

Archaeology & Anthropology Admissions 2023

This year 122 candidates applied to read Archaeology & Anthropology, a modest decrease from 125 in 2022 and the all-time high of 132 applicants for the degree in 2021. All but five of the applications were for admission in October 2024.

A total of 27 offers were made for October 2024 (Table 1), compared to 24 offers in 2022 (for 2023). Disappointingly, as last year, 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, Keble, St Hugh's and St Peter's.

Table 1. Archaeology & Anthropology Applications 2023

	<i>Applied</i>	<i>Desummoned/ Withdraw</i>	<i>Rejected</i>	<i>Places</i>
<i>School type/domicile</i>				
UK State	44	7	22	15
UK Independent	17	3	8	6
EU/EEA	7	5	2	0
International	61	39	16	6
<i>Gender</i>				
men	36	13	12	11
women	81	35	32	14
IUAT or PNTS	5	1	2	2
total	122	49	46	27

**IUAT – I use another term; PNTS – prefer not to say [These are new UCAS gender identifications used in this admissions round] Numbers have been aggregated due to low values to prevent identification of individuals*

Table 2. Applications and places by College

	<i>Applications</i>	<i>Places</i>
Harris Manchester	5	1(+1)
Hertford	24	5
Keble	23	6
St Hugh's	35	7
St John's	12	2
St Peter's	23	5
Total	122	26+1 = 27

NB – One each of the places offered by Hertford, Keble, St Hugh's and St Peter's is a pool offer made on behalf of all the Colleges, except Harris Manchester. Additionally, Harris Manchester retained one candidate who deferred from the 2022 round (in brackets above). In addition to the numbers above, St Peter's made one deferred offer for 2025.

Number and quality of applicants

The number of applicants was slightly down on last year (n=125) and the record total in 2021(n=132), but still considerably up from the 103 candidates in 2020. Several of those applying had attended our Open Days or, in four cases, the UNIQ Archaeology & Anthropology Summer School.

The overall success rate for all applicants was 22%, slightly higher than last year (19%). Of those applying, 73 (60%) were called for interview, an uptick from last year where the figure was 68 (54%). Of those candidates of school or near-school age, twelve of those who applied had qualifications already in hand. Five of these were from schools in Britain (compared to none in 2022 and ten in 2021) and seven from Europe and overseas (compared to none in 2022 and eleven in 2021).

Eleven 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 candidate withdrew shortly before interview). 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 50% of all applications this year, compared to 45% in 2022 and 44% in 2021. This reflects a continuing strong interest in the degree from non-UK applicants. Sadly, however, residents of the EU/EEA, now burdened with the imposition of significantly higher fees, were relatively few in number (n=7), as they were in 2022 (n=8) and 2021 (n=5), compared to previous years (e.g., n=11 in 2020 and 2019, and n=12 in 2018). Successful non-UK-based candidates came from North America and Asia.

The overall success rate for EU/EEA/international candidates, however, continued to reflect a disproportionately large number of weaker applicants with less strong references/grades/personal statements or written work, or poor interview performance. As a consequence, 44 non-UK candidates were desummoned (or deemed to have withdrawn) compared to 10 of those applying from within the UK. The overall success rate of EU/EEA and other international candidates (8%; 7% in 2022) was considerably lower than that for candidates applying from within the UK (34%; 29% in 2022).

Gender

In total, eleven men and fourteen women were offered places, representing success rates by gender of 31% (24% in 2022) and 17% (17% in 2022), respectively. Looking only at applicants of school age from within Britain, the relevant success rates this year were 44% for men and 25% for women, compared to 38% and 23%, respectively, in 2022. 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, fifteen were from the maintained sector compared to six from the independent sector. The maintained sector accounted for 72% and independent sector 28% of UK applications. These figures compare, respectively, to 65% and 35% in 2022 and 73% and 27% in 2021.

Maintained and independent sector candidates were almost equally successful in their applications, with 34% of candidates being admitted from the maintained sector compared to 35% of those from the independent sector. In comparison, relevant figures for 2022 were 26% and 37% and, for 2020, 35% and 25% respectively.

Of the fifteen successful candidates from the state sector, nine were from academies, two from free schools, and one each from a foundation school, community school, Scotland establishment school, and grant-maintained school. The following success rates were indicated across the maintained sector: academies 32% (9 out of 28); free school 33% (2 out of 6); foundation school 100% (1 out of 1); community school 33% (1 out of 3), Scotland establishment school 100% (1 out of 1), and grant-maintained school 100% (1 out of 1). (To note, UCAS updated the school types in this cycle.)

Of the eleven applicants in the most disadvantaged group and the ten in the next most disadvantaged group, two were desummoned because they were predicted to obtain less than the minimum entrance offers (AAA/ 38 IB) or otherwise had particularly weak applications. (There was a total of eleven candidates in the most disadvantaged group and 20 in the next group last year.) Of those candidates from disadvantaged backgrounds who were interviewed this year, four of the former (40% of those applying) and four of the latter (40% of those applying) were awarded places. This compares to an overall success rate of 34% (28% in 2022) for all UK-based school-aged candidates and success rates for Band A of 45% and Band B of 19% in 2022 (compared to 20% and 25% in 2021).

Archaeology & Anthropology joined the Opportunity Oxford scheme in 2022. All of the ten candidates identified as eligible were interviewed in this round. Of these candidates, four obtained places, a success rate of 40%, significantly higher than the success rate for all applicants (22%). None of those rejected at interview were considered appropriate for further consideration by the scheme.

Deferred entry

Five applications were received for deferred entry in 2025. (Four were rejected and one was offered a place following interview.)

Distribution of applicants between Colleges

The distribution of applicants between Colleges showed a significant number of applicants for St Hugh's, possibly correlating with the greater number of places available there. Once again, the lack of places on offer this round at Magdalen – which often attracts many

applicants despite its historically typical offer of two places – did not have a discernible effect on overall application levels.

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 made available and interview scores were also recorded. All those deemed of high quality were designated for a place following a single third interview conducted on the Thursday.

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

Aptitude testing

No pre-interview tests were used. In deference to interviewing 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 all of 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 23 students this year. Four applied, of whom two were successful. We are offering our UNIQ programme again in 2024. 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.

Tim Clack
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