

6<sup>th</sup> May 2021

## **CBA response to the Office for Students Recurrent Funding Consultation 2021-22**

The Council for British Archaeology (CBA) is a charity committed to making archaeology accessible to anyone interested in exploring the stories of people and place. As the voice of archaeology in the UK we bring together community groups, commercial units, academics and heritage organisations to create and share opportunities to participate, discover and be inspired by archaeology.

We welcome the opportunity to respond to the Office for Students consultation on Recurrent Funding 2021-22. Our specific interest in this consultation relates to the proposal to split the C1 subject group, and the consequent reduction of funding for archaeology courses. The CBA are extremely concerned about the approach taken to this split and the effect on archaeology subject courses, the discipline and the wider contribution archaeological research makes to the UK economy.

In our response we have urged the Office for Students to review its approach and retain archaeology courses within the category C1.1.

Commercial archaeology and heritage management in the UK depends on university degrees and the skill sets they teach. Degree qualified archaeologists help underpin the heritage industry, which through tourism and development generates £31 billion a year towards our economy. An archaeology degree course provides grounding in the sciences, scrupulous training in fieldwork and a feeling for the debates embracing our history. The UK's archaeological research is truly world-leading, with the top four places in the QS World Rankings. This success and reputation for quality is a direct consequence of the fact that the UK has embraced the modern scientific approaches to archaeology and has led in innovative research and development of the discipline's scientific and high-tech methodologies such as ancient DNA, photogrammetry, and advanced survey techniques.

Archaeology is not a desk-based subject that can be only taught in the classroom. It relies on the understanding and teaching of fieldwork, technical and laboratory based skills. Whilst drawing on the humanities as a discipline archaeology is also a STEM subject relying on lab-based scientific techniques and practical fieldwork skills that define the modern discipline of archaeology. These are costly elements of archaeology courses and are the elements most likely to be impacted by any cut in high-cost subject funding. Understanding this broader scientific definition of archaeology is essential in maintaining its C1.1 status.

Furthermore archaeology graduates are crucial to the sustainability of the UK workforce in development-led archaeology. As a recognised construction skill, archaeology is a part of the supply chain for housing development and infrastructure and is essential to meet planning policy requirements to deliver sustainable development. As such, archaeology is a contributor to this key Government priority area. The development led archaeological sector is supremely reliant upon university training, with over 90% of archaeologists being trained to graduate level. Developers through the planning process contribute in the region of £250m annually to archaeology and heritage that helps safeguard and unlock the history of our country and how it contributes to our wider economy and health and wellbeing.

The importance of trained skilled graduate archaeologists to the development and infrastructure sectors has been recognised by Government with archaeologists being added to the shortage occupation list. Reducing the ability of our university archaeology departments will further increase the strains on the development sector to source skilled graduates.

UK university archaeology departments make an outstanding contributing towards global debates and themes in archaeology and heritage studies. Post-COVID, UK society and economy needs trained archaeologists and heritage professionals like those provided by our university archaeology departments to aid our recovery and support the health and wellbeing of our communities.

We fully appreciate the difficult financial environment in which we now operate but would like to emphasise the reputational damage to the UK by this potential threat to our outstanding university archaeology teaching.

These views are firmly supported across the sector. A recent letter to The Times (6 Feb 2021) urging a re-think to the proposals to cut Archaeology funding was signed by myself, Professor Chris Gosden, University of Oxford, and chairman of the archaeology section at the British Academy; Professor Amy Bogaard, head of the School of Archaeology, University of Oxford; Paul Drury, president, Society of Antiquaries; Professor Chris Gerrard, chairman, University Archaeology UK; Lizzie Glithero-West, chief executive, Heritage Alliance; Peter Hinton, chief executive, Chartered Institute for Archaeologists; Professor Nicky Milner, head of the Department of Archaeology, University of York; Dr Kate Pretty, hon vice-president, Council for British Archaeology; Dr Alison Sheridan, National Museum of Scotland

## **Consultation questions**

We have only responded to the questions central to our concerns about the proposal to split price group C1 and its impact on the teaching of archaeology in university departments.

**Question 1: To what extent do you agree with the proposal to distribute a greater proportion of OfS recurrent grant through the main high-cost subject funding method? (See paragraphs 15 to 36)**

Tend to disagree.

*Please provide an explanation for your answer. If you believe our approach should differ, please explain how and the reason for your view.*

We recognise the financial concerns affecting high-cost subjects but consider the possible cuts made to funding for teaching archaeology by 50% in order to help combat this wider shortfall as extremely damaging. It will undermine the delivery of subject teaching and have a knock-on effect on the discipline and sector as a whole. Archaeology graduates are crucial to the sustainability of the UK workforce in development-led archaeology. As a recognised construction skill, archaeology is a part of the supply chain for housing development and infrastructure and is essential to meet planning policy requirements to deliver sustainable development. As such, archaeology is a contributor to this key Government priority area. The development led archaeological sector is supremely reliant upon university training, with over 90% of archaeologist being trained to graduate level. We are especially concerned about the impact on smaller departments which specialise in training archaeologists to enter the archaeological profession. These departments are often less able to make cost savings or seek additional income generation elsewhere. The proposed cut could disproportionately impact these departments.

**Question 2: To what extent do you agree with the proposal to split price group C1 in order to implement a reduction of 50 per cent to the high-cost subject funding allocated to subjects in the performing arts; creative arts; media studies and archaeology? (See paragraphs 15 to 26)**

Strongly disagree.

