

Archaeology & Anthropology Admissions 2022

This year 125 candidates applied to read Archaeology & Anthropology, a modest decrease from the all-time high of 132 applicants for the degree in 2021. All but one of the applications were for admission in October, 2023.

A total of 25 offers were made for October 2023 (Table 1), compared to 26 offers in 2021. Magdalen did not offer its usual two places for the degree this round. Four offers were made on behalf of the subject as a whole (excluding Harris Manchester College) by Hertford, St Hugh's, St John's, and St Peter's.

Table 1. Archaeology & Anthropology Applications 2022

	<i>Applied</i>	<i>Desummoned/ Withdraw</i>	<i>Rejected</i>	<i>Places</i>
<i>State sector</i>				
men	18	5	6	7
women	32	8	17	7
total	50	13	24	14
<i>Independent sector</i>				
men	8	2	3	3
women	11	4	3	4
total	19	6	6	7
<i>EU/EEA</i>				
men	1	*	*	*
women	7	*	*	*
total	8	5	2	1
<i>International</i>				
men	14	*	*	*
women	34	*	*	*
total	48	35	10	3
<i>Total</i>				
men	41	17	14	10
women	84	42	27	15
total	125	59	42	25

* = small numbers withheld

Table 2. Applications and places by College

	<i>Applications</i>	<i>Places</i>
Harris Manchester	1	1 (+ 2)
Hertford	23	5
Keble	31	4
St Hugh's	33	7
St John's	15	3
St Peter's	22	5
Total	125	25+2 = 27

NB – One each of the places offered by Hertford, St Hugh's, St John's and St Peter's is a pool offer made on behalf of all the Colleges, except Harris Manchester. Additionally, Harris Manchester retains two candidates who deferred from the 2021 round (in brackets above).

Number and quality of applicants

The number of applicants was slightly down from the record total of 132 candidates in 2021, but considerably up from the 103 candidates in 2020. Several of those applying had attended our Open Days or, in a few cases, the UNIQ Archaeology & Anthropology Summer School. The overall success rate for all applicants was 20%, the same as last year (20%). Of those applying, 68 (54%) were called for interview, somewhat lower than the number seen last year (57%).

Of those candidates of school or near-school age, none of those who applied had qualifications already in hand from schools in Britain compared to ten in 2021, nor from elsewhere in Europe or overseas (compared to eleven in 2021). Two candidates withdrew before decisions were taken about desummoning or were deemed to have withdrawn because they failed to submit the written work required of them (a further two withdrew shortly after the interview stage). All shortlisted candidates were interviewed online and all those interviewed were seen by two Colleges.

In total, EU/EEA-based and overseas-based candidates accounted for 45% of all applications this year, compared to 44% in 2021 and 47% in 2020. This reflects a continuing strong interest in the degree from non-UK applicants. Applications from the EU were relatively few in number (N=8), as they were in 2021 (N=5), compared to previous years (e.g., N=11 in 2020 and 2019, N=12 in 2018). Successful non-UK-based candidates came from Canada (N=1), Poland (N=1) and the USA (N=2). The overall success rate for EU/EEA/international candidates (7%; 9% in 2021) continues to be lower than home applicants (29%), aligning with less strong grades, personal statements, references, written work and interview performance. 40 non-UK candidates were desummoned (or deemed to have withdrawn) compared to 19 of those applying from within the UK.

Gender

In total, 10 men and 15 women were offered places, representing success rates by gender of 24% (29% in 2021) and 18% (17% in 2021), respectively. Looking only at applicants of school age from within Britain, the relevant success rates this year were 38% for men and 24% for women, compared to 42% and 25%, respectively, in 2021. The lower success rate of UK women is thus notable again this year and deserves further scrutiny.

School type and social disadvantage summary scores (United Kingdom only)

Of candidates resident and studying in the United Kingdom to whom offers were made, 14 (67%) are from the maintained sector compared to seven (33%) from the independent sector. These figures compare, respectively, to 73% and 27% in 2021 and 36% and 64% in 2020. Maintained sector candidates were slightly less successful in their applications, with 28% of candidates being admitted compared to 37% of those from the independent sector. In comparison, relevant figures for 2021 were 35% and 25% and, for 2020, 15% and 45%, respectively. Those accepted from the maintained sector came from a variety of different school types from comprehensive schools to tertiary colleges.

Of the 32 applicants identified as disadvantaged, 13 (including one mature applicant) were desummoned because they were predicted to obtain less than the minimum entrance offer (AAA) or had particularly weak applications. This compares to a total of 29 applicants last year. Of the disadvantaged candidates who were interviewed, 9 (28%) were awarded places. This compares to an overall success rate of 31% for all UK-based school-aged candidates.

