

Constitution of the Annual Student Archaeology Conference



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on 9 July 2014*

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1. The National and Organising Committees

The Annual Student Archaeology conference series (henceforth, ASA) is an unprecedented opportunity for archaeology students in the United Kingdom and beyond to share their innovative research and original ideas with fellow students and the wider discipline through paper and poster presentations in an annually occurring conference run both by and for students that can appeal to people of all archaeological interests, specialist skills and levels of education.

ASA is run by two committees of students. The Organising Committee circulates the UK by being a group of undergraduate and/or postgraduate students at a different university each year, and is responsible for preparing all aspects of the ASA conferences, including: the calls for, and selection of, papers and posters; arranging the facilities, schedule and events of the programmes; setting registration and managing finances and any funding. The National Committee is composed of student representatives of universities and is responsible for overseeing the overall direction of the conference series by promoting people's involvement in ASA and discussing its future.

The inaugural (2013-14 academic year) National Committee of ASA was established in January 2014. Applications from students to join the National Committee were overseen by David Altoft, founder of ASA and co-organiser of the first ASA conference, between 12 December 2013 and 12 January 2014. As no university had multiple applicants, all four applications were accepted, and so the inaugural National Committee comprised of Emily Rhodes (Bournemouth University), Alex Loktionov (University of Cambridge), Rachael Sycamore (University of Durham), Alistair Galt (University of Southampton) and David Altoft (University of York).

2. Main Aims of the National Committee

Meetings by the National Committee occurred via Google Hangout online streaming on 27 March and 3 July, and at the 2014 ASA AGM during the second ASA conference (henceforth, ASA2) on 17 June. From these meetings the National Committee agreed on its three main aims:

1. Generating central and in-Department publicity of the forthcoming ASA conference
2. Electing an applicant Organising Committee for the next year's ASA conference
3. Promoting more broadly ASA and the benefits it can provide students and archaeology

The purpose of ASA and the three main aims of all the National Committee's activities centre around the founding principle of ASA as "Developing Integrated Archaeology", explained more fully as:

"Opening the discipline of archaeology and related fields for students to share and discuss research and views on the past" (taken from the profile of the ASA Twitter page)

As membership of the National Committee is expected to grow in the first few successive years it will become increasingly representative of archaeology students at universities across the United Kingdom. Furthermore, it, like the Organising Committees and the programmes of the conferences, will continue to comprise of and be relevant to individuals from all levels of education and from a wide range of sectors of research and practice across the discipline of archaeology, thereby ensuring ASA contributes to the development of a more 'integrated archaeology'.

2.1 Publicising the forthcoming ASA conference

In the 2014 ASA AGM, it was suggested by the ASA2 Organising Committee that the National Committee should generate all publicity for ASA, including the forthcoming conference as and when information on its preparation, call for papers, registration and programme is received from the current Organising Committee. The intention of this suggestion was to help simplify communication between the two committees and clarify who is responsible for generating publicity. The National Committee agreed to enact this suggestion, on the provision that an agreement is made between the two committees each year on what information on the progress of conference preparation is communicated to the National Committee, and when (see the stipulations of Organising Committee election in Section 1.2 below). Despite this, the National Committee recognises that different approaches of working will suit different potential Organising Committees, so it is highly recommended that upon election, each new Organising Committee discusses the conditions of their activity, including whether they wish to delegate or directly initiate any publicity.

It is envisaged that the National Committee will continue to play an especially important role in publicising the forthcoming ASA conference within universities in direct ways the Organising Committee cannot achieve remotely. Each university representative on the National Committee is expected to communicate with fellow students at their university via an appropriate combination of email, face-to-face conversation and Facebook groups and other online departmental communities.

2.2 Electing an applicant Organising Committee

In order to ensure chronological regularity in the development of ASA and to allow students time to prepare hosting and National Committee bids over the summer vacation and start of the academic year, it was agreed in the 2014 ASA AGM that the end of October would be the point of transition of both committees each year from 2014¹. The application processes of the ASA2 Organising Committee and the inaugural National Committee were concurrent between 12 December 2013 and 12 January 2014. This was a unique situation in which the newly elected National Committee had to vote on the best bid for hosting of the forthcoming ASA conference, though for the third ASA conference (in 2015) onwards it has been agreed that due to their experience with ASA it will be the retiring National Committee that will vote on the best hosting bid immediately before both committees transition for the new academic year and next ASA conference.

