



## Archaeology Education Pathways

**A Level and beyond: a survey of key stakeholders to review sustainability of the current progression pathways in academic Archaeology**

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Subject Committee for Archaeology and  
Council for British Archaeology**

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Cover images: A level students at York College gaining practical experience as part of their course  
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# A Level and beyond: a survey of key stakeholders to review sustainability of the current progression pathways in academic Archaeology

## 1. Background to the Survey

Archaeology is seemingly in a relatively strong position in both higher and further education compared with its position when the majority of current senior academic staff began their own careers in the 1970s. The subject is popular in the media and of interest to much of the general public. However, there is uncertainty over the future of the subject and a feeling that its apparent strength may be somewhat fragile. This is compounded by the image of archaeology as a low-paid profession, and of the degree as being a specialised niche with limited wider applicability. High student tuition fees make both of these propositions seem like good reasons for not studying the subject at university.

In the past decade 39% of UK Archaeology graduates found employment in archaeology-related fields (Archaeology Graduates of the Millennium survey)<sup>1</sup> but doing a degree in archaeology opens up a wide range of employment opportunities. With a predicted decline in public funding and very few people staying in the same job for their working life, it is the transferable skills and adaptability at which archaeology students excel that will be their greatest strength.

Few other subjects address the very wide breadth of skills and topics covered in an archaeology degree.<sup>2</sup> Six months after graduation in 2011, nearly half of all archaeology graduates were in employment either in the UK or overseas in sectors beyond Archaeology,<sup>3</sup> including other professional or technical occupations; commercial, industrial and public sector management; marketing, sales and advertising; and in education and information technology. This was due to the range of skills they were able to demonstrate, including Teamwork; Management skills; Lateral Thinking; Problem Solving; Ability to work creatively in diverse situations with limited resources; Ability to work with a wide range of people including public engagement; Health, Safety and Risk Awareness; IT skills; Attention to detail and ability to record relevant details; Numeracy and quantitative data handling; Literacy and ability to compile a structured report; Presentation skills (oral, written and image manipulation); Reasoned argument; Budgeting; and Timekeeping and forward planning.

As a result of this information, the Subject Committee for Archaeology (SCFA) recognised that it would be in the interests of the discipline for higher and further education organisations to engage in more of a dialogue and mutually to support each other. SCFA commissioned a study of the relationship between university archaeology departments and A Level Archaeology providers, to identify and reduce any barriers to recruitment, confident that the study of Archaeology at Level 3 and/or degree level is a stepping stone to a wide range of career options and is not career-limiting.

This Survey was commissioned by SCFA via the Council for British Archaeology (CBA) to poll key stakeholders for their experiences and perceptions, and to gather their suggestions for a sustainable future for progression routes in academic Archaeology.

<sup>1</sup> 'Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education' (DLHE), a bi-annual national survey of UK and EU graduates run by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (latest available data covers students who completed their studies between 1 August 2009 and 31 July 2010)

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.ucl.ac.uk/archaeology/studying/careers/transferable\\_skills](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/archaeology/studying/careers/transferable_skills)

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.prospects.ac.uk/options\\_archaeology.htm](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/options_archaeology.htm)

## **2. Methodology**

In order to explore fully the potential to strengthen the relationship between all stakeholders involved in Archaeology Education Pathways and increase recruitment, electronic surveys were created and distributed to canvass experience and proposals for improvement in the composition and promotion of Archaeology at A level, University, and employer levels. Electronic surveys were created through Survey Monkey and sent by specific linked email to identified A Level Centre tutors and University Heads of Department (HoD). Correct email addresses for the relevant personnel were identified by telephoning the organisation to check for accuracy. The link to the relevant student level survey was then sent to the tutor/Head of Department who had completed the staff level survey for requested distribution to the student body.

As well as Archaeology employers, the simple survey aimed at employers targeted non-Archaeology employers from a range of sectors in order to canvass experience and formulate proposals to focus on promoting the transferrable skills inherent in the study of Archaeology at any level.

Electronic technology maximises access and standardises the synthesis of results. A few participants encountered technical problems with completion of the surveys which appeared to be linked to a hiatus in the completion when a 'time-out' filter came into play and terminated the response mechanism. This was overcome by over-riding the settings to enable tutors, HoDs and employers to re-enter the survey to complete it. No issues were reported with the student surveys.

At each level, questions were set around specific themes which linked to questions set in another level. For example, both A level tutors and A level students were asked their views on the different modules of the A level syllabus to check if perceptions of value and difficulty were similar. In the same vein, University students who had taken A level Archaeology were asked which module(s) had best prepared them for degree level study and University HoDs were asked which module(s) were of greatest value to their incoming students. In the same way, questions about transferable skills crossed levels between employers, University students, University HoDs and A level students.

It had been planned to carry out further sampling at each survey level through telephone/Skype/face-to-face interviews to develop further understanding of the perceived issues and opportunities across stakeholder groups. However, when the results were analysed, it was clear that there was sufficient agreement across responses to minimise such activity. Follow-up was carried out by email (as participants had indicated to be their preference) only where a detailed comment to support a question response was of particular interest to exemplify a view.

The Results section following presents the charted results of the relevant surveys with brief comparison of the main themes tackled in multiple surveys. The subsequent Analysis section discusses both the Results and the specific comments made by participants to explain their responses. Conclusions are then drawn to sum up the overall survey.

Finally, Recommendations are made of actions identified as essential to strengthen Archaeology Education Pathways for the future.

### 3. Participation

Responses were received from:

Target group	Response target	Actual survey invitations sent	Responses received	Comments
<b>A Level Centres</b>	40	43	39	<p>The initial list supplied by AQA of Centres delivering A Level Archaeology proved to include 12 Centres no longer offering the qualification and 29 Centres who submit a maximum of two candidates annually. The latter are generally individuals in private schools or working with a distance-learning tutor. These were not included in the research.</p> <p>The remaining 52 Centres were targeted but in a number of cases no response to identify the correct person to survey could be gained by telephoning the Centre on several occasions.</p> <p>Of the 43 Centres where contact could be established, tutors were mainly extremely supportive in completing the survey and in providing perceptive qualitative responses in addition to the required quantifiable data. Several rounds of reminders were sent to non-participants.</p>
<b>A Level students</b>	200	n/a	314	<p>Students were clearly encouraged to participate, presumably in cohort formation, as responses are from 26 Centres only. Several rounds of reminders were sent to Centres where a tutor had responded but students had not.</p>
<b>University Departments</b>	25	32	17	<p>A disappointing return from the list supplied by SCFA via CBA, although responses received are thoughtful. Email addresses were checked for accuracy and appropriateness and several rounds of reminders were sent to non-participants.</p>
<b>University students</b>	120	n/a	125	<p>Student responses are from only nine Universities but are most valuable when compared with similar questions posed to A Level students. Several rounds of reminders were sent to Departments where Heads had already responded but students had not.</p>
<b>Employers</b>	10	11	10	<p>Care was taken to engage with employers in a range of Sectors, not restricted to the Archaeology/Heritage arena. Despite intensive approaches, it was difficult to gain entry to the correct personnel in some sectors where it is known that Archaeology graduates are valued. For example, approaches to the military and to MI5 (due to a personal connection) were politely refused as it is a security threat to give an email address to which the survey could be directed.</p>

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Archaeology A Level

When questioned about the value of different aspects of the A Level archaeology syllabus as it currently stands, University HoDs and students identified ARCH 2 Archaeological Methods and Techniques and fieldwork experience as the most valuable as preparation for degree level study (figs 1, 2).

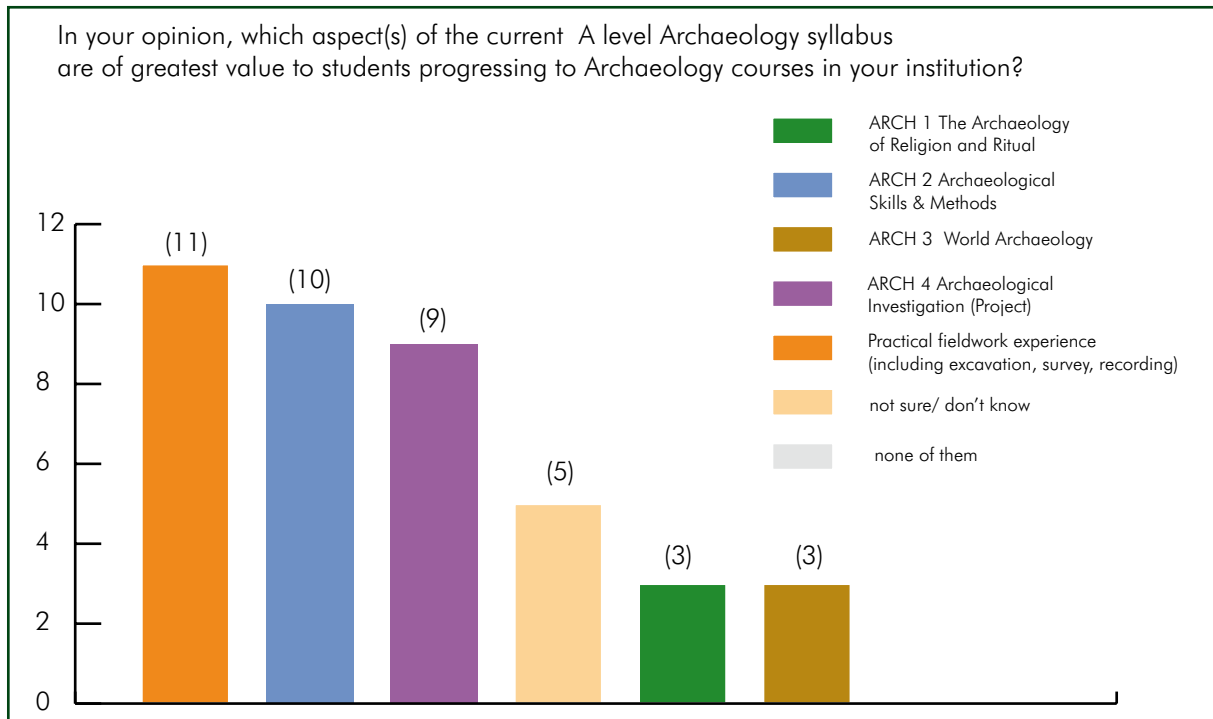


Figure 1: University HoDs' responses

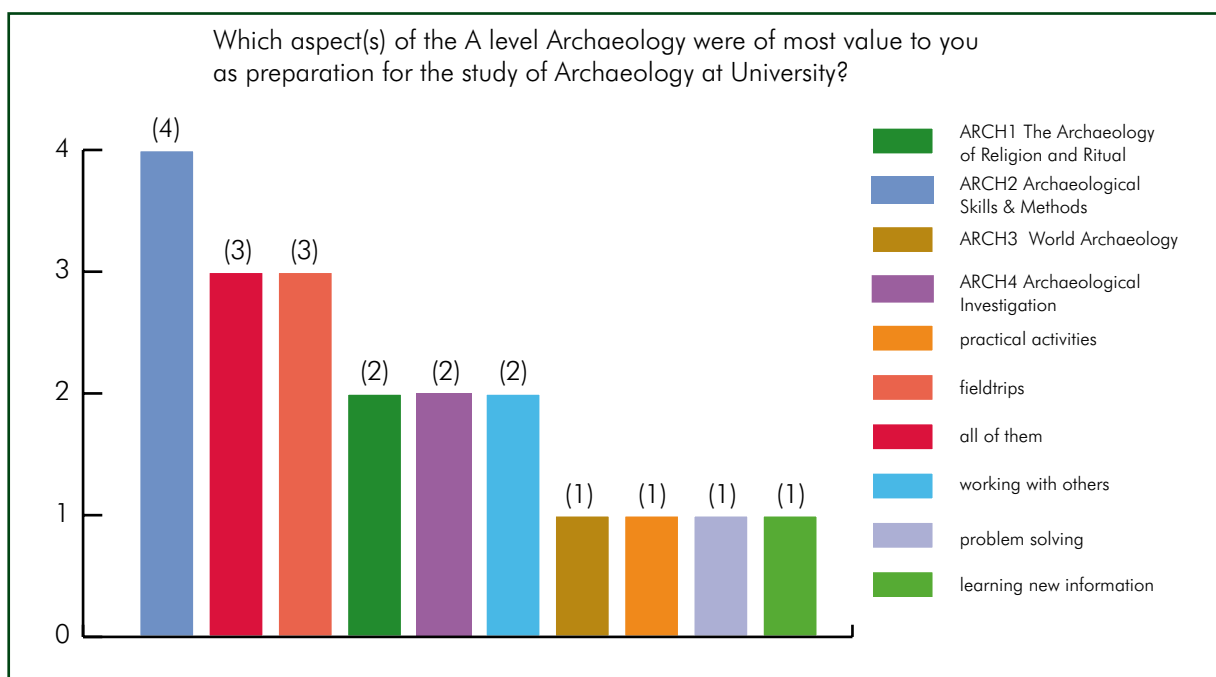


Figure 2: University Students' responses from those who had studied A level Archaeology (sample size=20)

Unfortunately ARCH 2 is the module LEAST favoured by A Level students and their teachers (figs 3, 4, 6), with some excellent reasoning given in the accompanying comments.