*Please provide an explanation for your answer. If you believe our approach should differ, please explain how and the reason for your view.*

- We believe that archaeology has been mischaracterised in the approach to splitting the group. While we welcome the recognition that archaeology makes an ‘important contribution to access and participation’, we are concerned that the OfS has underestimated the importance of skills for employment within the archaeological profession, meeting labour market needs. The training that UK universities deliver is critical to sustainable labour supply, at a time when archaeology jobs are listed on the UK Shortage Occupation List. This is also evidenced by the explicit link that the CfA Accredited Degree Programme provides between the Chartered Institute and departments delivering vocational degree programmes.
- These changes will reduce the value of the Archaeology qualification and so undermine student progress from higher education and into employment or further study. Modern archaeology blends the humanities with the techniques of science (eg. aDNA, isotopes, dating methods) in its laboratory work (artifact conservation, digital technology, and the analysis of archaeological objects and human bone) and fieldwork (such as excavation, surveying, recording, measurement and analysis). This broad spectrum incorporating humanities and STEM based approaches enables archaeology

students to consolidate and blend learning across a range of principles including physics, chemistry, biology and statistics — everything from satellites to scanning electron microscopes are needed in the toolkit of a modern archaeologist. These are the most expensive elements of an archaeology degree to deliver, they are central to teaching provision and expected through QAA Benchmarking. The cut in recurrent funding will directly impact the provision of this lab and field-based training to the extent that the funding changes will reduce archaeology towards a classroom-based subject – which it is not.

- As a STEM subject, which draws from science, social science, and humanities, archaeology provides a well-rounded skill set to graduates, even those who do not enter the archaeological profession. Lab-based scientific techniques and practical fieldwork skills are essential in the modern discipline of archaeology. These are costly elements of archaeology courses and are the elements most likely to be impacted by any cut in high-cost subject funding.
- Archaeology is a recognised construction skill and a necessary part of the supply chain for the delivery of housing and infrastructure development, for instance HS2, Crossrail, and the A14 corridor project. Archaeology is essential to meet planning policy requirements and is therefore a contributor to key national priorities. 79% of archaeologists work in ‘development-led’ archaeology, facilitating the sustainable delivery of development. These skills are, in addition, recognised by Government as being subject to a shortage, with archaeology jobs currently listed on the UK Shortage Occupation List. Unlike some construction skills, archaeology relies heavily on graduate entry routes, with over 90% of UK archaeologists holding a degree. Furthermore, the archaeological profession has demonstrated a skills shortage in recent years. Although the profession is diversifying entry routes, graduate recruitment is likely to be even more critical in coming years as the opportunity to recruit archaeologists from outside the UK will be reduced following the end of freedom of movement with the EU. For some of the highly specialist areas of archaeology, graduate and post-graduate qualifications are essential.
- UK university archaeology departments make an outstanding contribution towards global debates and themes in archaeology and heritage studies. UK archaeology departments occupy the top 4 places in the QS World Rankings, an extraordinary achievement and built on a reputation for teaching and an interdisciplinary ‘environment’ which will be corroded by these proposed measures. As we move into the essential post-COVID recovery, UK society and economy needs trained archaeologists and heritage professionals like those provided by our university archaeology departments to aid our recovery and support the health and wellbeing of our communities. Commercial archaeology and heritage management in the UK depends on university degrees and the skill sets they teach. Degree qualified archaeologists help underpin the heritage industry, which through tourism and development generates £31 billion a year to our economy. An archaeology degree course provides grounding in the sciences, scrupulous training in fieldwork and a feeling for the debates embracing our history. Archaeology graduates fuel the cultural

heritage sector and further afield. Archaeology graduates are employed at the heart of the tourism and museums sectors, engaged with non-academic communities through education courses, local societies, and heritage groups, and they are involved in environmental and developmental work at regional, national and international levels. These projects deliver well-being and a valued sense of place and they will continue to do so post-COVID. Archaeological research is vital to the climate change agenda, forensic anthropology, forensic palynology, botany, environmental soil science, geophysics, and even facial reconstruction. Archaeology remains a fulfilling option for students in all manner of satisfying careers – the British Academy's Qualified for the Future report showed that social sciences, humanities and arts (SHAPE) graduates are just as employable as their counterparts in sciences and mathematics. Eight of the ten fastest growing sectors in the pre-pandemic economy employed more graduates from SHAPE than from other disciplines. Many SHAPE graduates fill vital roles as teachers, in the civil service and across industry, and this is true also of archaeology graduates.

**Question 3: Notwithstanding your answer to question 2, if we were to split price group C1 as proposed, to what extent do you agree with our approach to implementing this? (See paragraphs 27 to 28 and Annex B)**

Strongly disagree.

*Please provide an explanation for your answer. If you believe our approach should differ, please explain how and the reason for your view.*

We disagree with the approach taken to implementing the splitting of price group C1 as proposed. This will have a detrimental impact on the teaching of archaeology and in particular the lab and fieldwork elements that are so critical. It will undermine the very strong STEM core to the modern teaching of archaeology in UK and how these skills are needed in the wider economy and workforce.

The current HECoS codings for archaeology are not always helpful as they often mask the STEM elements to the discipline and therefore fail to reflect the granularity of archaeology degree content. Identifying the strong science content of some archaeology degrees would lead to greater clarity for students when choosing their degree and underpin why archaeology should not be split into the lower price group.

Therefore, we strongly advocate the value of archaeology teaching for all students, including those that do not pursue a career in archaeology and that the Office for Students should retain all archaeology subjects in group C1.1.

If you have any further questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact us.



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