

UCL Qatar and the Institute of Archaeology

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Fig. 1: Sorting iron smelting slag at a UCL Qatar excavation in Sudan.

As a new parent, the venerable Institute of Archaeology is doing very well. While it was celebrating its 75th anniversary this year, there was much activity to get UCL Qatar onto its feet – UCL's new department focusing on all aspects of cultural heritage, with particular emphasis on the Arab and Islamic world. An outline of our plans was presented in last year's issue of *Archaeology International* (13/14: 24–25), very much written with an aspirational tone. One year later, after our first steps, we have actually something to look back upon –and to report about here.

What is most noticeable, for those present on site, has been the change in staffing levels. Whereas last summer we had 15 offices and 4 members of staff, we still have 15 offices of our own but now almost 20 staff (and counting). This highlights an aspect that dominated much of the past year for us: the most generous hospitality which we have experienced from our neighbours, Georgetown University's School of Foreign Services in Qatar, who have been lending us the desperately needed additional offices and seminar rooms while we wait for the fit-out of the space allocated to us to be completed. However, the long-awaited teaching space, laboratories, social and office rooms should become available within the next few months, almost in time for the start of teaching.

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Mentioning teaching – last year, we were preparing for two MA programmes, but in the event we have recruited for three Masters' degrees, following a re-assessment of demand and in consultation with our main stakeholders, Qatar Foundation and Qatar Museums Authority. The MA in the Archaeology of the Arab and Islamic World, coordinated by Robert Carter, and the MSc in Conservation Studies, coordinated by Voula Goufomitsoy, are two-year programmes, and we are expecting ten students in both of them. The one-year MA in Museum and Gallery Practice, coordinated by Karen Exell, has recruited even better, and we are now preparing for more than 15 students to enrol. The quantity of applications, and firmly accepted offers, has been very satisfying, as has been the quality of the applicants and their diversity. About one third of our students are Qatari nationals, most of them with a previous degree either from Qatar University or from one of the other Education City universities. The remaining two-thirds are residents of Qatar of varying nationalities: in about equal parts, Europeans and from the Americas and Asia. This promises to form a very international and highly motivated first cohort of UCL Qatar students, which we shall be welcoming in late August because we follow the American academic calendar in line with the other Education City universities.

Teaching is, however, not the only job in hand for a new university department. There is also administration – and a lot of it. Everything has had to be developed from scratch: all teaching programmes and modules developed, externally scrutinised and finally approved by central UCL; the essential committees set up; policies and procedures for finance, HR, immigration, housing and IT had to be established and adjusted between UCL, QF and various government agencies; marketing and student recruitment had to be developed, targeting a rather multi-faceted audience; and the library had to be set up with clear priorities but in the face of opaque customs regulations and inexperienced local

book sellers. There is no spare capacity in the system: each functioning post is filled with a single member of staff, with no deputies or vacation cover. We are particularly grateful to Robert Kirby of the UCL Institute's library for agreeing to spend six months in Doha to get us started.

Research: yes – we managed some! Both of our field projects ran spring campaigns: Edgar Pusch in Qantir–Pi-Ramesse, the New Kingdom capital of the Ramessides in the Nile Delta; and Jane Humphris at Hamadab near Meroe, the Kushite capital of the Sudan (**Fig. 1**). Similarly, our joint project with the Institute in Merv, directed by Tim Williams, had a good field season – despite the apparently inevitable visa problems. We were also successful in winning competitive project grants, including from UCL's internal funds for a joint project between the Institute (David Wengrow), UCL History (Karen Radner) and UCL Qatar (Robert Carter) in Kurdistan. Nearer to home, Robert also won a 3-year QNRF grant to explore, through oral history, survey and test excavations, 'The Origins of Doha', and Jane Humphris will have Brigitte Cech as a colleague for three years, also courtesy QNRF, to explore 'Raw Material Procurement in Meroe' – primarily mining and quarrying, in a challenging environment. Further research was done by visiting scholars, who spent periods of between six weeks and four months at our department in order to complete a piece of research or writing. The first of these, in the months up to Christmas, was Sam Nixon, who did his PhD at the Institute on an Islamic settlement in Mali. He was followed by Brigitte Cech from Vienna, finishing an edited book on European iron metallurgy and one on Roman mining and metallurgy in Austria – the latter in preparation for her future involvement in our Sudan project. Eleni Asderaki, from the National Museum in Volos, worked on Early Iron Age copper and iron from the eastern Mediterranean, and also made helpful contributions to the planning of our temporary conservation laboratories.



Fig. 2: The UCL Qatar inaugural public lecture by Tim Power.

Last, but certainly not least, for report here is the work done as part of our Continuous Professional Development programme, and on outreach more generally. A good number of CPD units, typically short courses of a few days to a few weeks in length, were offered exclusively to QMA staff; several of these courses had to be repeated due to high demand. In view of the large number of museums currently under development across the entire Gulf region, we decided to open these

courses additionally to other professionals, with effect from this autumn. We also organised two public lectures; the first on 'The Dome of the Rock', by Tim Power (**Fig. 2**), held at the Museum of Islamic Art, and the other by Robert Carter on 'The Origins of Seafaring in the Gulf', held in the Georgetown auditorium. Both attracted very good audiences of 120–180 guests, and we look forward to offering more such events once the summer heat is over.