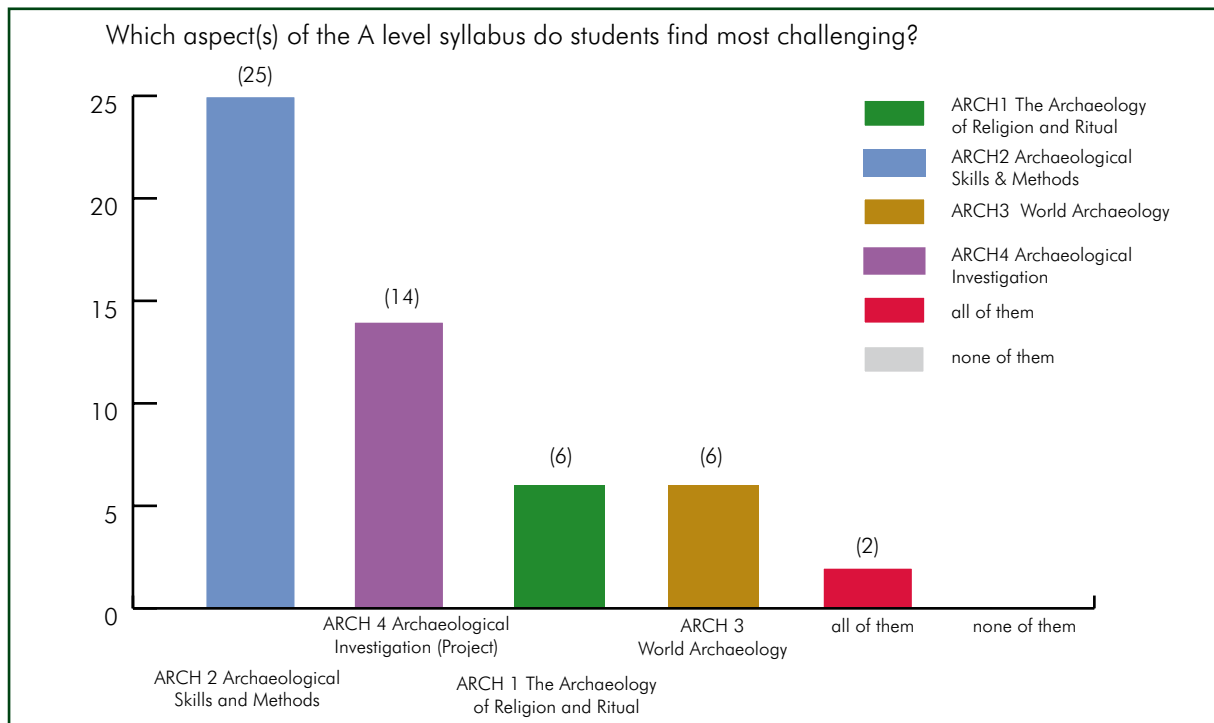


Figure 3: A Level Centres' responses

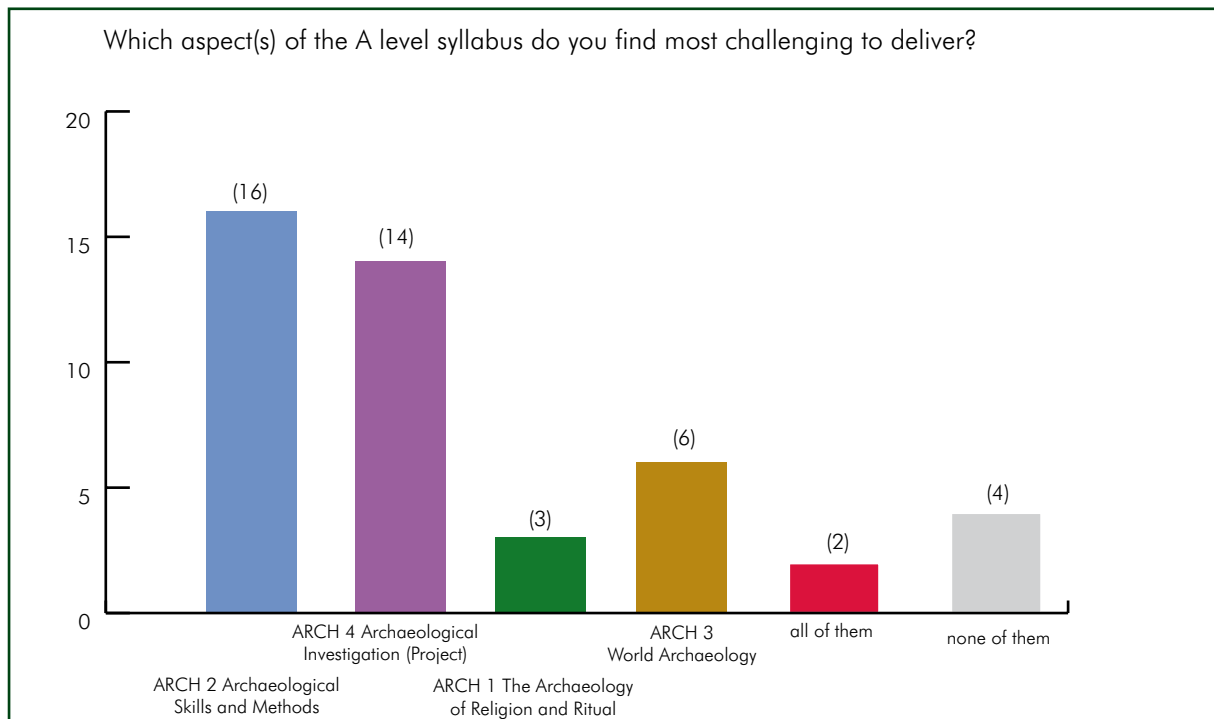


Figure 4: A Level Centres' responses

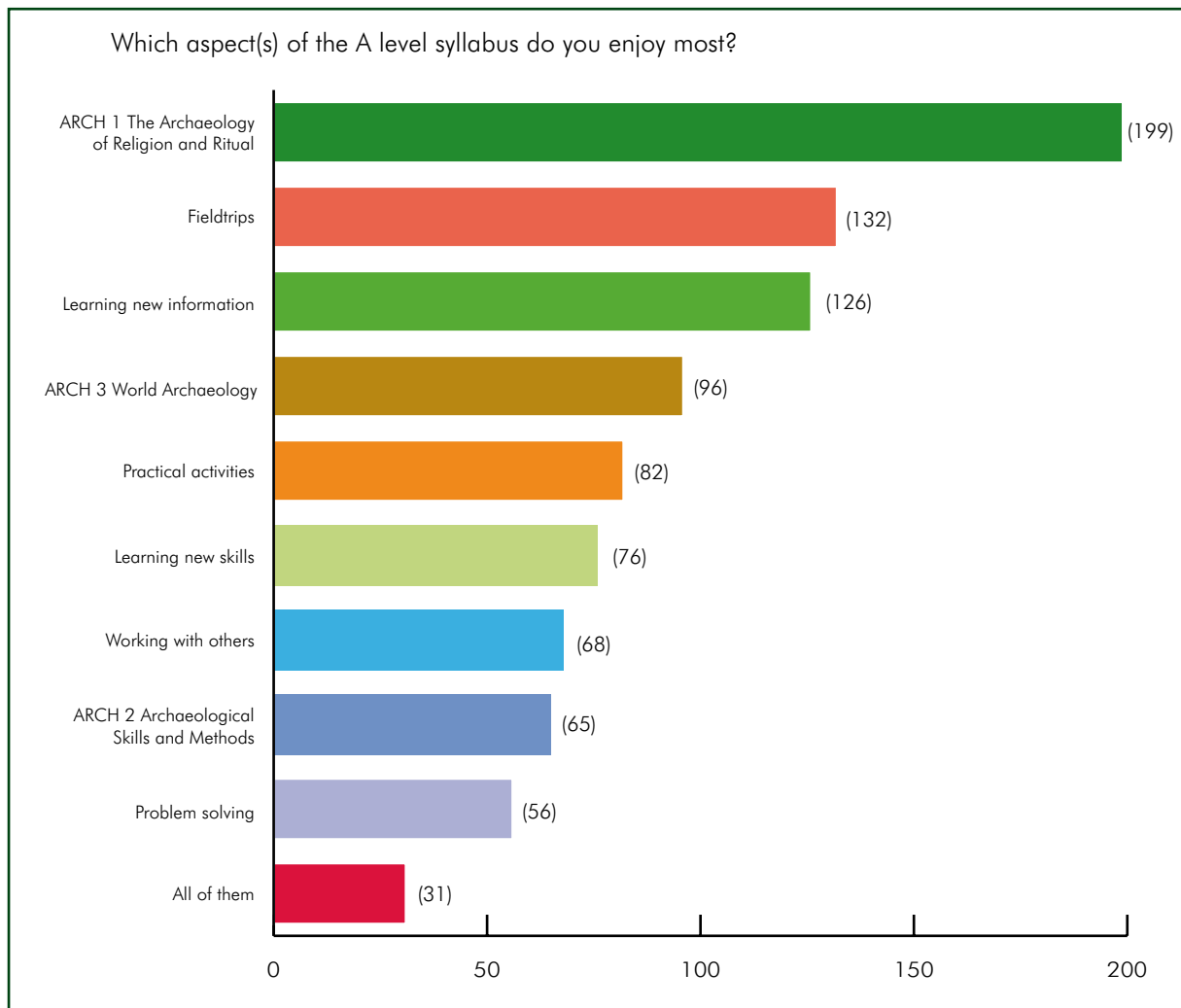


Figure 5: A Level students' responses

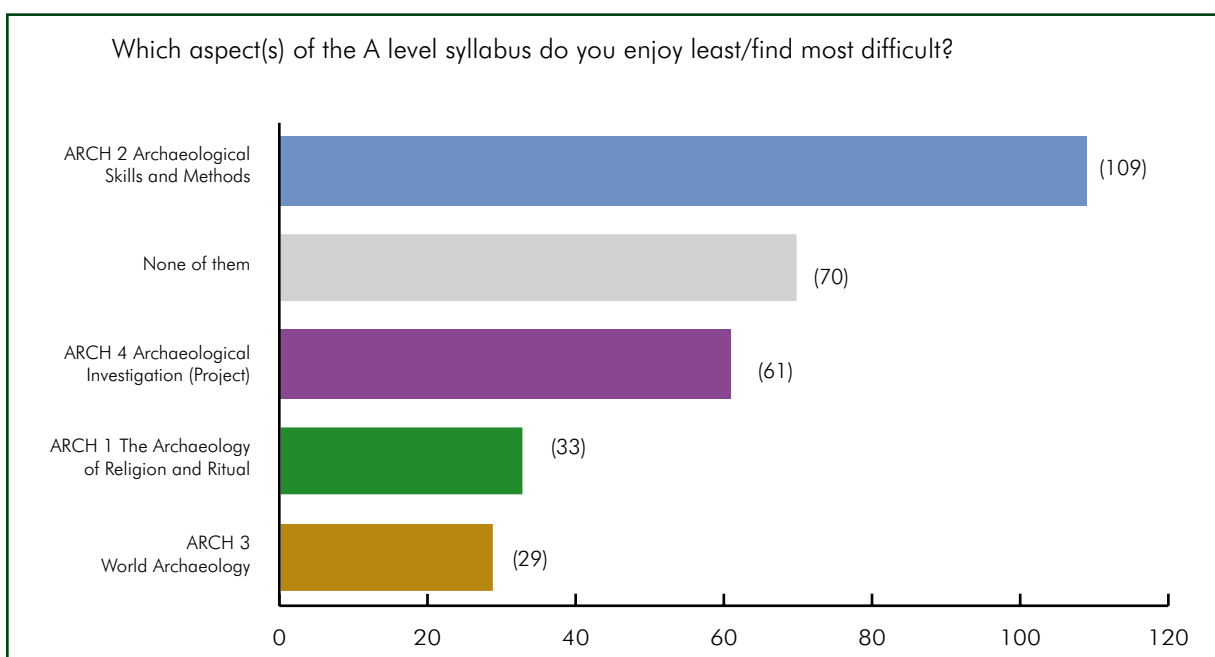


Figure 6: A Level students' responses

ARCH4 Archaeological Investigation is likewise disliked by tutors and A Level students (figs 3, 4, 6) while valued by University HoDs and students (figs 1, 2). These results will inform recommendations about the reformulation of the A Level syllabus to provide more coherent and positive pathways to higher level study and employment.

A Level students and A Level Centres agree on the reasons why other students do not take A Level Archaeology (figs 7, 8). Apart from a lack of interest in the subject, they identify lack of understanding of the subject and lack of perceived value of the subject by student and/or parent. The most common reason given by University students who did not study A Level Archaeology was that it was not available (fig 9). Drilling through the responses, it is clear that many of the respondents were Scottish or foreign students who did not have access to A Levels.

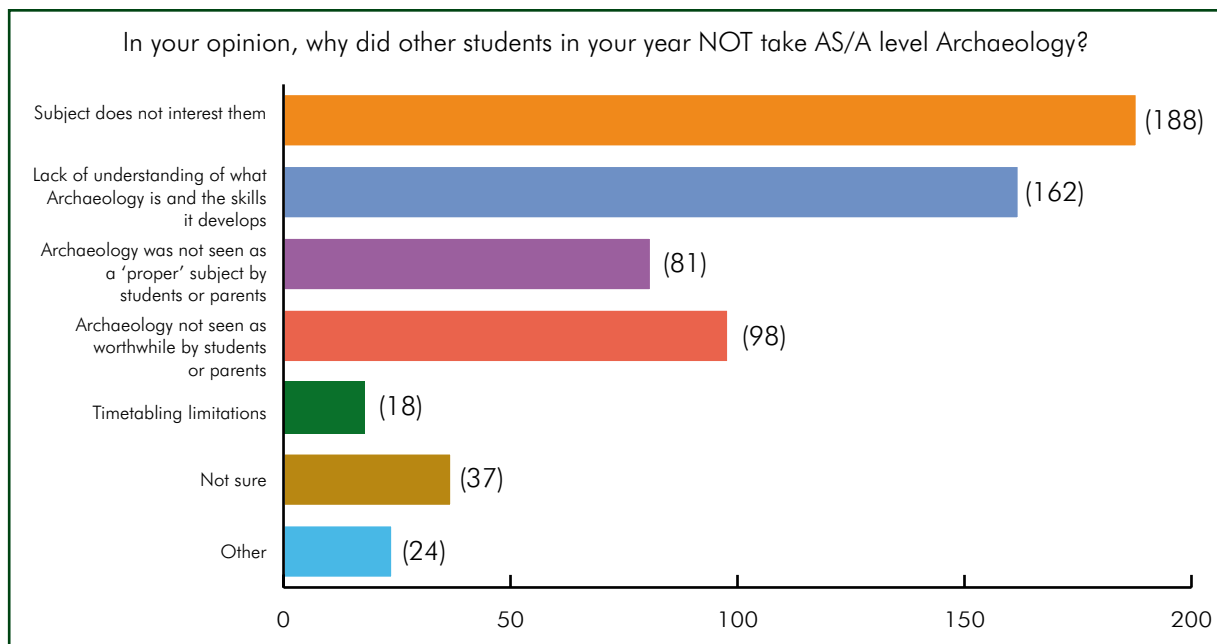


Figure 7: A Level students' responses

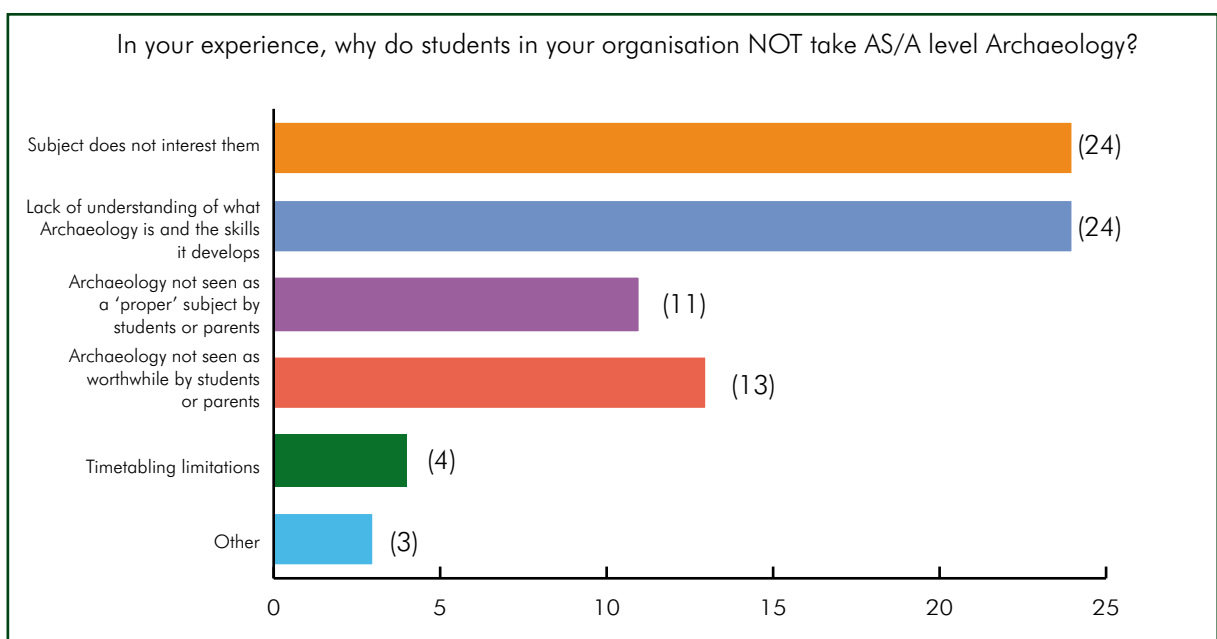


Figure 8: A Level Centres' responses

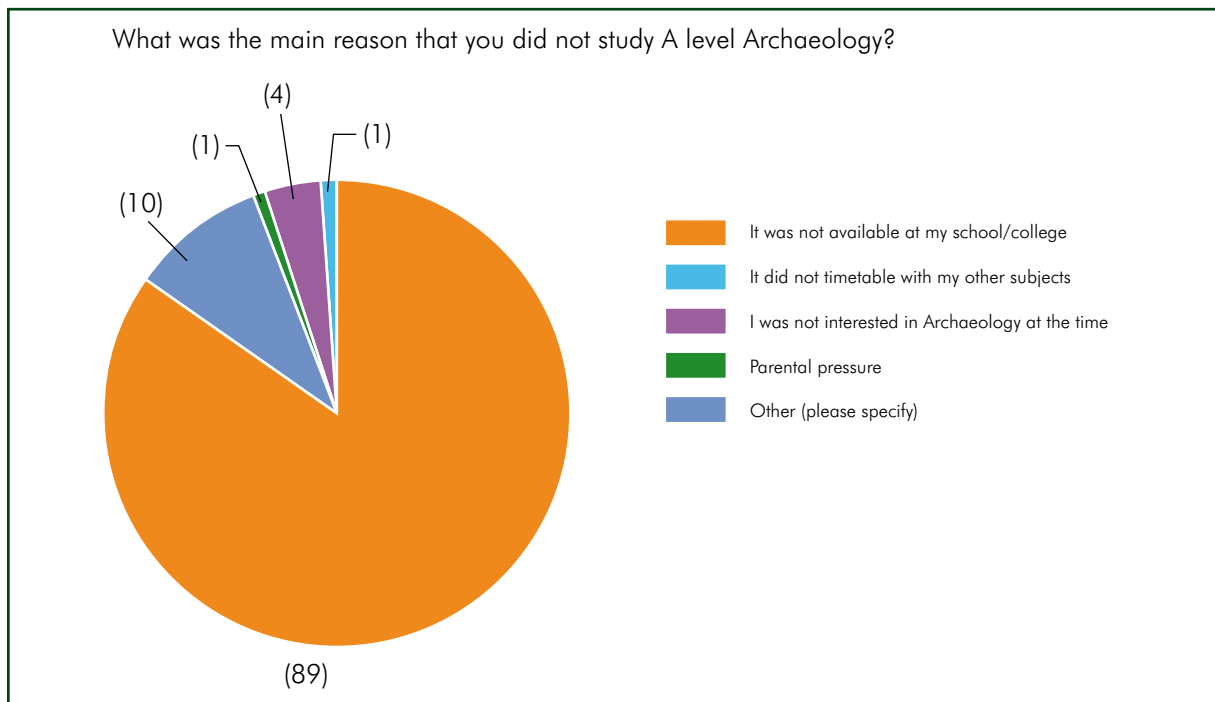


Figure 9: University students' responses (sample size=105)

## 4.2 Progression from A Level to degree

Investigation into the barriers to progression to degree level study in the discipline by those who study A Level Archaeology suggest that lack of confidence in finding employment either within or outside the Archaeology/Heritage sector is the major deterrent to continuing study in the subject. The results from current A Level students (fig 10) and from University students (fig 11) show almost identical percentages of response against these factors. Both also show tuition fees as the third most significant factor.