¹ Annual timeframe has been changed in the 1st Amendment (2015) appended to the end of this Constitution

It is the responsibility of the National Committee, shortly following an ASA conference, to produce, release and publicise an application form for the hosting of the next ASA conference in the following year. The application form will be completed by groups of students at any UK universities other than the current and most recent host of the ASA conferences (as such, prospective Organising Committees at any universities other than York and Reading are eligible to apply to host ASA3, and other than Reading and the ASA3 host for ASA4, etc.), and returned to the National Committee by email to the ASA email address (contact.asaconference@gmail.com) by the advertised deadline. A consenting member of the current Organising Committee should be responsible for impartially collecting votes and single-paragraph explanations from all members of the National Committee and returning them anonymously together.

The questions in the application forms should challenge the prospective Organising Committees to research and answer in detail what personal experience, university facilities and original or creative ideas they can deliver for the next ASA conference. In order to encourage confidence that applicants can deliver the things they propose in their hosting application, the National Committee formulated a set of stipulations to be displayed within the application form and be accepted by each elected Organising Committee. These stipulations are:

1. The National Committee holds no responsibility for the organisation of ASA conferences, especially concerning the conference programme and any monetary transactions
2. If the elected Organising Committee encounters an unpredictable setback to delivering a significant aspect of the conference stated in its application, this must be communicated with the National Committee (specifically the representative responsible for administration)
3. It will be agreed with the newly elected Organising Committee what information on the organisation of the ASA conference will be communicated to the National Committee and when (regarding information for publicity generated by the representatives responsible for social media and email publicity, and any private updates to administration)

The National Committee values the informal nature of ASA and is aware that different groups of students at different universities will wish to follow unique approaches important to making each ASA conference distinct, so will seek to make an agreement with each new Organising Committee on the specific working relationship and expectations to be followed by both committees during the period of conference organisation.

2.3 Promoting ASA more broadly

In order for ASA to develop it is essential that the National Committee raises awareness of ASA amongst students across the UK and beyond, especially undergraduates who are more likely to underestimate the significance of attending conferences and, each year, new students who will not have heard of ASA or attended previous ASA conferences.

It is also important that the National Committee engages the whole discipline of archaeology with ASA, whether that be finding and suggesting to the Organising Committee new sources of funding and support, raising the prestige of ASA so universities actively encourage students to bid to host future ASA conferences, or enriching ASA conferences by ensuring attendance and participation by an integrated audience from multiple sectors across archaeology.

3. Coordination of the National Committee

The inaugural National Committee has functioned primarily as a loose group of representatives enabling promotion of ASA and advertising of ASA2 to fellow students at the five universities on the committee. Due to his position of being the founder of ASA and the National Committee, David Altoft voluntarily undertook administrative duties for the committee, including minute taking, ASA and ASA2 publicity, and maintaining communication between representatives and with the ASA2 Organising Committee. The National Committee agreed in its 3 July meeting that for long-term sustainability administrative responsibilities will be divided between some or all representatives in future incarnations of the National Committee. Roles, in addition to shared in-department publicity, to be voluntarily undertaken each year by four representatives on the National Committee are:

Administration - taking minutes from the AGM and any other meetings, keeping the National Committee aware of its collective activities, and being the point of contact if and when the Organising Committee faces significant unexpected setbacks that need to be communicated to the National Committee

Social media - receiving information on the conference from the Organising Committee for the purpose of generating publicity on the ASA Facebook and Twitter pages (and designing posters and banners unless any Organising Committees wish to have that responsibility)

Email publicity - retaining contacts built by previous National Committees for the purpose of sending publicity to departments and societies by email

Collaboration - scouting funding and collaboration opportunities from societies, organisations and other initiatives to suggest to the Organising Committee (the only representative expected to initiate occasional spontaneous communication with the Organising Committee, outside the time frame of updates from the Organising Committee to the National Committee agreed on each October, or contact due to significant unexpected setbacks)

It is important to note that these formally acknowledged additional roles will serve to ensure an efficient collaborative workflow whilst not creating a hierarchy within the National Committee.

4. Election of the National Committee

It was proposed by Alex Loktionov in the 3 July meeting that, in order to accommodate for the diversity in approaches to students and interest in ASA from different universities, a two-tier recruitment of university representatives to future National Committees (starting with 2014-15) is employed. All Heads of Archaeology Departments across the UK are to be invited by the retiring National Committee to delegate the holding of an election for a student representative by either the staff or student archaeology society of their department before a specific date one or two weeks into the new academic year (14 October for the 2014-15 National Committee, the same date as the deadline for bids to host ASA3 in 2015). Following that date, it will be advertised by the retiring National Committee that direct applications may be received via email from interested students at any of the listed universities that either did not wish to hold an election or never responded to the National Committee. The deadline for this second phase of recruitment will be the day prior to the transition from the retiring to the new National Committee (this year, on 28 October). If multiple direct applications are received from any universities then it is the discretion of the retiring National Committee to select the most suitable direct applicant for each applicable university².