Archaeology & Anthropology joined the Opportunity Oxford scheme last year. Of the 9 candidates identified as eligible for it, one was desummoned because their A-level predictions did not meet the minimum grades specified. Of the remaining 8 candidates, three obtained places, a success rate of 33%, slightly higher than that for all applicants (20%), and for all UK school-aged candidates (31%). None of those rejected at interview were considered appropriate for further consideration by the scheme.

Deferred entry

One application was received for deferred entry in 2024, and no deferred entry offers were made.

Distribution of applicants between Colleges

The distribution of applicants between Colleges showed a significant number of applicants for St Hugh's and Keble. The lack of places on offer this round at Magdalen – which often attracts many applicants despite its typical offer of two places – did not have a dramatic effect on application levels. The interview process (see below) allows for numbers to be balanced appropriately between colleges at the offer stage, and so the uneven distribution

of applicants across colleges does not alter applicant success rates.

Selection procedures

Tutors remain committed to providing interviews at two Colleges for all candidates interviewed in Oxford. A slight degree of reassignment of second choice candidates was necessary in order to achieve an equitable balance of workload between Colleges and was arranged by the Organising Secretary. Candidates were desummoned where appropriate, using the agreed selection criteria (see below). Following the conclusion of all interviews (marked on a 1-10 scale), candidates were discussed and ranked on an ABC system before places were confirmed.

Written work for all candidates was uploaded onto the admissions system and interview scores were also thus recorded. All those deemed of high quality were designated for a place following several third interviews conducted on the Thursday.

All candidates were interviewed online using Microsoft Teams. In a very few cases minor technical difficulties led to some candidates being unable to maintain a video as well as an audio link or to the interview's length being slightly extended. In no instance, however, did this seriously interfere with the successful conduct of the interview.

Aptitude testing

No pre-interview tests were used. In deference to having to interview all candidates online again this year, none were asked to read, and then answer questions on, an appropriate archaeological or anthropological passage as part of their interview. Some slight modification of other questions was required due to the inability of candidates to physically handle objects, but this did not prove difficult.

Short-listing criteria

Tutors employed the following criteria when selecting which candidates to interview: 1) A-level grades or equivalent (unless convincing extenuating circumstances could be demonstrated, AAA or 38 at IB as a minimum prediction/secured set of grades with candidates without this not being summoned for interview); 2) two pieces of submitted written work plus a 500-word essay ('What can we learn about people in the past OR in the present from their material culture?') showing evidence of logical argument and analysis, as well as sufficient grasp of English to deal with the demands of an Oxford degree, the work being graded by Tutors from best to worst on a 5-1 scale; 3) a positive academic reference from someone acquainted with the candidate's academic background (subject to modification in the case of mature applicants); 4) a strong record of achievement, where relevant, in previous academic examinations, such as GCSE; 5) a personal statement showing a convincing degree of enthusiasm and motivation for studying the subject. Candidates who met these criteria were interviewed.

Reallocation and redistribution

Given the small numbers of places, candidates and Colleges involved, this remains an irrelevant issue for Archaeology & Anthropology and all interviewed candidates continue to be seen separately by two Colleges. However, in order to equalise the total burden of interviews between Colleges a small number of second choice allocations were amended by the Organising Secretary.

Access

i) Open Days

Open Days linked to the University-wide Science Open Days continue to be successful in attracting applicants. We have maintained the fuller and, we believe, more effective programme initiated in 2017. In addition to a general talk about the degree and the admissions process, this includes taster lectures and the opportunity to talk with current undergraduates, including discussion of the fieldwork projects in which they have been engaged. Visits to the Ashmolean and Pitt Rivers Museum and the Research Laboratory for Archaeology and the History of Art continue to play an important part in our Open Day event. Outside Oxford we will continue to support the London Anthropology and Archaeology Days and play a full part in those Oxford-Cambridge Student Conferences taking place in England and Wales as soon as these again become possible. We remain keen to participate in those taking place in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The UNIQ Summer School was attended by 10 students this year. Three applied, of whom one was successful. We are offering our UNIQ programme again in 2023. We shall also continue to respond promptly and effectively to requests for further information sent on by the degree's Administrator to the Organising Secretary.

ii)

The Archaeology & Anthropology admissions website and related social media accounts continue to be maintained and updated.

Amy Bogaard
Organising Secretary, Archaeology & Anthropology admissions