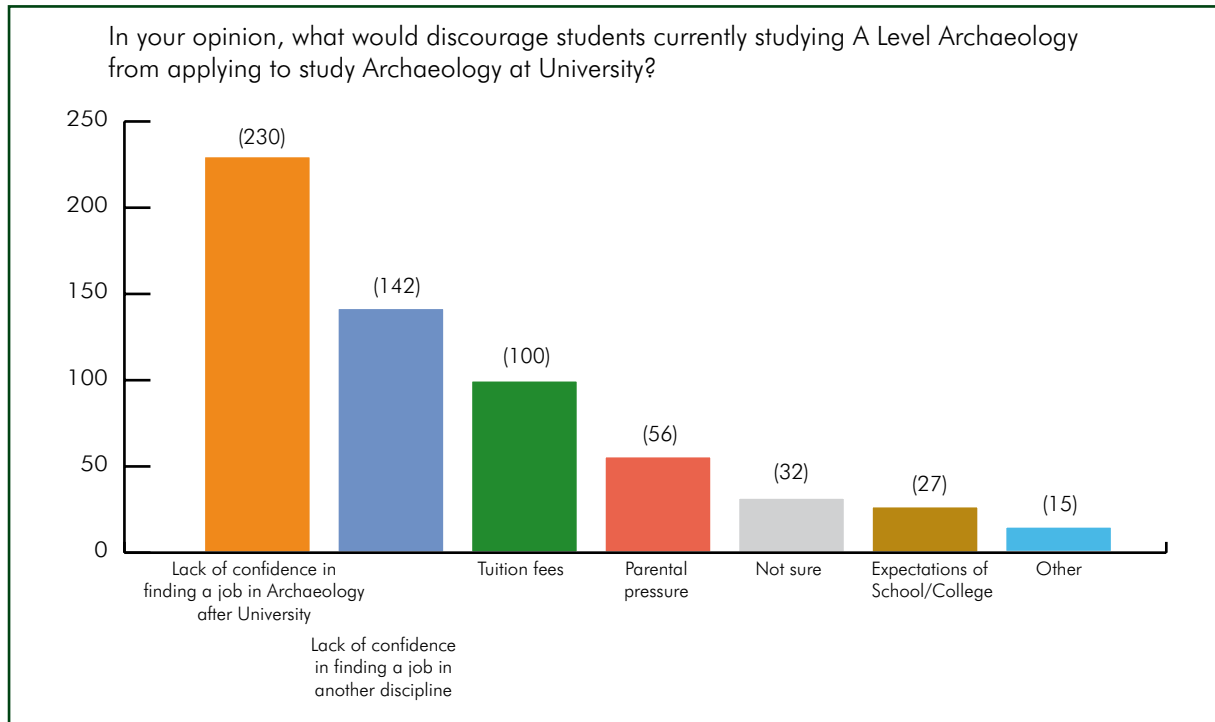


Figure 10: A Level students' responses

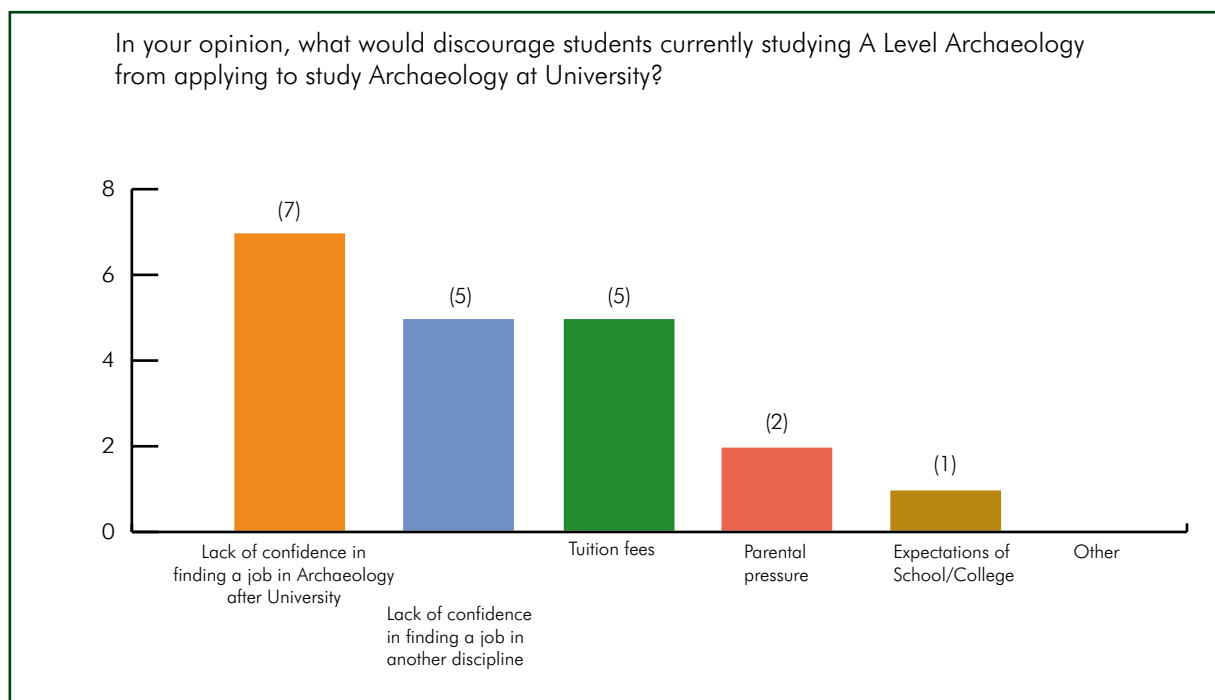


Figure 11: University Students' responses

A Level Centres are clear that there is direct correlation between students who choose A Level Archaeology and their proposed future path. A Level students indicate that their future career plans were secondary to their interest in the subject in choosing A Level Archaeology.

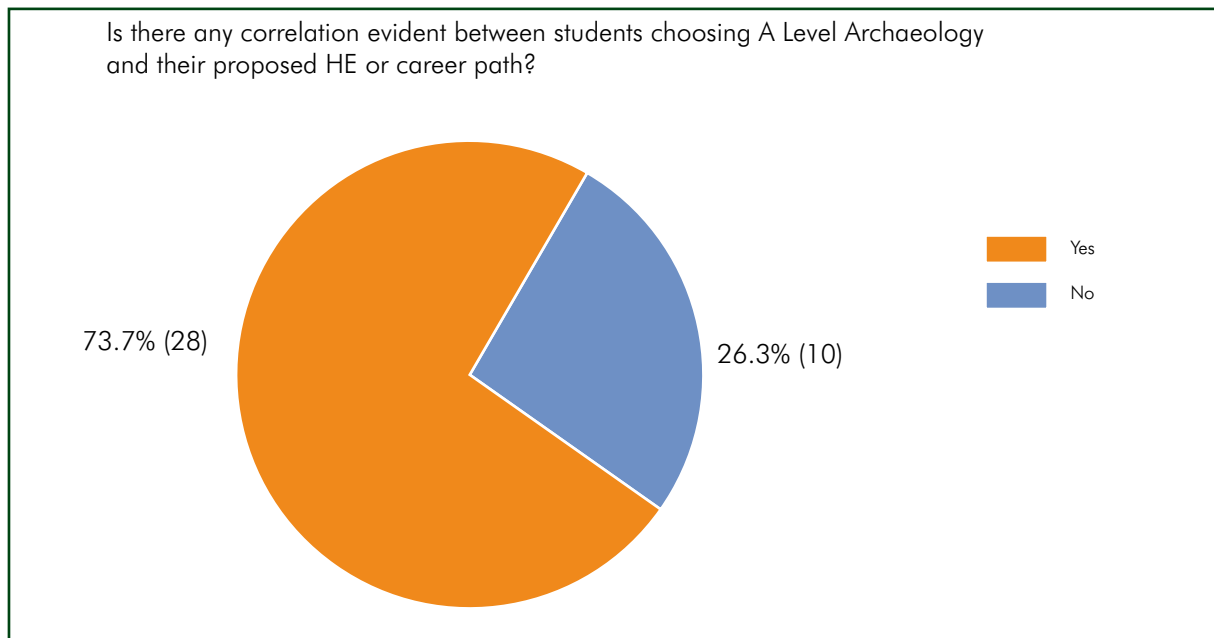


Figure 12: A Level Centres' responses

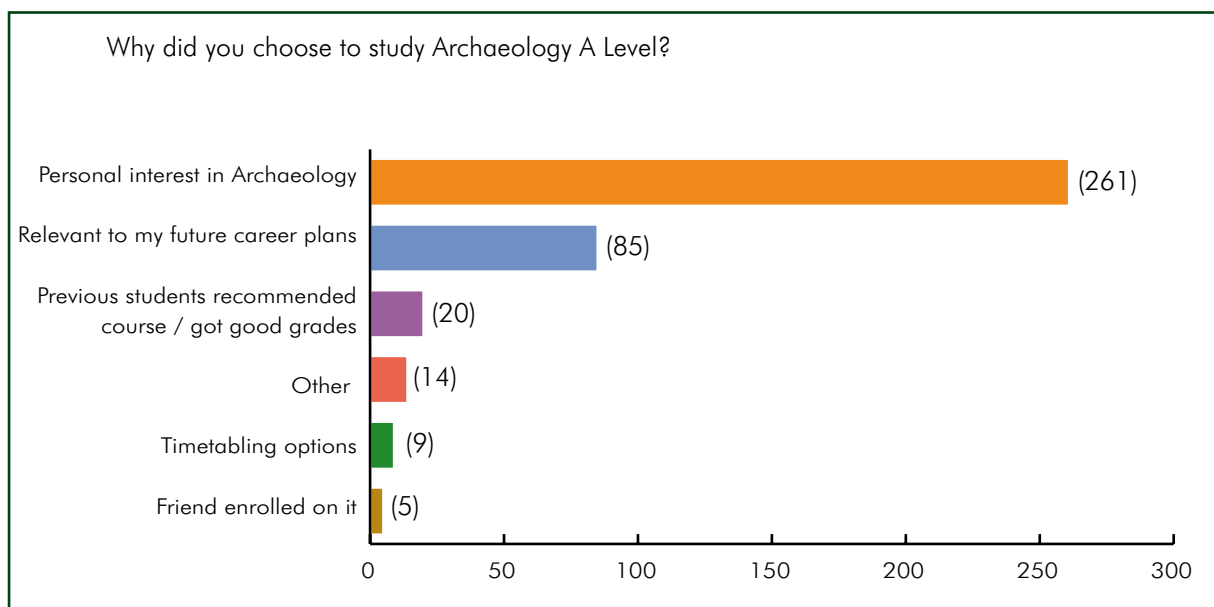


Figure 13: A Level students' responses

### 4.3 Relationships between A Level Centres and University Departments

A Level Centres were asked to comment on any existing relationship with HE institutions and to identify any support which they would appreciate from an Archaeology HE institution (figs 14, 16). Universities were asked the same questions from the opposite perspective (figs 15, 17).

