

MSc in Building Conservation and MSc in Timber Building Conservation

Course Information Sheet

These programmes are delivered over two years, in a part-time, block release format. The courses are delivered on site at the Museum near Chichester, West Sussex where the buildings, staff and external lecturers provide an inspiring, excellent and unrivalled resource. Students are registered as students of the Museum and upon successful completion receive the award of MSc from the University of York who validate the two Programmes.

Students develop the ability to understand building materials, to analyse defects and failures, to define significance and to evaluate strategic conservation options. Many approaches are possible, ranging from complete replacement of elements to full preservation of original material. There is no “correct” answer to a particular problem, but the better the conservator’s understanding of the structure and site, its significance and the materials, processes and opportunities, the better will be the result. The course also provides a broader understanding of the conservation profession and of conservation theory and practice.

Overall programme aims

This postgraduate programme aims to develop in its students the abilities to work as independent conservators, or within the regulatory agencies and other organisations concerned with building conservation.

The programme will provide students with a qualification, to enhance their existing employment status and open up the possibilities of advancement in the field, especially with national bodies, local authorities, consultancies and private practices. The degree also aims to provide students with a substantial range of transferable skills in data gathering and analysis, report and essay writing which may be applicable to professional activity and development in other career areas.

Learning

The programme consists of six taught modules, each running on five consecutive days, Wednesday to Sunday inclusively, spread over the first eighteen months of the course. Learning takes place at the Weald & Downland Living Museum and consists of lectures, seminars and workshops delivered by Museum staff and visiting lecturers.

Students also undertake a Capstone research module over the last six months of the course. This typically involves writing a dissertation on a topic of the student’s own choosing.

Indicative content – Building Conservation MSc

An overview of the history and development of heritage structures - Conservation legislation - Conservation of timber buildings - Conservation using lime - Conservation of masonry - Conservation of metals - Conservation of 20th century buildings - Conservation of fixtures and finishes - A Capstone research project (dissertation.)

Indicative content – Timber Building Conservation MSc

Timber-frames and their regional and chronological variations - Timber science and decay - Timber-framing systems - Conservation process, site and workshop practice and associated materials - Conservation of structural timber - Conservation of non-structural timber - A Capstone research project (dissertation).

Private study

At MSc level students are expected to complement the module learning with their own private study during the course. Students are advised to keep a record of their background reading, research and visits to conservation sites of interest.

The Museum has an extensive reference and a lending library that students can access during teaching or at other times. The University of York library has many resources that students can access digitally. These include some books and journals, map resources and an archive of broadcast programmes.

Assessment

Each of the first six modules is assessed by the submission of one or two pieces of work such as essays or reports. Often, assignments require students to select case study sites that they will need to visit to conduct field studies. All assignments are submitted electronically via the University of York VLE.

The final module is a Capstone research module, which requires students to draw on the knowledge and understanding gained during the taught modules to analyse a topic in detail. This dissertation takes about six months to complete.

Support for students

At the induction and during each module there is support in developing the academic skills required to succeed. Students can also have one-to-one support from the Programme Leader and the Programmes Manager. The University of York VLE also has comprehensive resources specifically aimed to develop study skills.

Costs

For the 2025-2027 intake the fees are £4,250 per year and are payable at the start of each academic year. Payments can be made in full or over the first four months in four equal instalments. Currently Museum students are not able to apply for a loan through the government student finance system.

IT Requirements

The course makes extensive use of the York virtual learning environment (VLE) where information on the programme modules including, timetables, presentations, academic papers and documents and assignments are submitted electronically. We therefore require our students to have a suitable level of IT skills when you start the course, though support can also be given to enhance these skills throughout the programme.

Reading list

If you are interested in either of these courses and would like to read more while considering your application, you may be interested in these books and web sites.

- English Heritage (2013). *Practical Building Conservation: Conservation Basics*.
- English Heritage (2012). *Practical Building Conservation: Timber*.
- English Heritage (2008). *Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance*. downloadable here: <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/conservation-principles-sustainable-management-historic-environment/>