In exceptional circumstances requiring some flexibility, such as the movement of a representative to another university already represented, the National Committee reserves the right to appoint a limited number of extra representatives who bring essential additional expertise to the committee. Such appointments require the approval of a majority of existing representatives to demonstrate that there is a genuine need.

5. Constitution Amendment Process

This constitution serves to provide a framework for consistency and efficiency in the future development of ASA, especially due to the annual changes in membership of both the National Committee and the Organising Committee. However, for that reason it is just as important that there is sufficient flexibility to accommodate the differing circumstances of the committees' members each year, and as such this constitution should be reviewed by both Committees in each AGM. The weeks following the AGM each year is considered an ideal time to reflect on any discussed changes in circumstances to amend the constitution. Views should be sought from all participants of the AGM and the National Committee, and any amendments made must be done so with the agreement of at least two-thirds of the National Committee. As agreed in the 2014 AGM, the process of amendment of this constitution (when applicable) to be displayed publicly on the ASA website should ideally take place in advance of the launch of applications for the next year's Organising Committee and National Committee so that potential applicants have a full understanding of the nature and progress of ASA and both committees.

² Election process has been changed in the 2nd Amendment (2015) appended to the end of this Constitution

1st Amendment of the Constitution of the Annual Student Archaeology Conference

Annual Timeframe for the Annual Student Archaeology conference series

Written and ratified by all members of the second National Committee, Emily Rhodes (Bournemouth University), David Altoft (University of Bristol), Sam Munsch (University of Chester), Dave Hanks (University of Nottingham), Nefeli Iliou (University of St Andrews), Alistair Galt (University of Southampton) and Bryony Smerdon (University College London), on 29 June 2015

A new timeframe for ASA will be trialled in 2015-16 and 2016-17 with applications to host ASA4 launching in June 2015 and closing in September 2015 followed by a whole year for the Organising Committee to prepare to host ASA4 in September 2015, and applications to host ASA5 (and potentially all subsequent ASA conferences) launching in May (or whenever exactly the call for papers for the current conference closes) and closing shortly prior to when the current conference takes place in September, ready for announcement of the host of the next conference to delegates at the current conference. Not only will this new timeframe give organising committees more time to prepare their conferences, it will enable greater flexibility in the timing of their call for papers, extend the period of time for confirmed presenters from other countries to make successful arrangements to travel to the conference, and may open up more opportunities of funding for the organising committees to pursue. Furthermore, from consultation with delegates of ASA3, it is likely that having ASA conferences take place in early September rather than mid-June will enable attendance by more students who participate in summer fieldwork.

2nd Amendment of the Constitution of the Annual Student Archaeology Conference

Process of Election of the National Committee

Written and ratified by all members of the second National Committee, Emily Rhodes (Bournemouth University), David Altoft (University of Bristol), Sam Munsch (University of Chester), Dave Hanks (University of Nottingham), Nefeli Iliou (University of St Andrews), Alistair Galt (University of Southampton) and Bryony Smerdon (University College London), on 29 June 2015

Election of the National Committee will return to being by application only. This is in response to a lack of uptake of the election part of the trialled two-tiered election process by university departments in 2014 (elections were only held at the University of Nottingham and University College London, and had just one contender for each). More cohesive and targeted advertising will be possible for a simpler and universal process of election, hopefully encouraging more students to join the National Committee and increase the representation of universities across the UK.

As before, at the end of the period for application to join the National Committee, a retiring member of the National Committee will be responsible for receiving, assessing and responding to all applications received to the National Committee email account. If in any given year, all current members of the National Committee will continue to be university students during the following year and none wish to retire from the committee, an alternative person will have to be found to serve as an impartial returning officer. It is imperative that the process of election of the National Committee is always transparent and fair, and so any resolution to this or any other procedural problems will have to be discussed by the retiring National Committee within the public sphere.

A more flexible approach on the number of representatives per university allowed to serve on the National Committee will be implemented from 2015-16. If there are ever multiple candidates from a single university judged by the returning officer to be suitable for the National Committee, he or she will contact those candidates and ask them whether they wish to share the responsibility of representing their university on the committee or initiate a one-off election in their department so the study body can select a single representative.