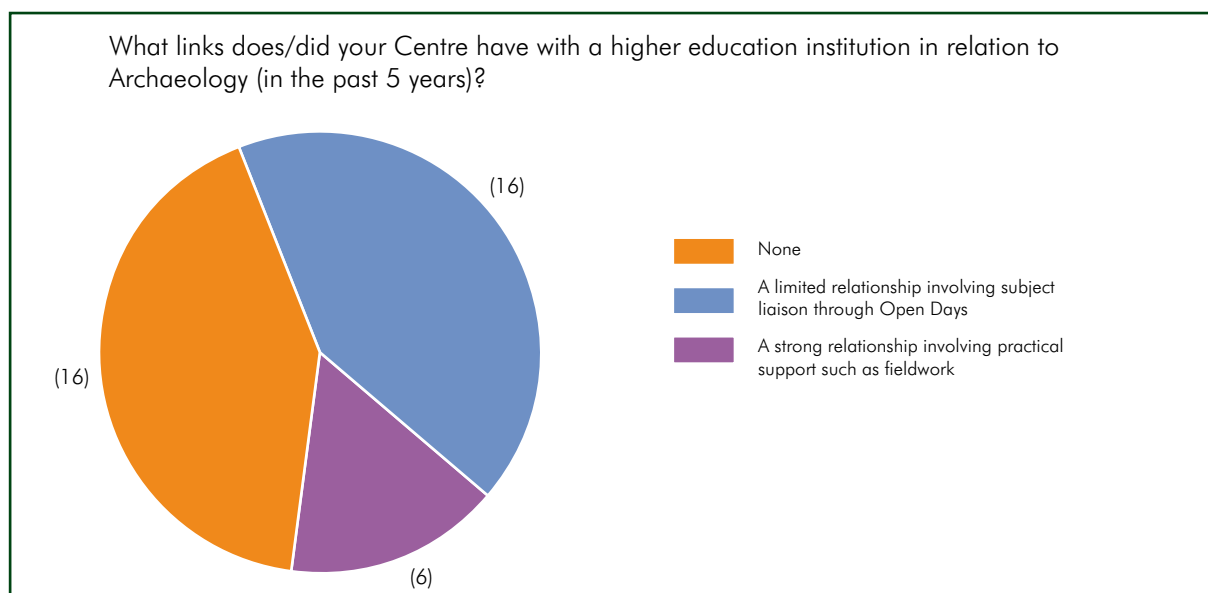


Figure 14: A Level Centres' responses

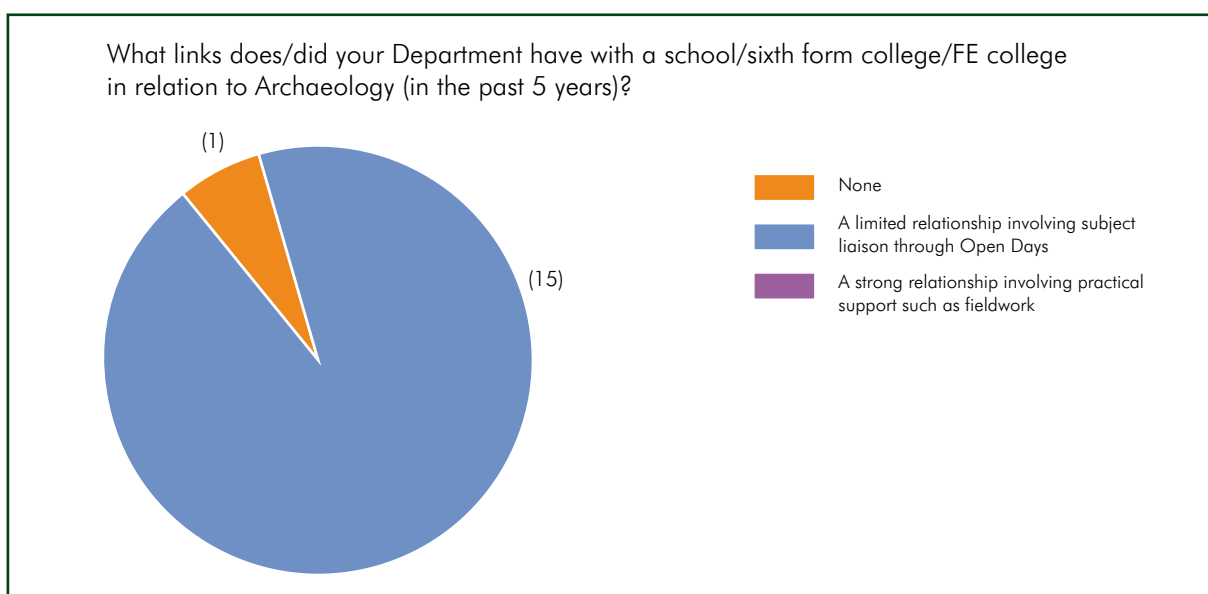


Figure 15: University HoDs' responses

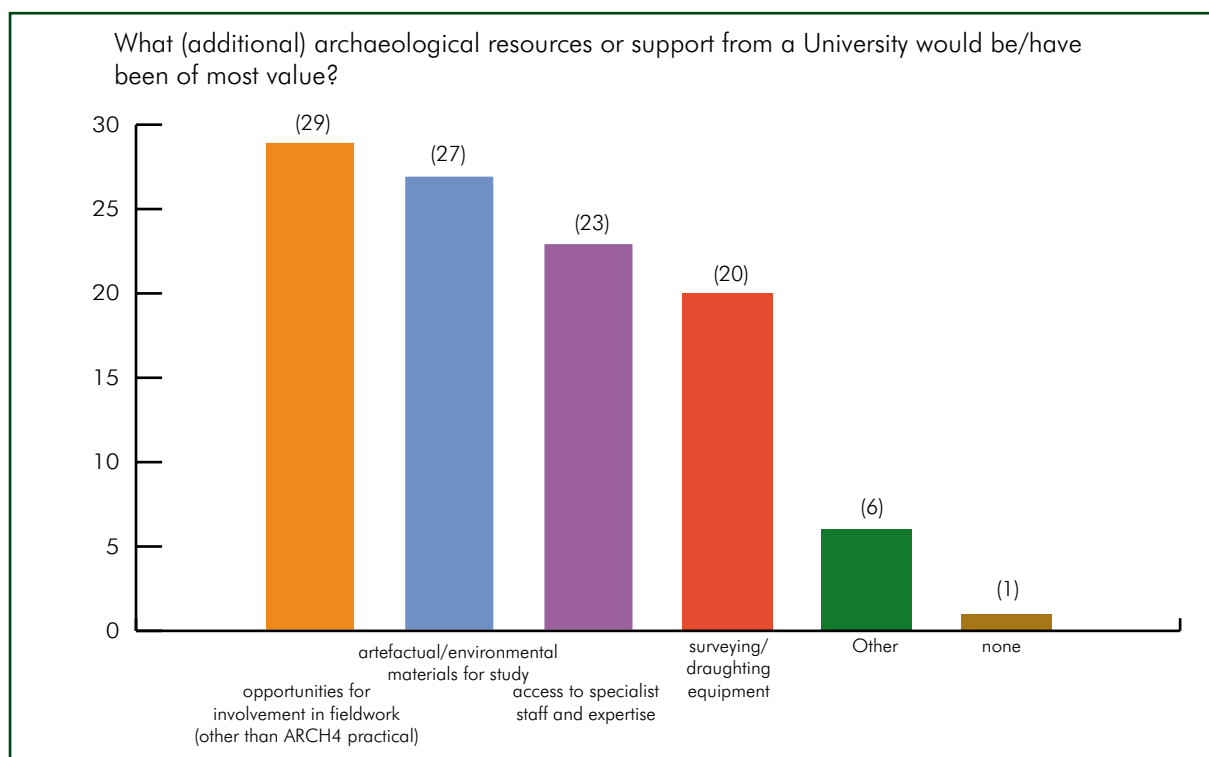


Figure 16: A Level Centres' responses

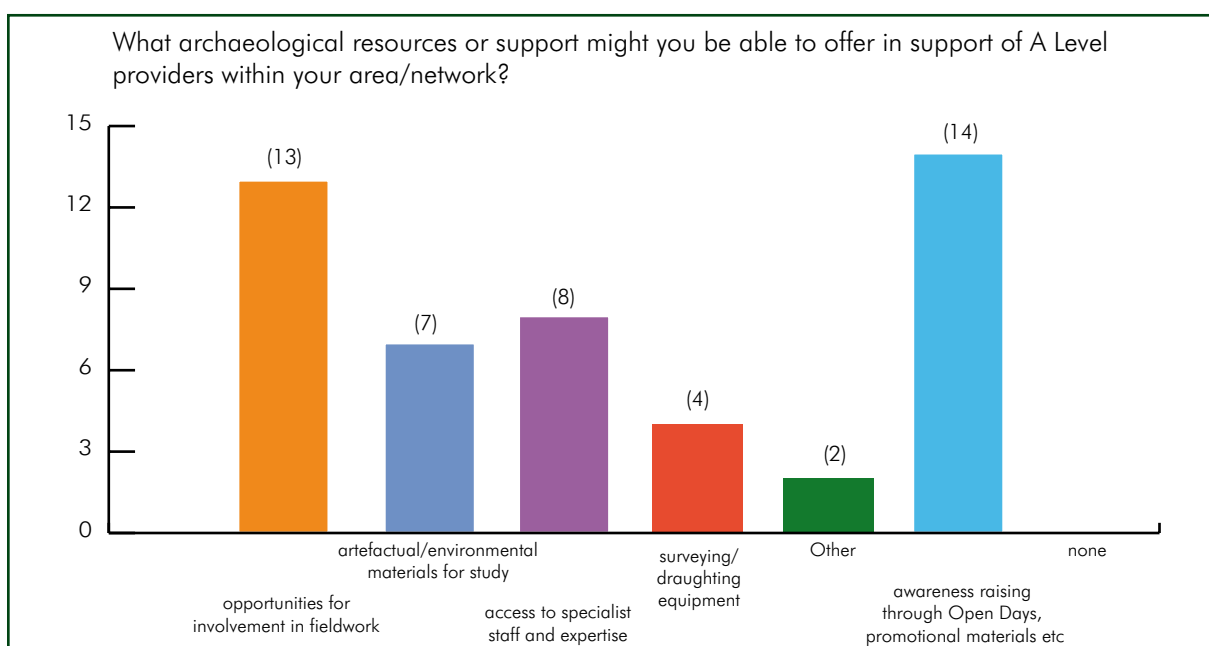


Figure 17: University HoDs' responses

Responses from A Level Centres and Universities (figs 14, 15) show clear discrepancies around the relationships between them. Since the survey participation rates from Universities were disappointing, it is not possible to explain why Centre responses range from 'None' to 'Strong relationship' while Universities identify no 'Strong relationship' at all. The comparability of the 'wish list' of A Level tutors and the 'offer list' of Universities matches in relative significance apart from the glaring exception of the University aspiration to offer more Open Days while Centres are focused on practical fieldwork and finds handling opportunities for their students.

## 4.4 Progression to employment

Universities were asked to estimate the proportion of their students who intended to work in the Archaeology/Heritage sector after University (fig 18) and the proportion who did find work in the sector (fig 19).

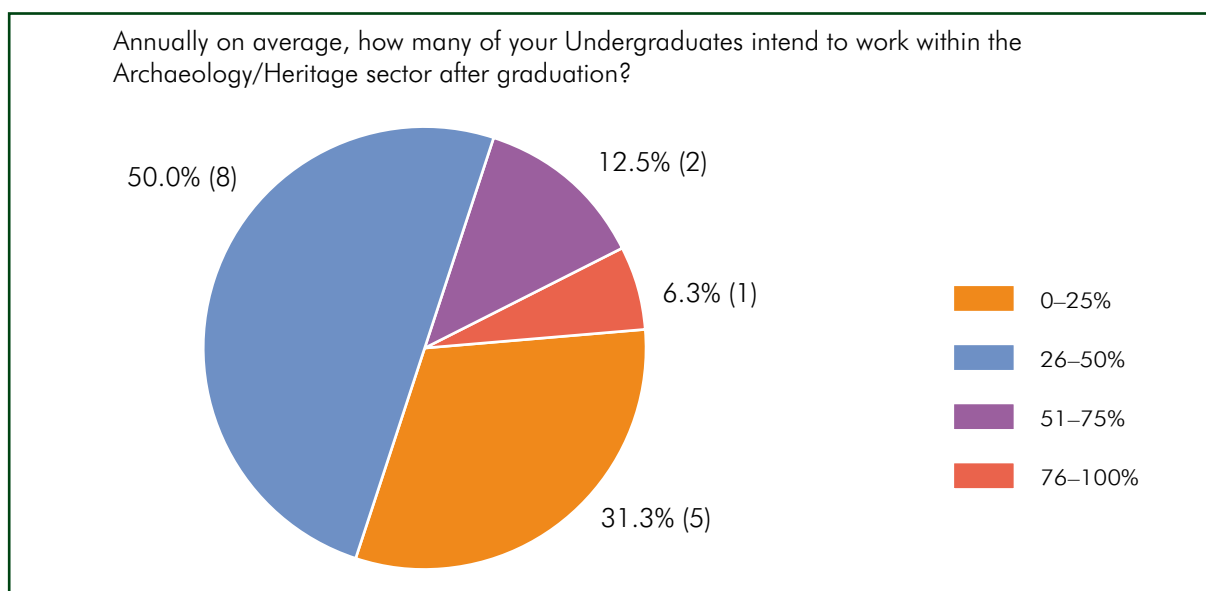


Figure 18: University HoDs' responses

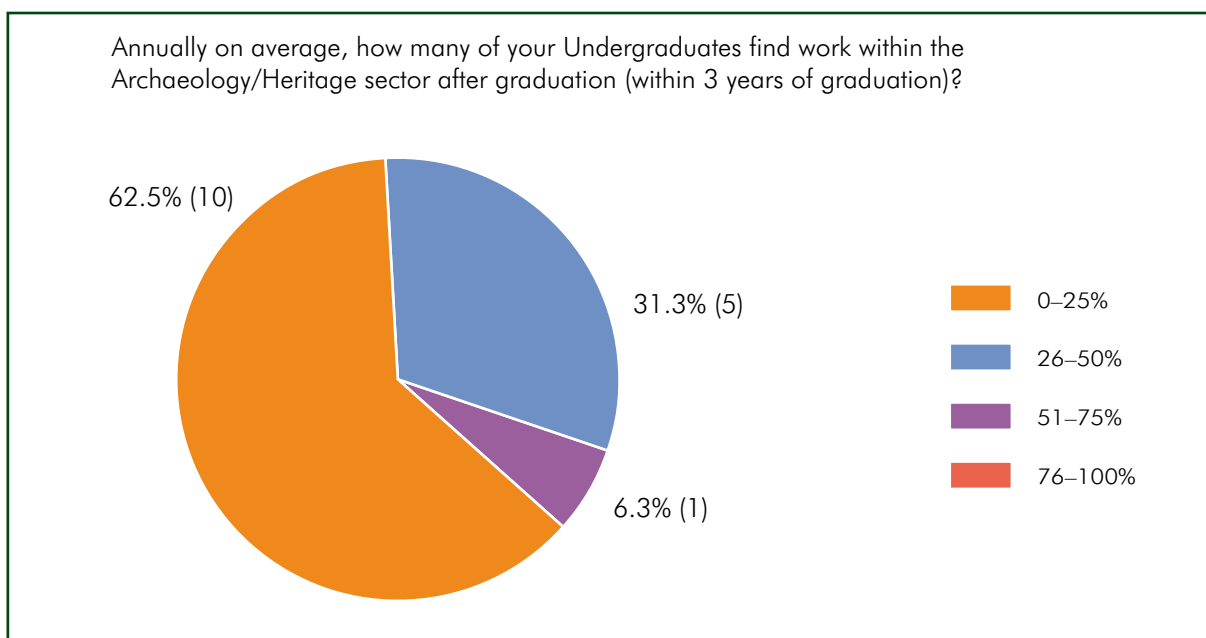


Figure 19: University HoDs' responses

University Departments clearly expect that most Archaeology graduates will not work in their own Sector, despite their aspirations (figs 18, 19). Half think that between 25% and 50% of their students intend to stay in the sector, and 62% expect that only a maximum of 25% will manage to do so.

All participants were asked about transferable skills and their potential significance for progression to employment. Most A level students identified 'Attention to detail' and 'Ability to adapt skills and knowledge base' as the top transferable skills gained from study of the A Level (fig 20).

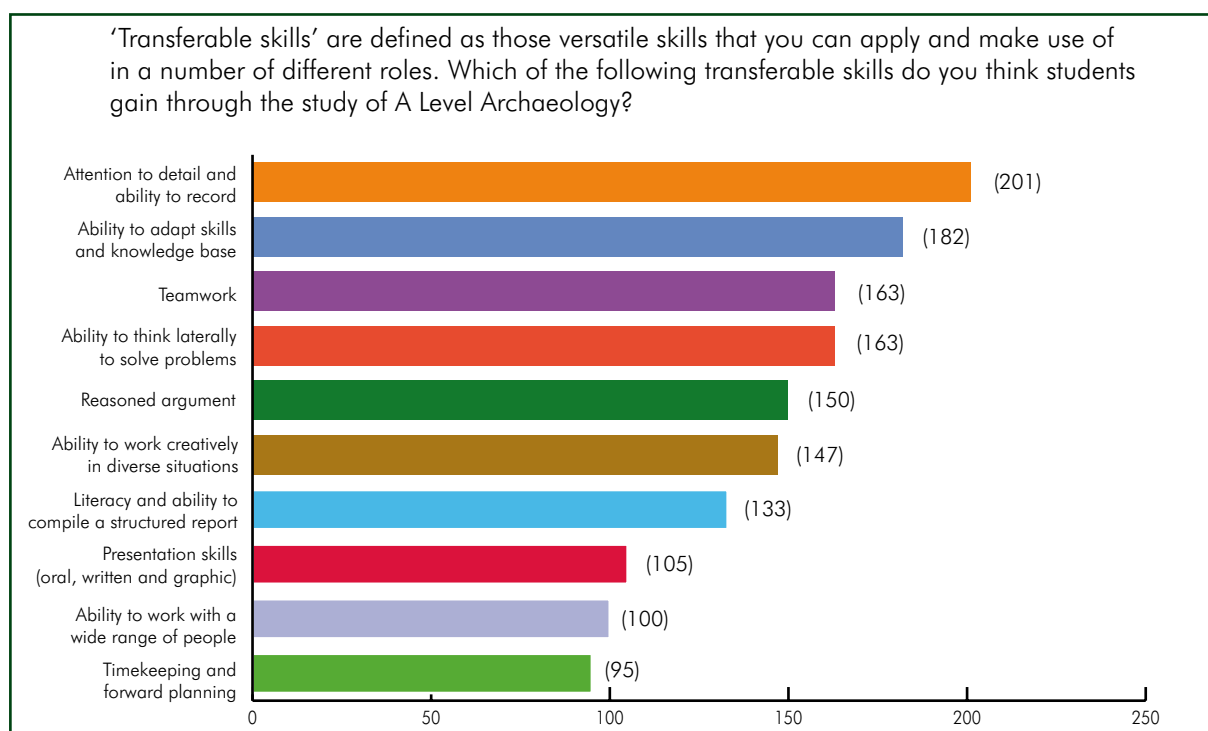


Figure 20: A Level students' responses

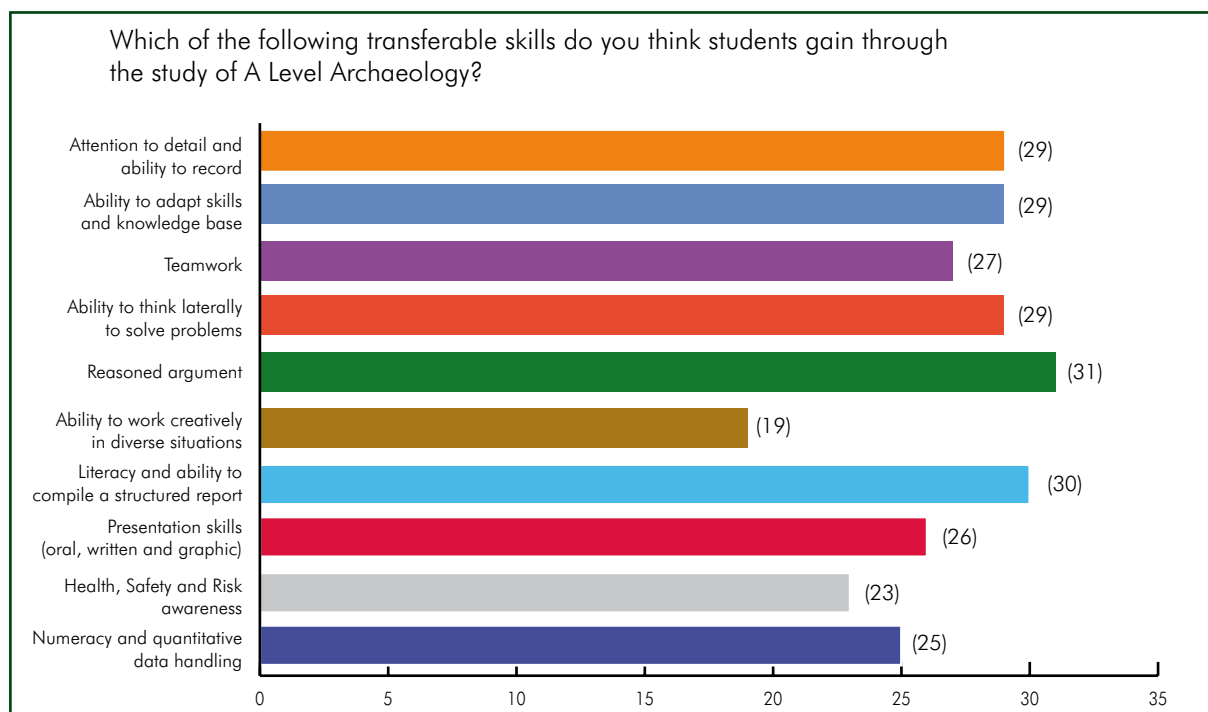


Figure 21: A Level Centres' responses

A Level Centres, on the other hand, rate 'Reasoned argument' and 'Literacy and ability to compile a structured report' as the top skills. Overall however, the two sets of responses have eight out of ten skills in common.

