I'm writing to you about your application to study BA Prehistoric Archaeology in the Department of Archaeology at the University of Sheffield. As you know, the University will be adjusting how it delivers its courses in the autumn to accommodate the social distancing measures required to combat the coronavirus pandemic. The current plans involve a blend of face-to-face teaching in small groups in Sheffield, where social distancing can be maintained, supported by digital delivery. In this email, I'll explain what this will mean for your studies on the BA Prehistoric Archaeology degree.

Course content

There's no change to the overall learning outcomes of the course. You'll still obtain an advanced understanding of how we study the human past through archaeology and a proficiency in archaeological techniques, as well as a wide range of transferable skills. However, to accommodate the new protocols for the 2020-21 academic year, we have made some adjustments to the content and structure of Level 1.

The core and optional Archaeology modules are all the same, but we've moved the modules with lab or field components from Semester 1 to Semester 2, when we hope social distancing restrictions will have been relaxed. We also hope to be able to run our field training programme in a similar way to previous years next summer. In their place, we're moving two lecture-based modules from Semester 2 to Semester 1.

Finally, we've removed the 40 'unrestricted' credits available at Level 1, where students could study any Level 1 modules, not just the options listed in your programme regulations. Because of the challenges of managing module selection during the pandemic, the University has suspended unrestricted credits for 2020-21. In their place, we've added to our list of options the following 20-credit modules drawn from other Archaeology courses, and from courses offered by our colleagues in the other departments in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities and one Department in the Faculty of Social Sciences:

AAP110 Classical World and its Legacy
EAS1021 Understanding China 1
EAS1022 Understanding China 2
EAS1031 Understanding Japan 1
EAS1032 Understanding Japan 2
EAS1041 Understanding Korea 1
EAS1042 Understanding Korea 2
MDL106 Understanding Spanish & Latin American Culture
MDL107 Understanding Modern France
MDL108 Understanding German History and Culture
MDL112 An Introduction to Russian Culture
MDL1012 Russian Language (Post A Level)
MDL1013 Spanish Language (Post A Level)
MUS117 Popular Music Studies
MUS125 Music of the World
MUS126 History of Western Music
MUS129 Music Psychology
MUS133 The Materials of Music
MUS134 Harmony and Counterpoint
MUS140 Folk Music Participation
REL1001 LGBT Studies
REL1013 Religion in Britain
SCS1001 The Sociology of Everyday Life
SCS1003 Understanding Inequality
SCS1005 Gender, Sexuality and Society
SCS1007 Understanding Crime
SCS1011 Classical Sociological Theory
SCS1029 Welfare, Politics and the State
SCS11001 Introduction to Media and Communication in Society
HST117 The Making of the 20th Century
HST122 Land of Liberty? Rights in the USA, 1776-2016

You'll also be able to choose a foreign language module which you can study for credit through the University's Languages for All scheme.

Please be assured that there will still be a wide selection of modules for you to choose from, you'll still get to learn all about Archaeology, and you'll still acquire the knowledge, understanding and academic skills you'll need for Levels 2 and 3.

**Teaching**

As you know, the majority of our teaching comprises lectures, seminars, lab practicals and field trips and we'll still be using these formats in 2020-21. Teaching will be spread across the usual two semesters and will start the week commencing Monday 28 September.

It's not possible to social distance in a crowded lecture theatre, so we'll be delivering all our lectures online. Lectures are primarily presentations by one of our subject experts, and online delivery suits the format well. We'll be providing you with lectures in our online learning environment, along with a full complement of learning resources and clear communication with the teaching staff.

You will also be having small group classes in Semester 1, to accompany the lectures. For these interactive classes, we'll be using a combination of face-to-face and digital teaching, and you'll have regular, timetabled sessions of each form. The face-to-face sessions will take place in small groups, so that we can use our larger teaching rooms and still maintain social distancing. Our face-to-face teaching has always taken place across the University's campus, and this won't change in 2020-21. The digital sessions will be live and fully interactive, for example group video calls.

Our academic staff will be available as usual for tutorials and other one-to-one meetings, and will still hold their regular office hours. It may not be possible for these sessions to take place in person, but if not you'll be able to make an audio or video call.
Learning resources
Most of our learning resources are already available online, and this includes all the core reading for our Level 1 modules. Our physical libraries will be open as soon as it's safe to do so, and our librarians are committed to providing as full a service as possible, taking into account social distancing requirements and all the latest government advice.

Assessment
Coursework assignments are already completed electronically, and submitted and marked online.

We're still finalising our plans for exams, but we won't be holding formal, invigilated exams in the Semester 1 exam period in January/February. It's likely we'll use an 'open book' format instead, where exam questions are made available online and you have a certain amount of time, for example two days, to answer them. You'd complete your answers electronically at home, and you'd be able to consult your books and notes. Some other universities use open book exams as a matter of course. We'll confirm the arrangements for Semester 1 exams in the individual module handbooks you'll receive when you join us.

Costs
The tuition fee for the course will stay the same, and we don't expect students will incur additional costs as a result of the changes we're making. You'll be able to participate in all the online activities using a regular laptop or tablet connected to the internet, although you will need a microphone and camera to contribute fully in virtual discussions.

I hope this email has given you an idea of what to expect when you join us in the autumn. As you'll be aware, this pandemic is a fast-moving and unpredictable phenomenon, and we might need to make further changes as the situation develops and the University responds to updates in public health guidance. Please be assured that we'll be approaching the next year as a single departmental family of staff and students together, and we're committed to ensuring that you're supported, and that you still receive a world-class university education here at Sheffield.

If you have any questions or concerns, please get in touch with our Level 1 Student Support Officer Paul Dennington at p.j.dennington@sheffield.ac.uk.

Further information
Please keep looking out for emails from the University and checking our frequently asked questions, which are updated regularly with all the latest developments. We also have some on demand content from our online applicant open days which you might find useful.

I hope you enjoy what's left of the summer and stay safe,

Best wishes