



# SOCIETY OF ANTIQUARIES OF LONDON

Burlington House

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I am writing, on behalf of the Society of Antiquaries of London, to ask you to reconsider the recent decision of your Board to discontinue the provision of A and some AS-level examinations from 2018 onwards.

The Society of Antiquaries of London is Britain's oldest independent learned society concerned with the study of the material culture of the past. Founded in 1707, our Royal Charter of 1751 defines the Society's aim as 'the encouragement, advancement and furtherance of the study and knowledge of the antiquities and history of this and other countries'. Its Fellows today engage in conservation and research, and in communicating knowledge of the past to the widest possible audience. The range of the Society's interests covers a wide field, from the archaeology of all periods and all countries to heraldry and art history, architectural history and other subjects based on the material remains of the past.

We therefore recognize that understanding the past is relevant to present and future generations; that the tasks of safeguarding, protecting and disseminating knowledge about heritage are important for the world of today; and that research and debate about, as well as respect and appreciation for, the material remains of the past created by all peoples in all parts of the world are fundamental to our understanding of ourselves.

Your own AQA website makes considerable claims about the contribution made by your Archaeology curriculum. It is "the fascinating study of past human societies through artefacts, data, buildings and remnants left behind." This makes it "one of the most exciting subjects... the ultimate subject for an 'all-round' student, in that it combines elements of many other academic disciplines, such as Science, Art, Technology, Geography, History, Sociology and Religious Studies." The examination course you have provided also "challenges students to understand and use a range of evidence to draw substantiated conclusions and raises their awareness of the uncertainty of knowledge." Furthermore, "your students will develop transferable skills such as research, analysis, critical thinking and essay writing skills, and they're perfect for students who are interested in further study."

We understand that the numbers taking this A-level every year are relatively low. Leading Archaeology departments at UK universities, however, report figures of 10 to 20 per cent of incoming students having studied Archaeology at either AS or A level. This course of study and qualification thus contributes significantly to a pathway via advanced study to a career, and



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indeed does so especially amongst older students returning to education after breaks and other activities in their lives. The course therefore has a value in terms of widening access beyond the mere numbers involved.

We also understand that AS and A level introductions to these subjects must necessarily be preliminary. Nonetheless there has been considerable time invested in the design of these courses, making them highly valuable in themselves, while in the case of Archaeology much that is positive can be made of the extent to which the subject requires techniques and skills to be acquired and applied, in a disciplined and forensic way, to evidence from the past. Your own appraisal of the subject quoted above makes an excellent case in this regard.

In summary, we regard this withdrawal of Archaeology, among a number of other subjects, from your curriculum as an unfortunately retrograde step. It will deny students enthused in many ways about the material remains of the past one of the key ways in which they can pursue, understand, and enhance that interest. We call on you to reconsider.

Yours sincerely,

Gill Andrews PSA  
President