University Students (fig 22) and Heads of Department (fig 23) show remarkably similar views of the primary transferable skills gained through degree level Archaeology, with seven common choices in the top ten.

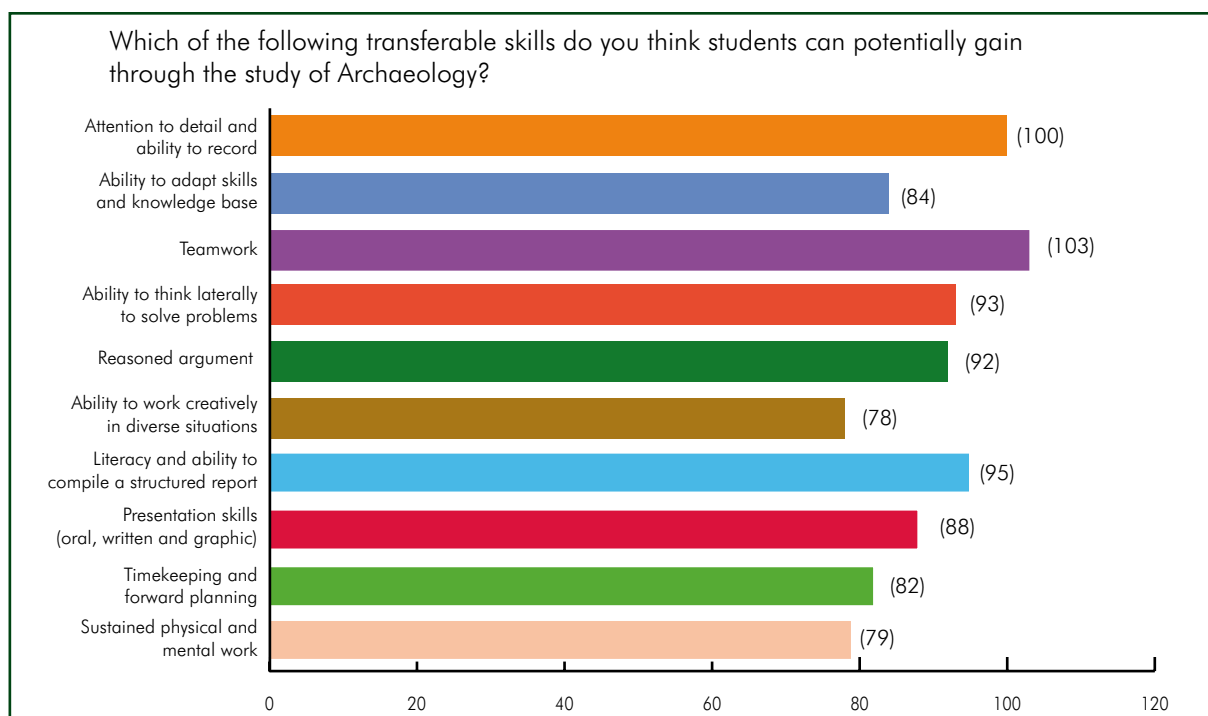


Figure 22: University students' responses

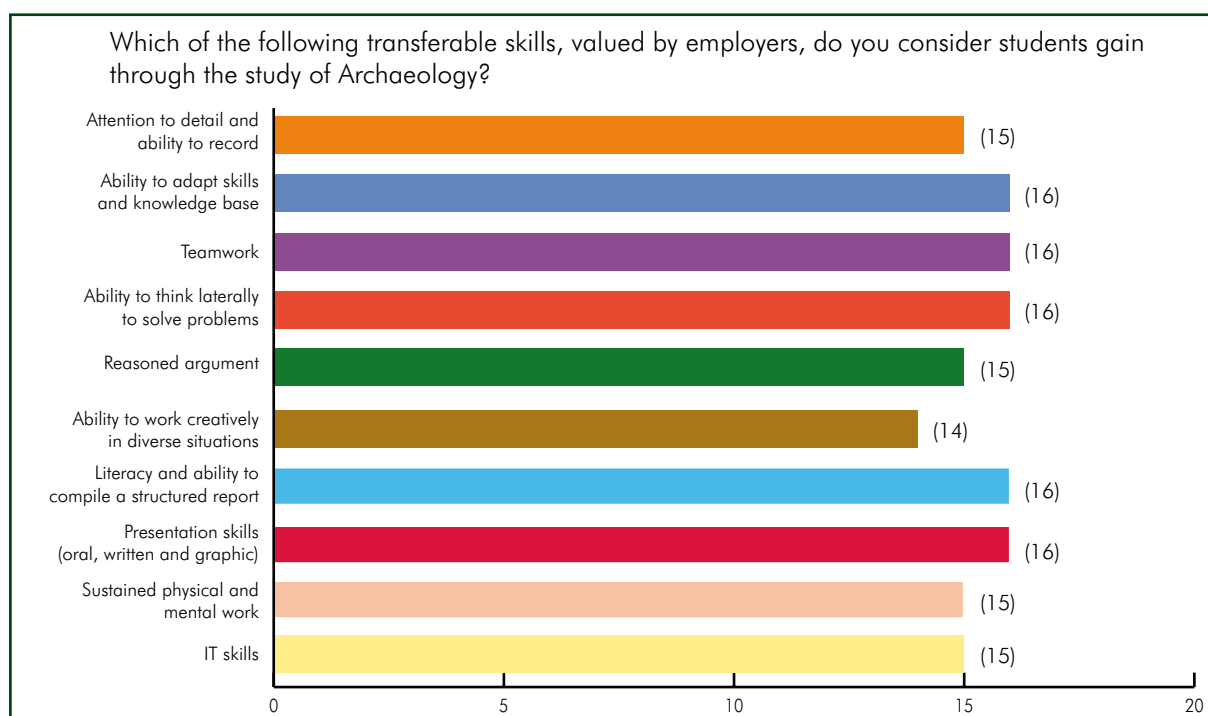


Figure 23: University HoDs' responses

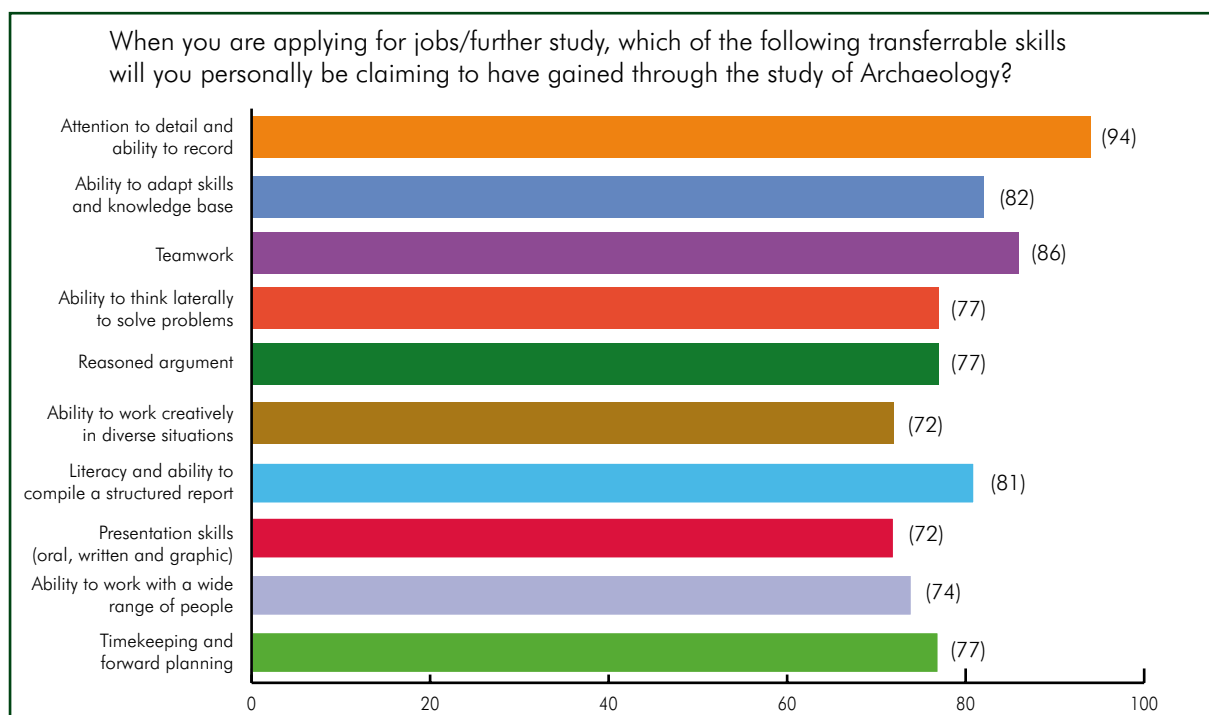


Figure 24: University students' responses

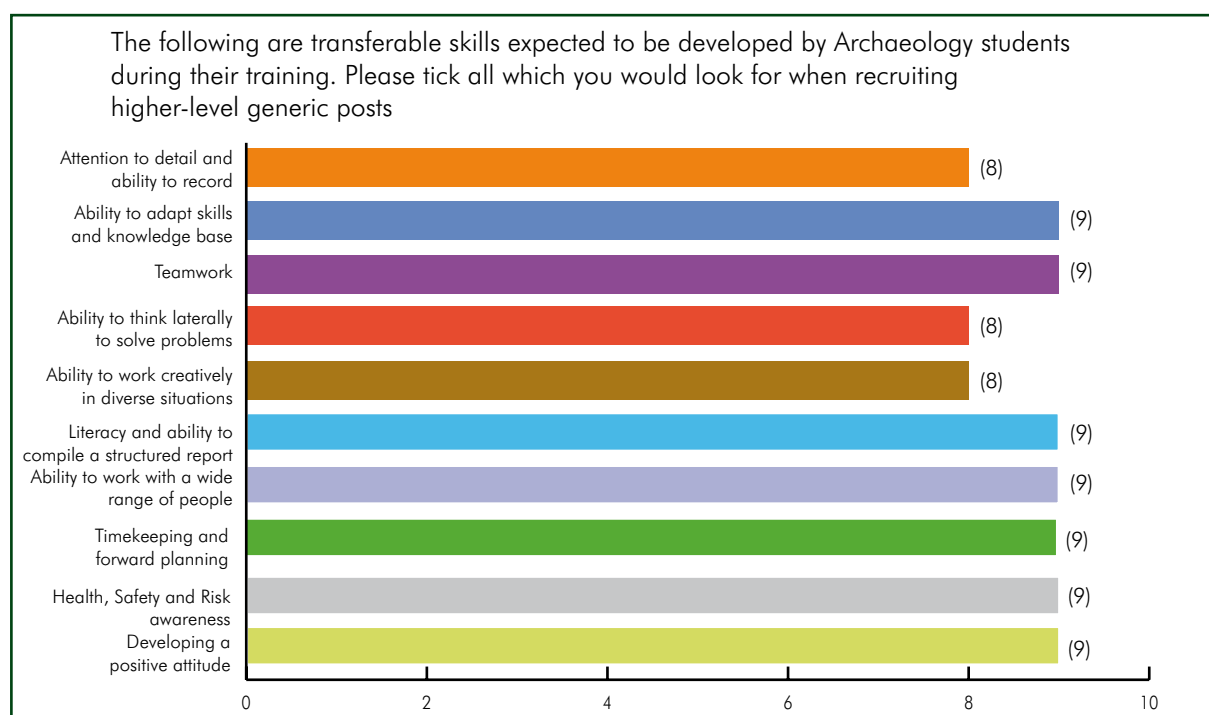


Figure 25: Employers' responses

University students were also asked to identify which of the same list of transferable skills they would personally claim to have gained (fig 24) and they chose nine of the ten skills which they had objectively selected. Employers asked to rate their top ten desirable transferable skills (fig 25) chose skills also identified by University students and HoDs as critical. Interestingly, only Employers rated 'Health, Safety and Risk Awareness' as a key skill.

The transferable skills gained through the study of Archaeology were rated by University students as being potentially of value in a wide range of Sector areas (fig 26) and a cross-section of these Sectors was then targeted for the Employer survey (fig 27) as a check on the students' perceptions.

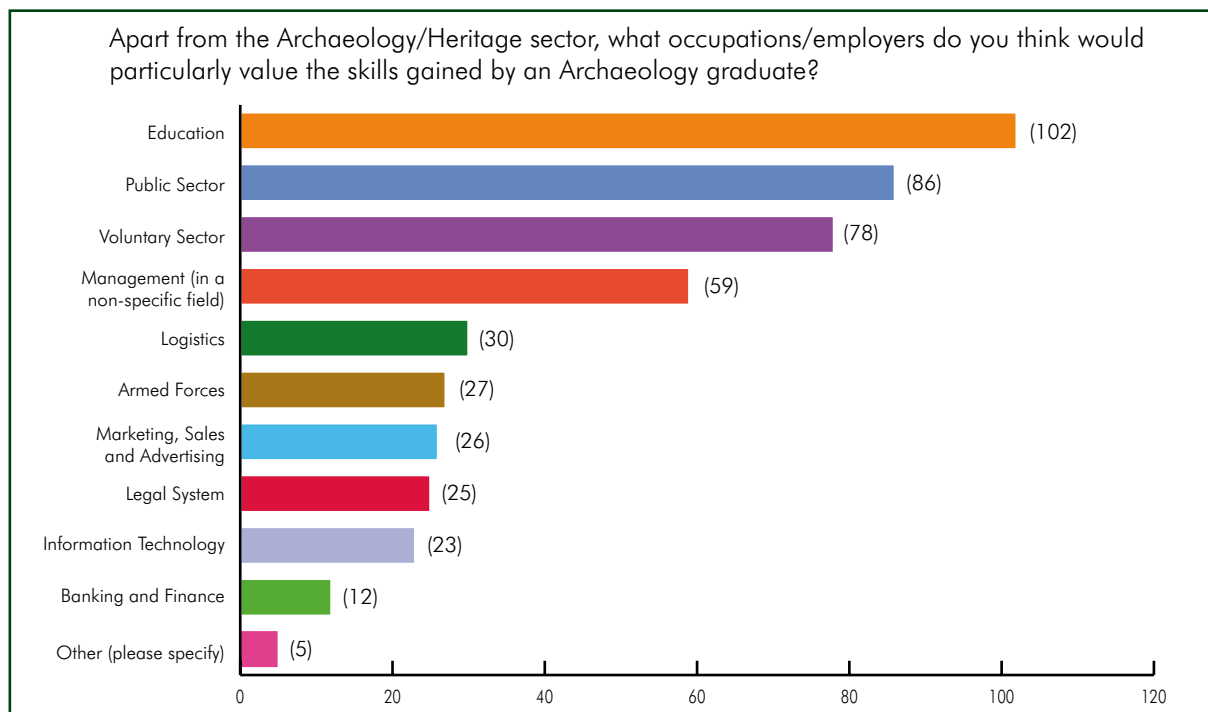


Figure 26: University Students' responses

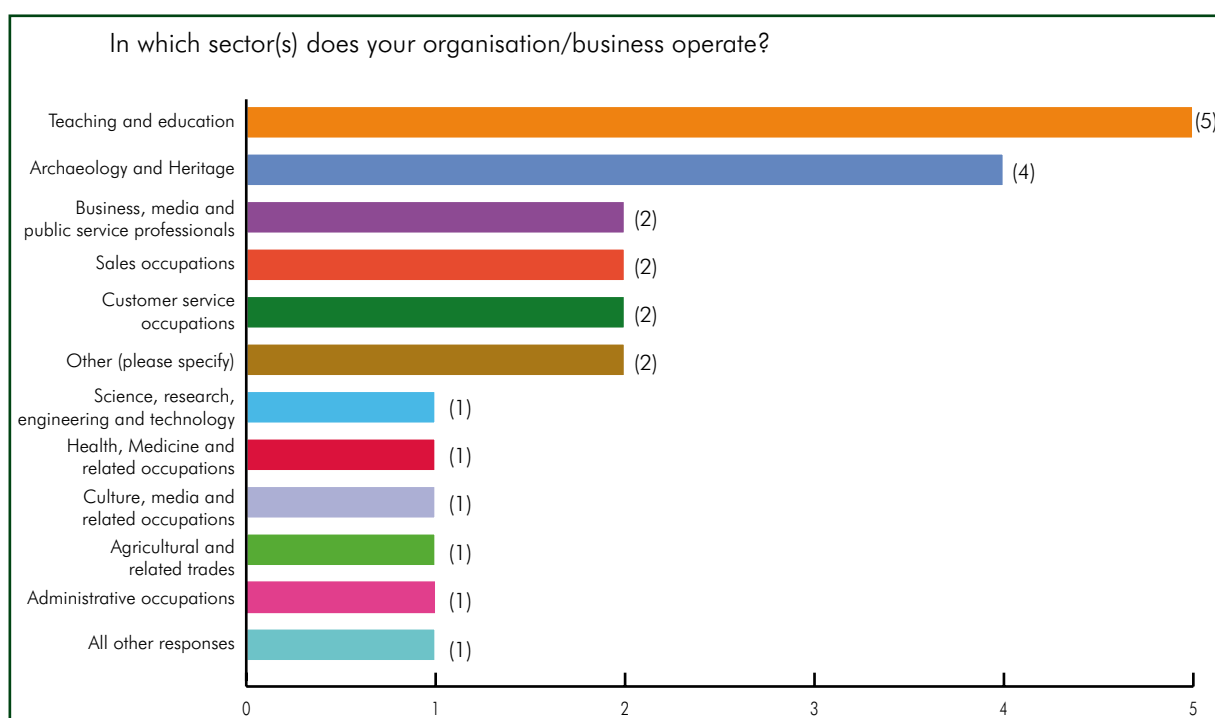


Figure 27: Employers' responses

The sectors in the 'Other responses' category from Students were Geography, Drama and Tourism and from Employers was 'Commercial Print'.

## 5. Analysis

Detailed consideration of the results charted in Section 4 will be supported by extracted comments from participants who were asked to expand further on their views on specific topics. These comments will be shown as direct quotes *in italics*.

### 5.1 Archaeology A Level

The A Level Archaeology specification offered by AQA is the only academic qualification below degree level currently available to young people and adults who are not working in the profession. The GCSE, also offered by AQA, was withdrawn in 2005 when the A Level became the entry qualification to the subject. There is an NVQ in Archaeological Practice provided by EDI at Level 3, Level 4 (currently under review), and Level 5, which is open to those working in the sector (paid or voluntary) and which is assessed mainly in the workplace. This is outside the scope of the present report.

All survey participants were asked to comment on the structure and composition of the A Level Archaeology qualification, evaluating each part of the qualification in terms of difficulty of access to the topic or to resources required. It must be noted that 38% of A Level respondents were AS students in their first term of study and so, while their views on other aspects of the survey are valid, they are unable to evaluate effectively the value of the component parts of the overall A Level syllabus. In retrospect, the survey design should have filtered these out for this topic and limited responses to A2 candidates. The most meaningful results would have been obtained if the surveys had been completed in the 3rd term of the academic year when students would have experienced the whole syllabus but this was not possible within the time constraints given.

#### 5.1.1 **ARCH 1: The Archaeology of Religion and Ritual** does not arouse much comment from participants and appears to be viewed as generally fit for purpose.

A Level students find it most enjoyable/easiest (although note above that AS students had ONLY done this module at time of survey) and Centres have few delivery issues: *They [students] like and respond well to prehistoric ritual and religion, they like learning specific case studies.*

- One student begged to differ, rather eloquently:

*Have ARCH 1 begin with a short introduction to different periods of history associated with them. This would show student how broad a scope archaeology encompasses and what future study options are available to them should they choose to study. ARCH 1 shoehorns students into a particular period at the moment; this can dampen student's interests in archaeology from the offset if they are not interested in the period. Therefore, I believe an introductory module to show students the wonders of the past conveyed through archaeology for many periods would be useful before starting ARCH 1 proper. This shows students that in future, especially university, there will be a chance to study something they will definitely be interested in, even if the topic of ARCH 1 does not suit their interests.*

Some concerns from Centres include: *This is the paper on which students tend to get the lowest marks. It covers a very long timescale, which makes questions very vague and open rather than precise, particularly in Section C of the paper,* but overall most participants seem content with content and resources available to them to deliver this module.

#### 5.1.2 **ARCH 2: Archaeological Skills and Methods** is the module *least* favoured by both A Level students and their tutors. Some 70% of tutors identify this as the most challenging for their students and 38% of their students agree. Only 21% of students enjoyed this module

most. Students did not follow their response with detailed feedback on this aspect of the survey but tutors expressed clearly why they felt their students struggled with ARCH 2.

- Many of the comments concerned the scientific element of the unit, particularly in accessibility of understanding for 'humanities' students (for example, dating techniques require some understanding of physical and chemical concepts), and also because experiential learning in these topics is rarely available in colleges/schools: *Students have very limited practical opportunities – this makes it difficult for them to appreciate and apply archaeological methods to an unseen source, eg surveying techniques.*

- Tutors also pointed out problems with the learning and assessment requirements for this module: *Cognitive demands in ARCH 2 are very different to ARCH 1. Much more content and sophisticated /scientific understanding required for ARCH 2 which impacts on weaker students particularly. They tend to struggle with the method of assessment too (application of knowledge to a case study plus the longer essay in section B).*

and: *students always comment on too little time / too much to do in the exam. They ask why it cannot be presented via 'pre-release' style questioning, so that they have opportunity to examine the source material (one lad compared Archaeology Paper 2 to an equivalent in Geography, where he does receive course material via pre-release) ... or at least if the name of the site might be provided, to allow the 'best' students to prepare in advance of the exam. They tend to find the essay 'one step too far' after the source questions, too ... they've simply had enough of a difficult paper by then ... yet it's worth 30 marks!!!! The comparison with the ARCH 1 paper is immense ... there two thirds of the paper is pre-prepared (Section A and B) ...and if a student knows his 'terms' and 'prescribed sites' he's onto a C / B grade straightaway.*

- This is a common (and passionately expressed) theme among tutor responses, the broad range of subject material and the unseen nature of the paper being given as major contributors to poor success rates for this module: *as [candidates] are given a site that they may not have any knowledge of and are asked to apply their knowledge of techniques to them. The issue is that some of the pictures even I can see are open to interpretation and the mark schemes do not always link to what a 16 year old would think of. Also some of the wording used can throw students, especially as we tend to get the less academic students!*

and: *Even the best students can get caught out if they simply fail to apply their knowledge to an 'unknown' site. Pre-release of material [would help], so that at least the source photos can be seen in advance OR the name of the site under discussion revealed. I did my university course a long time ago, but I recall doing source translation in Year 1 of the degree, NOT as a 17 year old! I think we're asking too much of their ability. Too much to do on the paper, too ... there's no time for thought. Exam either needs to be longer or number of questions lessened ...*

and: *ARCH 2 requires students to apply skills to unknown source material. They find this very hard – national pass rates for this paper were incredibly low this year – suggesting it's too hard.*

and also: *A2 resits for this module are usually very successful, as students further their understanding of ARCH 2 during the work completed for the A2.*

- For tutors, 44% find this the most challenging module to deliver successfully and expressed clearly their issues. Again the science elements featured as some tutors have no scientific experience, or do not have access to specialist facilities in which to demonstrate them. As one tutor put it: *I am teaching from a book, pictures, videos and diagrams which works to some extent, but there is very little opportunity to get out and put it into practice.*

Another said: *ARCH 2 is necessary, but some topics require very detailed knowledge and skills, which are not taught to many Archaeology undergraduates. It can be a challenge to gather appropriate materials for ARCH 2.*

- Tutors are also concerned that the breadth of content is too great to be taught effectively within the time available: *This unit has too much material in it for teaching over 2 terms – weaker students and students with no prior knowledge of the subject do not have the time to study and practice.*
- Conversely, 44% of degree students who gained A Level Archaeology identified this module as having been of most value to them in preparation for degree level study in the subject but gave no additional comments to support their judgement. In the same vein, 62% of University Heads of Department (HoDs) identified this, along with ARCH 4 and practical experience (fieldwork, excavation, recording) as of greatest value to students progressing into Archaeology degree programmes but gave no additional comments to illustrate their responses.

**5.1.3 ARCH 3: World Archaeology** is the module *least* valued by University students and Departments as a preparation for degree level study. This may have much to do with the wide range of degree courses available which will have their own specific focus.

- This module is seen as the *least challenging* to learn by both A Level students and their tutors, although 16% of tutors express concerns about their ability to deliver it effectively, largely to do with the broad range of potential material covered and ensuing lack of clarity of delivery boundaries.
- An experienced tutor says: *The syllabus is a bit vague and this is both a strength and a weakness: it's great because there isn't a prescribed set of sites that everyone has to learn, so the material can be chosen based on students and teacher interest. However, that means that there is an awful lot of choice and a big chance that it could go wrong. I have never felt very confident in delivering ARCH 3. I am never sure if I am going into too much detail, too little detail, using the right sites and I am glad that my students do well in the first year, as that gives them a cushion in the second year. Having said that, I do like the Section B material, but again, more guidance on specific articles to read for specific topics would be great.*
- The same sentiments are clear from a tutor new to the specification: *The broad nature of this paper is challenging for a new teacher to archaeology like myself. I am not sure how much emphasis to place on theory versus case studies. It assumes a huge amount of prior knowledge on the part of the teacher and is not adequately supported by a text book.*
- Concerns are also expressed around students' ability to handle the module successfully: *ARCH 3 requires sophisticated analysis of scientific methods and crucial essay skills which are not developed by ARCH 1 or 2 short answer questions.*
- The combination leaves some tutors anxious about the relationship between the syllabus, their own teaching, and their students' success: *The lack of clarity or too much flexibility in ARCH 3 leads to not always knowing what can come up and it is difficult to get the theory level right with the site information. Last year all of my students got U grade in this paper. I have adapted my teaching this year but almost feel that I am teaching at undergraduate level and am too focused on being driven by fear of students failing that the course is not enjoyable for them.*

**5.1.4 ARCH 4: Archaeological Investigation** (project) is identified by A Level students and staff (39%) as the second most challenging module to deliver/achieve in the A Level syllabus. On the other hand, 56% of University Departments rate ARCH 4 as being of significant value as a preparation for degree level study.

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- A Level Tutors identify the difficulties as a combination of accessing suitable topics and supporting learners to work independently, with an element of dissatisfaction that it is 'harder' than other comparable A Levels. An extremely experienced practitioner expressed concerns as: *ARCH 4 – finding projects, managing students, both in terms of helping them project manage and in terms of how much help I am allowed to give – and I'm an examiner! I hate to think how hard other people must find it.*

- Other tutors clearly express the tutor burden in this module by comments ranging from: *ARCH 4 requires very careful management. I generally know which sites and questions for our local area will make for good studies, but this has required a great deal of work and research by myself. This Unit is particularly challenging for new teachers of subject.*

to: *Getting students started on an original project is enormously time-consuming – out of all proportion with other subjects. The teacher has to be prepared to spend considerable amounts of their own time on this, to a much greater extent than is the case where students can be set the same project, or those in which the project relies on secondary sources. The format is good in educational terms, but, as a teacher, you have to be a real mug to take it on.*

and to the rather sad: *I do not have time to teach A2 archaeology as I am mainly a geology teacher. ARCH 4 puts me off teaching the A2 as it would be difficult to come up with 20 different projects.*

and: *I don't spend too much class time devoted to it since they are all doing different titles and topics – and sometimes when I do one-to-ones some students don't take on board the effort that is expected from them.*

The latter comment reflects the challenge of 17 year olds not only identifying suitable and accessible projects, but having the skills to carry them out effectively.

- Tutors are in agreement that: *ARCH 4 is difficult to deliver because so many projects are needed and it can be difficult to gain access to sites/artefacts. It can also be difficult to ensure that they are keeping on top of the workload – the requirement that no written feedback can be given also causes difficulties as the coursework is a completely new way of working and a very unfamiliar format.*

- Comments noting that the difficulty varies depending on the location of the Centre are slightly contradicted by the comment that: *finding sites and coming up with questions is incredibly difficult, even in a city as rich in heritage as York. Project management skills – ie they have none. This is only going to get worse as centre-assessed components are removed from GCSEs, so students will have not had the experience of project work. This will undoubtedly benefit centres who have more than 4 and a half hours a week to deliver the subject, ie public schools, thereby disadvantaging state schools who don't have time to deliver the extra training required with the project.* In actual fact, of the 39 Centres who responded, 22 were Sixth Form Colleges, 10 were FE Colleges and 6 were state Secondary Schools. None were Independent Schools.

- Realistic consideration of students' abilities are reflected in: *a lot of it is dependent on them managing their own time and research – of which some find the organisational elements tough – however some thrive on it! – really dependent on the student ...*

and: *They have to do independent study!!! This can be difficult for some to motivate themselves.*

- Finally, tutors express their perceptions of levels of difficulty in: *ARCH 4 is much harder than history coursework and requires a huge amount of motivation from 17 year olds;*

and: *Anecdotal evidence would suggest some degree projects would not meet this*

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standard; both clear expressions of frustration from staff at the sharp end of the teaching of A Level Archaeology.

### 5.1.5 General comments on the A Level included:

- *I don't understand why the Archaeology specification insists on synopticity between units when this was dropped by most subjects in 2008.*
- *I feel that ARCH 2 and ARCH 4 need a radical redesign if A Level Archaeology is to survive. The exam for ARCH 2 is far more challenging than in other comparable subjects (eg Classics or History), where you could only be shown material with which you are familiar. I have seen talented students achieve low marks because they panicked when they saw the source booklet. I feel that ARCH 4 is unsuitable as a module for A Level in terms of the practical element. Many of my students struggle to find a topic because they live in a large urban environment. A Level History coursework does not require archive research, so I see little reason for Archaeology coursework to require practical work. I feel the coursework should be redesigned so that it could be library based (in the style of ARCH 1 or ARCH 3).*
- *More explicit syllabus. Offering a different option for ARCH 4 – not all students want to/ are able to get out into the field and do something practical. I think there is a view that all archaeologists do practical things, but an awful lot of research is synthesising other people's results. More resource availability for tutors – if you were a geography teacher with no prior knowledge of the subject and your head of department told you that you were teaching archaeology this year, you'd run a mile – the only resource that's widely available is the coursebook and that doesn't really have any teaching ideas in it. I spoke to one teacher last year who taught just the AS as a bit of stretch and challenge for her GCSE history students who took the history exam in year 10. She felt that the subject had been misrepresented to some degree as the AQA website stated that you didn't need to be an archaeologist or have any prior experience. She had done A level archaeology and she still struggled to deliver the course, largely because of a lack of resources. Until this is dealt with, tutors won't offer it and therefore students won't have the opportunity to take it. Greater liaison with HE would be good, as it would mean more opportunities to deliver things that I can't do in an experiential way – the downside is, of course, that if I had to take students out of college, then that would impact on other subjects.*
- *I would prefer an A2 specification which prescribed case studies to illustrate the course, provided they were supported by resources that were widely available, and intellectually accessible to an A level student. Current resources are either far too detailed, or give a summary of the interpretations of a site, rather than presenting evidence. For assessment, I want more structured, multi-part, resource-based questions with a clear incline of difficulty in place of wall-to-wall essays.*
- *Assessment criteria generally leave students with lower marks in archaeology over those gained studying Edexcel History. For example – to gain a pass grade in AS History students need to get more than 40% but to pass in archaeology the pass grade is greater.*
- *Make it easier to get students access to actual practical excavation. Perhaps Exam Board could establish links with Archaeological units to promote this.*

### 5.1.6 Participants were asked to suggest ways in which A Level Archaeology could be made more attractive to a greater number of students; the answers focus on the issues of syllabus content, resources and links with Universities, and on highlighting transferable skills gained.

A Level tutors commented on all of the above themes, sometimes in the same response:

*First, create another theme in ARCH 3 on Human Remains (and a chapter in our*

textbook). Young people find forensic stuff fascinating. Second, make sure that the wider Archaeology World supports it, especially as regards ARCH 2 and ARCH 3. It would be great, for example, to have access to the more scientific side of things here in Cambridge. Third, de-couple it from HE and the professional world of Archaeology. Many people do it because they want to go on and study it further but to recruit larger numbers we must get away from the idea that it is simply something prospective archaeologists do. Fourth, re-position it better both in terms of marketing and in real terms as regards other A level subjects. It needs to be thought of as the bit that History leaves out. It needs to be thought of (and to be in reality) no more difficult than other academic subjects, just different.

Comments concerning syllabus content mirrored those given in consideration of the specific units of the syllabus above.

Resource requests are heartfelt: *Better support for teachers! All we seem to have is one textbook and personal interest. Can you supply resources to help?*

Most responses focused on the public perception of Archaeology and the way it is (or is not) marketed to students and parents as an academic subject:

- *I would suggest it may be tough to move Archaeology out of the zone of a 'niche' subject ... personal interest seems to play the biggest role and this is generated by TV and news stories and big finds in many cases (from speaking to students).*
- *Greater promotion of the subject as a whole and the way that it complements a range of both Humanities and Science courses.*
- *I think the course works well – many students like it more than they thought they would, and consequently it does become the favourite subject of many, even if it did not start that way. Therefore, I think a wider marketing push highlighting the diversity and rigour of the subject would help to entice those students who may not even consider the subject because they perceive it as 'just digging'. Highlighting the chronological range of the subject and the range of topics covered in AS ie no other subject allows them to study Egypt & prehistory.*
- *We need to start changing perceptions, I have started at my school since being made HOS a few years ago, but it is very difficult to get across that it is an academic subject. They also cannot see that it is not a limited discipline ie that it provides you with skills that can link to other subjects. No matter how much you say! The difficulty here is that the majority of archaeology on TV is just digging and so this is where they get their knowledge from. In addition, those who are helping students decide on their choices are not aware of what the subject can offer. A greater range of education is needed not just for students but for sixth form leaders too and parents.*
- *I also think there is a lack of understanding in the 11–16 sector about what Archaeology is about. I have students attending taster sessions thinking we look at dinosaurs! Time Team is great but doesn't appeal to this age group. Some parents are also misled by the Russell Group 'Facilitating Subjects' list. Having taught History for many years I think the demands of archaeology are far greater and if there is any chance to review the specification for A level, standards should be more in-line with similar subjects.*
- *You cannot force a 16 year old to be interested in something they are not. Amongst those doing the subject it tends to be very popular – their favourite subject. So the key has to be promoting interest pre-16. I don't think current content or assessment method is a deterrent. ARCH 1 grabs attention straight away.*
- *I think the answer probably lies in going into schools and introducing students to archaeology at an earlier stage in their education. Time Team raises the profile of the*

subject, but tends to portray it in a slightly silly manner. This can reflect in the students the course attracts. Archaeology students are generally less academic than History students, which I also teach at A Level.

Many tutors referred to the potential role of HE in developing enhanced status for the A Level:

- More liaison with HE would be useful, in order to increase the prestige of the subject. Many HE institutions do not require A Level Archaeology and teach very similar content in their 1st year Undergraduate courses – this has led some parents to ask ‘What’s the point in my son/daughter doing the A Level?’ – perhaps this could be addressed, with greater advantage attached to having the A Level.
- Greater liaison with HE would be great – it would help deliver the practical aspects of ARCH 2 for example.
- I think more soundbites from Universities etc, that we can use to prove that Archaeology is a respected A level that provides many skills needed for university. Especially with the project – since although the teachers (as ex-Uni students) recognise the skills it would be helpful if we had qualification from HE to back us up and use in our marketing of the subject.
- Get universities more involved with local centres, guest lectures, podcasts aimed at revising A level topics, days at the university department. Links to specialists in ARCH 1 topics such as prehistory or Roman or Egyptian.
- More HE in school days and lectures would be great, we have a conference day and that would be great to have representatives there ... but every time we email unis we never seem to get a response! In short perceptions need to change, much more publicity is needed!

Comment was also made about the relationship between study and future job prospects:

- I think that part of the decline is a reflection of the current economic climate, students are training in subjects they feel will give them employment.
- The way in which the variety of skills aids employability is another key factor. The flexibility and independent thought is almost unique in A levels so a wider awareness of the benefits of A level Archaeology from institutions as well as students would be very useful.

A Level students were also asked to suggest ways in which Archaeology A Level could be made more attractive to potential students and their answers (sometime passionately) were largely focused on more practical experience, more trips to museums and sites and less ‘note-taking’. ‘**LETS GO DIGGING!**’ said one student!

Some thoughtful responses focused on the broader issues, such as employment prospects and early marketing:

- The skills acquired from the course should be stressed more because people don’t seem to realise they exist.
- A better explanation of what studying Archaeology can offer a student’s future and how it will prove an advantage to them when applying for jobs. Students are increasingly aware of the competition for jobs and as a consequence consider Archaeology to be the least important/beneficial, over other subjects such as Maths, English, Science or History. Unless the student has a prior interest they are unlikely to choose this subject as their first choice. Therefore you should improve the advertisement of the subject by educating students on the jobs available and how Archaeology will prove an advantage when following other lines of careers.

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- *If possible introduce Archaeology (instead of glimpses during History) into primary/secondary schools giving students an opportunity to make an educated decision to study Archaeology at A level. The essence of most other subjects is understood before deciding further study making the progression into subjects like Geography an 'obvious' path. Workshops in schools could be an effective way of inspiring future students of Archaeology.*

- *Introduction to archaeology at a younger age so an initial understanding of the subject is already there. For example for the majority of other subjects that people take at A level they have already taken it at GCSE, consequently they feel more confident/safer taking these subjects as they are aware of what it involves. Information on the skills that it can give you in the future made more prominent – say how it is accepted by universities as a very reputable subject.*

- *Greater engagement with 16 to 19 age group (limitations of YAC [Young Archaeologists' Club] membership ending at 17, need an alternative).*

Several suggested the introduction of an Archaeology GCSE/NVQ in secondary schools, obviously aware that this was removed some years ago due to lack of demand and changes in History education strategy.

Similar themes were again put forward by University students, focused on practical activities and experiential learning, links between Universities and A Level Centres, and more emphasis on transferable skills required in marketing the subject.

University Heads of Department were asked a slightly different question, about how the A Level could be made more relevant to progression to degree level.

- *Scottish HoDs were positive about the syllabus: Greater awareness of the availability of this module [not specified] would ensure more students take this module. On face value at least the modules seem appropriate for progression to our degree courses, for students in England at least. An equivalent course at Higher or Advanced Higher would be of interest within a Scottish context.*

- *Some HoDs were very positive about the A Level: Students who come to us with this A level seem generally to have a sound and rounded awareness of the subject which is a good preparation, certainly for first year and indeed subsequent years. I would recommend it.*

- *And some were not: We assume no previous knowledge among our students. Too much prior knowledge will require us to 'undo' some previously acquired understanding in order for them to progress.*

- *Some HoDs would like to see Historical Archaeology on the syllabus, and some wondered why Religion and Ritual was picked out as a specific theme rather than other topics of equal validity.*

- *Some identified missed opportunities for HE to work with A Level Centres: Closer links to the way in which archaeology is taught in HE and to involvement of HE staff/research projects as resources for teaching/supporting A level archaeology.*

**5.1.7 Reasons why students did not take A Level Archaeology** were examined among A Level students, Centres and University students. There was remarkable correlation in reasons given by A Level students and Centres who identified the main reasons as 'subject does not interest them' (students 63%, Centres 63%), 'lack of understanding of what Archaeology is and the skills it develops' (students 54%, Centres 63%), 'not seen as worthwhile by students or parents unless studied at degree level' (students 33%, Centres 34%) and 'not seen as a 'proper' subject by parents and students' (students 27%, Centres 29%). University students who did not take the subject at A Level reported overwhelmingly (85%) that it was not offered

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at their school/college. Further investigation revealed that approximately 15% of University respondents were Scottish or foreign students who did not have access to A Levels in their curriculum offer. Only 1% said parental pressure caused them not to take the A Level when it was on offer to them.

**5.1.8 Reasons why Centres offer Archaeology A Level** are primarily 'teacher interest' (31%) and 'student demand' (25%) with 19% indicating the subject is historically offered at the Centre. Planning for each intake is overwhelmingly linked to student demand (90%) with only 10% of Centres limiting numbers to fit funding, curriculum balance and staff resource.

**5.1.9 Archaeology A Level tutors** are largely graduates in Archaeology or a related discipline, although some claim a personal interest as the reason they are teaching the subject. Some 43% of tutors are involved in Archaeology beyond the classroom, although none is an Archaeology or Heritage professional. Some are active with local societies (53%), volunteer on digs or in museums (53%), or are involved with Community Archaeology (41%), while 24% are studying Archaeology courses themselves (presumably at degree level). Only 41% are members of CBA but around 80% buy Archaeology magazines, watch TV programmes and visit museums and sites. Two respondents have a role with AQA as Examiners for the Archaeology A Level specification!

**5.1.10 Centres no longer delivering the A Level** were asked for the reasoning behind the decision and three responses stand out:

*We have found the successful delivery of A Level Archaeology extremely difficult given the lack of specific resources and a lack of guidance from AQA on the specific content to be covered and clarity on how this will be examined. Year 13 students in particular were too often finding themselves 'shooting in the dark' when it came to the ARCH 3 paper. Having received several student papers back it was clear that in spite of delivering the course for seven years, staff were no clearer as to what was actually needed for good levels of response. There were also major reductions to controlled assessment marks which we felt were unjustified in relation to previous cohort entries. These two factors combined meant that the efforts of delivery and the efforts of students only to see disappointing grades were seen as unwarranted. We were not confident that support was available to make up the gaps between student targets and students' actual performance in the subject. It also seems to be increasingly clear that the specification was directed towards more mature students.*

*Our College Management Team decided to withdraw Archaeology A level from the curriculum as part of a series of cuts and redundancies. We admitted our last AS cohort in September 2011 and our last A2 cohort in September 2012. Archaeology was targeted because results at AS were lower than in other AS subjects and so there was a low continuation rate to A2, although A2 candidates got excellent results, including a high proportion of A\* grades.*

*The reason why Archaeology has just been dropped as an A level subject by our College is that the AS exam is harder than the comparable exams for other AS subjects, probably because of the high level of applied knowledge required. The AS papers can also be very technical for students who are not taking a Science subject at A level. I have wondered in the past whether this was because many of the candidates for AS Archaeology are actually mature students, who are able to cope with this type of question better than 17 year olds. I think that the AS syllabus in particular perhaps needs to be made more accessible to this age group. The A2 syllabus doesn't seem to be such a problem. In 2000–01 I taught both the old and new AS syllabuses concurrently – the pre-2000 syllabus was actually much more accessible to 17 year olds without previous archaeological knowledge. Students enjoyed the extended essays and students studying A level History were particularly*

*interested in how Archaeology had been used and abused by various past regimes such as Mussolini's Italy.*

Finally, there is the poignant but probably not unique: *I am taking early retirement and the college have decided to save money by not replacing me.*

## 5.2 Progression from A Level to degree

Some 74% of A Level Centres saw a clear correlation between students choosing A Level Archaeology and their proposed HE or career path but some comments make it clear that there are other reasons why it might be chosen. These ranged from the comprehensive response of: *Some students do archaeology because they want to pursue a heritage type career and some don't, students are all individuals and they all have their own reasons for doing the subject. I had a student going for veterinary science that did archaeology because he was interested. Our students have to do 4 subjects at AS, so some of them just carry on with their 4 AS into A2, because it's easier than picking up a new subject. So students do archaeology for lots of reasons that may or may not be related to their career goal.*

to the prosaic: *It counts as an essay writing subject to help balance their A level courses against subjects like Maths or Science.*

or: *it is the 'fourth of four' subjects, and simply fits onto their timetable where other subjects won't.*

Several tutors pointed out that a number of students started the A Level with no intention of pursuing it further, but decided during the course to apply for related HE degrees. The downright cynical response of: *A significant number have delusions about a career in archaeology, especially Egyptology,* is thankfully in the minority!

A Level students were questioned as to their intentions to study Archaeology at University and 45% said 'possibly', 34% said 'definitely not' and only 21% said 'definitely'. However, 39% of A level students stated that their experience of AS/A Level convinced them to retain an interest in Archaeology but not to study the subject formally any further, while only 25% were convinced to study it further. Consider these results in the context of why students chose to enter Archaeology education at A Level in the first place, where only 28% said the decision had been relevant to future career plans while 87% identified a personal interest as the deciding factor.

A Level Centres were not asked specifically what percentage of their students progressed to HE Archaeology but estimates given unsolicited in the comments returned seem to range between 20% and 50% and support the explanations given above that students will take the A Level for other reasons.

A Level students and University students were asked to consider what would discourage students progressing from A Level to degree level Archaeology and the results were remarkably consistent, with 77% of A Level students and 78% of University students identifying lack of confidence in finding a job in Archaeology post-degree as the main factor.

Similarly, 47% (A Level) and 56% (University) of students felt a degree in Archaeology would not be seen as a valid qualification for a job in a different sector. Tuition fees were quoted as a factor by 33% and 56% respectively.

Of the University students who took the A Level, 78% felt they were better prepared for degree level Archaeology as it had given them an understanding of the principles of the subject and some subject knowledge. However, the two students who chose to comment on this question were not of this opinion: *In some courses it may have been useful, but my*

*basic knowledge did not assist me in many modules. There were modules available that basically recapped the A level for those that hadn't done it. My writing and presentation skills from A level were the most useful to me.*

*and: No, only because the A level course gave me no experience in fieldwork and was predominantly theory-based. My only experience in field archaeology was attained by searching independently for work experience.*

Eighty-one percent of University HoDs were aware that some of their students had previously studied Archaeology at A Level and saw benefit in the students' confidence, knowledge and understanding of Archaeology.

### **5.3 Relationships between A Level Centres and University Departments**

Both A Level Centres and Universities were asked to comment on current relationships with the other sector and the results show interesting discrepancies. When asked to rate the relationship with the other sector over the past five years, 42% of A Level Centres said 'none', 42% said 'a limited relationship' and only 16% said 'a strong relationship'. Conversely, 94% of Universities felt they had a 'limited relationship' with the FE sector and none felt it had 'a strong relationship'. In both surveys, a 'limited relationship' was defined as involving subject liaison through Open Days, guest lectures, etc, and a 'strong relationship' involved practical support such as fieldwork engagement, access to specialist facilities and specialist staff.

A Level Centres report a wide range of valued activity with one or more HEIs:

- *We have a good relationship with both Oxford East Archaeology, CAGG, the HER and the university. Without their help in giving us fieldwork opportunities and providing guest lectures, it would be very difficult to run the subject.*
- *We have visited Bradford University in each of the last three years to take part in Archaeological Skills days (organised by Dr Cathy Batt). The University of Liverpool judged the college's Archaeology and Ancient History essay competition prize last year and provided feedback on essays written by students.*
- *Liverpool University invites our staff and students to take part in training digs, and we have done so for several years.*
- *Bradford University – I take my students on 2 or 3 compact events a year. York University – two coursework projects over the last two years with access to archaeological material and training from staff – I exploited my position as an alumnus – they know me and I know who to contact in the department which is often half the battle.*
- *Previously only open days but now we have links to York Uni to go and work with them on their skeletal analysis.*
- *Manchester Uni – digs, open days etc. Bradford Uni – visits to dept, however, most are once a year, twice at most – not a working partnership.*
- *It's a bit of both here as we do some limited day trips, courses, etc ... and I have had students do field schools with institutions such as Reading University. The day trips have mostly been to Cambridge University for 'discovery days' and similar.*
- *I have a friend who teaches at Cardiff Uni who takes our students on trips.*
- *Annual visit to a local excavation jointly run by a local society & the university.*

Some Centres have support from other sources but would welcome a relationship with the HE sector: *Our links lie with community projects funded by HLF such as excavation and*

experimental projects run locally – developing links with HE institutions would be of enormous value.

Strode College expressed frustration at the disadvantages created by its hybrid position as an FE Institution offering HE in Archaeology: *We run a Foundation Degree in History, Heritage and Archaeology at Strode College (University of Plymouth). However lecturers are not expected to be research active so we are not 'specialists' in the same way as other HE institutions and do not have a budget for fieldwork or practical activities.*

It is frustrating that some of the Universities mentioned positively above could not be persuaded to participate in the survey but some of those who did respond show a range of good practice which mirrored the A Level Centres' experience and several express good intentions to develop strong relationships and target potential partners which are encouraging.

- *Visiting lectures / introductory sessions to schools. 'Taster' sessions to schools at the University.*
- *We provide introductory Archaeology classes at a small number of local secondary schools and we offer a Kickstart programme where school pupils come to the University and are given classes in a range of disciplines including archaeology.*
- *Two staff are governors, several staff do regular guest lectures, several open days, and also take older school students on our summer field school.*
- *Guest lectures in schools by Cambridge staff; open days; Science on Saturday.*
- *We've run half day and full day workshops for local schools and supplied guest lectures. There has, however, been only limited targeting of schools/colleges teaching archaeology A level – rather more to the Manchester College providing modules in archaeology as part of access courses.*
- *On the cusp of trying to set something up with Exeter College that is just starting A level Archaeology.*
- *We have had a number of relationships over the years with colleges, but these have varied in their depth and level of contact. It is something we see we need to strengthen.*
- *Not at present but starting next year when the local 6th form college starts A Level Archaeology.*
- *We are currently working with local schools to provide linkages – this has to date taken the form of guest lectures, some project work (including a shared Nuffield student scholarship with ICIT, Heriot Watt University) and school visits to excavations in progress. We are also working with colleagues elsewhere in the University of the Highlands and Islands to develop a Humanities modular package for 5th and 6th year pupils in the Highlands region, as an alternative to Advanced Higher. It is anticipated that as part of the process some school students will opt to take one of our first year modules.*
- *Contact with Cirencester college, students involved in some field projects; plus we are increasing general outreach to schools.*
- *We have connections with Blackpool 6th and invite them to UCLan once a year. We have taken some students on excavation as well.*

A Level Centres identified clearly the resources they would most appreciate from Universities, with 78% requesting opportunities for involvement in fieldwork, 73% wishing for artefactual/environmental materials for study, 62% seeking access to specialist staff and expertise, and 54% asking to access draughting and surveying equipment. The links back to the comments from Centres about their difficulties in teaching ARCH 2 and ARCH 4 with their current

limited resources are very clear here.

University responses roughly mirrored the 'wish lists' of the Centres, with 88% offering involvement in fieldwork, 50% offering access to specialist staff and expertise, 44% offering artefactual/ environmental materials for study, and 25% offering access to draughting and surveying equipment. A total of 88% of University respondents offered more Open Days, which were clearly not what Centres were looking for in order to better develop the teaching and learning of Archaeology A Level.

## **5.4 Progression to employment**

### **5.4.1 Progressing to the Archaeology/Heritage Sector**

Universities were asked to estimate both the proportion of their students who *intended* to work in the Archaeology/Heritage sector after University and the proportion who *did* find work in the sector.

University Departments clearly expect that most Archaeology graduates will not work in their own Sector, despite their aspirations. Half think that between 25% and 50% of their students intend to stay in the sector, and 62% expect that only a maximum of 25% will manage to do so.

University students were asked if they intended to seek a career in Archaeology/Heritage after University and, of the 125 who responded, 46% said 'definitely' and 48% said 'possibly'. Only 6% had no intention of definitely remaining in the sector after graduation.

### **5.4.2 Progressing to employment outside the Archaeology/Heritage Sector**

Transferable skills are of key importance to many employers seeking to recruit workers to roles where any specialist skills required can be taught on the job.

#### **5.4.2.1 The education perspective**

A Level Centres and universities were asked if their students were aware of the value of studying Archaeology as a route to a career in another subject area due to the transferable skills inherent in the study of Archaeology. While 100% of University HoDs were confident that their students were aware of this, because the University ensured that students understood that Archaeology offered skills which are valued in a range of non-Archaeology/Heritage careers, only 81% of A Level Centres agreed, suggesting that a minority do not ensure students are aware of it.

All participants were asked to identify the most important skills gained through the study of Archaeology in the context of employability. A Level Centres and students agreed on eight of the ten 'top' choices of the transferable skills relevant to employment gained through A Level with 'Attention to detail' and 'Ability to adapt skills and knowledge base' the most popular with students and 'Reasoned argument' and 'Literacy and ability to compile a structured report' selected by most Centres.

Moving up an academic level, University HoDs and students show remarkable similarities in their views of which skills, attractive to employers, are gained through degree level study in Archaeology; both identified 'Teamwork' as the most significant. For comparison, 'Teamwork' was 3rd in the list of the A Level students and 6th in that of A Level Centres. Overall, University HoDs and students selected seven skills in common out of their top ten choices, with 'Attention to detail', 'Literacy and ability to complete a structured report', 'Ability to think laterally' and 'Ability to adapt skills and knowledge base' as the most popular choices.

One University student respondent challenged the perception that the transferable skills

under discussion were in any way specific to Archaeology: *I don't see how any of the skills listed here are specific to the study of archaeology. They read like a list of skills you'd expect to gain from any degree. Makes it look as though there's nothing 'special' about the study of archaeology.* Unfortunately, the respondent did not offer any suggestions as to what the skills specific to Archaeology might be.

One University HoD qualified their responses by saying: *One hopes all will fully gain these skills – my answers here are realistic for the generality of our students – ie what all at least should have on graduation.*

University students were then also asked to identify which transferable skills they would claim to have personally and they overwhelmingly chose nine of the ten skills which they had first objectively selected.

Finally, University students were asked to suggest which employment sectors (apart from Archaeology/Heritage) might particularly value Archaeology graduates with the transferable skills previously identified by the students: 88% suggested Education, 74% the Public Sector, 68% the Voluntary Sector, and 51% Management in a non-specific sector. As these are sectors where non-specific graduate skills are acceptable, the suggestions seem valid.

#### **5.4.2.2 The employer perspective**

While those in education as either students or educators may have clear expectations of employment pathways and the strategies required to access them, it is employers who ultimately decide whether or not an individual meets the criteria for entry to their particular area of work. A sample of employers from a range of business areas was surveyed for their views on whether an individual with Archaeology training, either at Level 3 (A Level) or as a graduate, would potentially have the skills to be considered for employment in that area. Subject-specific areas like Medicine, Nursing, Engineering and most Sciences would not be appropriate without a further degree but a wide range of sectors could be targeted where generic skills would be valued and specific knowledge and skills would be taught on the job. It is known that Archaeology graduates enter the legal profession, the military, and MI5/MI6 but it was not possible to engage a response from any approaches made to these areas. Nonetheless, ten employers of various sizes (from 0–10 to over 250 employees) covering thirteen sector areas between them (multiple sector choices were allowed) participated in the survey.

Employers asked to rate their top ten desirable transferable skills in employees chose skills also identified by Universities and students as critical. Nine out of ten employers named 'Teamwork', 'Ability to work with a wide range of people', 'Ability to adapt skills and knowledge base to new situations', 'Health, Safety and Risk Awareness', 'Literacy and ability to compile a structured report', 'Timekeeping and forward planning', and 'Developing a positive attitude' as their equal top choices. Interestingly, only Employers rated 'Health, Safety and Risk Awareness' in their top ten skills.

Of the sample of ten employers, 60% sometimes recruited Level 3 employees and 71% of these employers felt the A Level syllabus (shared with them) appeared to offer appropriate underpinning knowledge and understanding relevant to potential Level 3 generic posts in their work sector. Comments included: *Independent research and planning skills and project work would be appropriate...; These study skills appear very transferable to many roles in our organisation...; and Analytical, investigating information, applying skills such as reporting, documenting, supplying details.*

Of the sample of ten, 40% had employed or worked with an Archaeology graduate and all of these employers said they were employed because they exhibited a wide range of appropriate transferable skills.

When asked whether they had, or would consider, recruiting an Archaeology graduate to a post in their organisation which required higher-level generic skills, 70% agreed. One respondent noted: *One member of my own family is an Archaeology graduate now working in a very different sector, and has made very good use of skills, techniques and strategies acquired through her studies.* After they had perused the list of transferable skills promoted as being gained by training at degree level Archaeology, 100% agreed that they would now be interested in considering Archaeology graduates for employment in future. One commented: *This survey has certainly made me aware as an employer about the valued transferable skills that are required for any post within the organisation.*

Employers (from both the Archaeology/Heritage sector and the wider business world) were asked to suggest how Universities could make other employers, students and parents aware of the diversity and relevance of higher-level transferable skills developed by Archaeology graduates and their responses cover a range of approaches:

- *Work Experience* (from a Retail Sector employer)
- *I believe more information, like that which has been shared in this survey with myself, would enable people to understand the skills acquired in this field. I think that this information should be shared in schools and colleges* (from a Health, Medical and related Occupations employer)
- *Produce case studies on how Archaeology graduates are succeeding in other sectors. Share them via Social media and YouTube and Vimeo* (from an employer whose business contracts across five separate sectors)
- *Universities should perhaps work more closely with relevant industry lead bodies and HR professionals via CIPD to ensure all are aware of the underpinning skills* (from a Commercial Print employer)
- *More archaeologists in the teaching profession* (from an Education employer)
- *Case studies demonstrating jobs that Archaeology graduates have progressed to* (from an Education employer – Business Support area)
- *All of the above [transferable] skills need to be highlighted and showcased in job applications alongside scenarios where the skills have been applied* (from an Education employer – Business Support area)
- *Provide opportunities for archaeology students to work with potential employers as part of their degree structure* (from an Archaeology contracting employer)
- *Better publicity, use of web sites, and enhanced, up-to-date careers advice widely disseminated. Use of role models* (from an Archaeology/Heritage employer)
- *The wider world needs to get away from the idea that Archaeology is mostly about digging holes in the ground, as often portrayed in the media. In my experience Archaeologists begin their work with extensive investigations and are not necessarily considering digging anything up at all – their approach is much more cerebral and is about detailed and thorough interpretation of the world around them. So much in the syllabus seems to revolve around the ancient world, so maybe a larger element of Industrial Archaeology, modern world and live brief placement in industry and the community could bridge the gap. Also, I'm involved in a scheme where trainee teachers come out of the school environment for an element of their teaching practice to work in Settings Other Than Schools where learning takes place (SOTS – York St John University), eg National Trust sites, giving both sides the opportunity to appreciate the wider picture. The placement mentor is also involved in the formal professional accreditation assessment of each student. Is this approach useful as a means of gaining access to and infiltrating*

*the wider world of work?* (from a Heritage employer)

The message from the sample of employers surveyed is clear – share the message of those transferable skills more publicly to ensure all employers are aware of the value and transferability from Archaeology to their own areas of operation.

## 6. Conclusions

A large amount of data was generated through the five linked surveys and some key conclusions have emerged:

a) The main reason anyone becomes involved in Archaeology at any level, as an educator, student, employee or employer is simply because it interests, engages, delights, defines them. This is clear particularly in the volume of responses from A Level and University students.

b) The structure of the A Level syllabus does not currently meet the demands made upon it. The units which Universities find most useful in students progressing to them are those which most A Level Centres and students find most challenging.

- ARCH 2 is identified as requiring levels of scientific resource and/or expertise to which many A Level tutors do not have access but it is rated by Universities as of greatest value for progression to degree level.

- ARCH 4 is a real challenge for all tutors to support their students to identify suitable projects and for students (particularly 17 and 18 year olds) to maintain motivation and independent living skills to completion. Again it is valued by Universities for the skills it develops which are relevant to university study.

- ARCH 3 is seen by A Level tutors as too broad in scale and scope and is least valued by University staff and students as a preparation for degree level Archaeology.

- ARCH 1 provoked the fewest comments but was little valued for University progression.

Tutors have made some detailed suggestions for amendments to the syllabus which they feel would make it more accessible to students. Several tutors specifically compare the Archaeology A Level unfavourably with other subjects in terms of complexity of material and breadth of knowledge required. Lack of pre-released course material is cited as a weakness in the Archaeology format.

c) Linked to the syllabus concerns are the pleas from Centres for greater support from Universities for access to specialist resources to assist in the delivery of the complex mix of theory and practical currently required by the A Level syllabus. Tutors have been quite specific in identifying what they need and why. This is a mixture of fieldwork opportunities, access to specialist material (artefacts and environmental samples), and specialist skills to enable ARCH 2 particularly to be meaningful to tutors and students. While many A Level tutors are archaeologically educated, not all are scientists and many are uncomfortable about teaching practical archaeology solely in the classroom from books and web materials. A Level students who were asked to suggest ways to make the subject more interesting to potential students overwhelmingly suggested more fieldwork and less paper-based work – more action, less talk! Universities who contributed to the survey did suggest that they could (if they did not do so already) offer practical resources and engagement but their most frequently offered resource in the survey was more Open Days – which did not feature at all on the A Level Centres' 'Wish List' and could be viewed as a limited marketing tactic ultimately aimed at attracting students to degree level study, rather than helping to engage students lower down the academic pathway.

d) Tutors also pleaded for more comprehensive resources from AQA to support delivery of

the A Level, beyond the single textbook available. Again this compares unfavourably with other subjects.

e) A Level Centres which had stopped offering Archaeology did not blame it on simple economics in a minority subject, as might have been assumed, but referred to poor exam results, relative to other subjects such as History, which made it vulnerable to rationalisation. The frustration of tutors trying to enable their students to engage and achieve in Archaeology is clear both from the substantial response to the survey request and from the detailed responses given to every question.

f) It emerged that there are complex reasons why students might not choose Archaeology at A Level, including career fears and tuition fees. Suggestions to counter this ranged from adding a Human Remains element to the syllabus; make the specification 'easier', in line with History A Level; start educating children about Archaeology at Primary level; and invest heavily in marketing to parents and employers the transferable skills gained through Archaeology. Students choose A Level Archaeology mainly for personal interest and secondly for career intentions, although tutors do comment that a significant proportion of students become 'hooked' by the subject during the course and progress to degree level as a result.

g) Reasons why A Level students might not choose to progress to degree level are less complex and focus on lack of confidence in finding a job in any sector with an Archaeology degree. Most of the University students who had taken the A Level felt they were better prepared for degree study, although opinions varied on whether it was the subject content or the study skills which were more important.

h) Relationships between A Level Centres and Universities are varied but only a few seem to meet the needs of the A Level Centres to any real extent. Several Universities commented that they were in the early stages of developing a meaningful relationship with their local A Level Centres but the limited participation in the survey from the HE sector means that a valid evaluation of the scale of intentions of Universities cannot be made.

i) It is clear from the surveys that most Archaeology graduates will not work in the Archaeology/Heritage sector and that everyone concerned accepted this. It is also clear that all participants were aware of the transferable skills claimed by Archaeology as a natural result of the multi-disciplinary nature of the subject at any level and could suggest other sectors in which those skills could be effectively applied. A sample of employers validated the proposed transferable skills and indicated that they were appropriate for their sector areas. They suggested that an investment in marketing was required if the value of the skills was to be promoted to the wider world of work, and that this should include Work Experience opportunities in a range of fields outside the Archaeology/Heritage sector.

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## **7. Recommendations to strengthen the Archaeology Education pathways**

- a) AQA to restructure AS/A2 – move ARCH 2 to A2 and pre-release materials. Limit content of ARCH 3 or replace (part/all) with a Human Remains and/or Community Archaeology module. Reduce fieldwork requirement of ARCH 4.
- b) AQA to ensure parity of assessment with related A Levels.
- c) A Task and Finish group of A Level Centres, HEIs, CBA and AQA to be established to plan and implement a country-wide support network of practical resources and expertise available to every A Level Centre from their nearest/most appropriate HEI. Cluster groups may be an appropriate model here. Formalise the relationships with Service Level Agreements.
- d) A Task and Finish group of A Level Centres, HEIs, CBA and AQA to be established to plan and implement a country-wide strategy to introduce Archaeology to children at Primary and Secondary level.
- e) CBA to raise possibility with DfE of re-introducing Archaeology into the 'History' curriculum at Primary and Secondary levels.
- f) A Task and Finish group of HEIs, CBA and employers' representatives to be established to plan and implement a national campaign to raise awareness of transferable skills in Archaeology graduates to increase employability ratings of those who do not wish to/cannot find employment in the Archaeology/Heritage sector.