



University College Dublin
An Coláiste Ollscoile, Baile Átha Cliath

UCD School of History

Prospectus for MA Archives and Records Management 2026/27

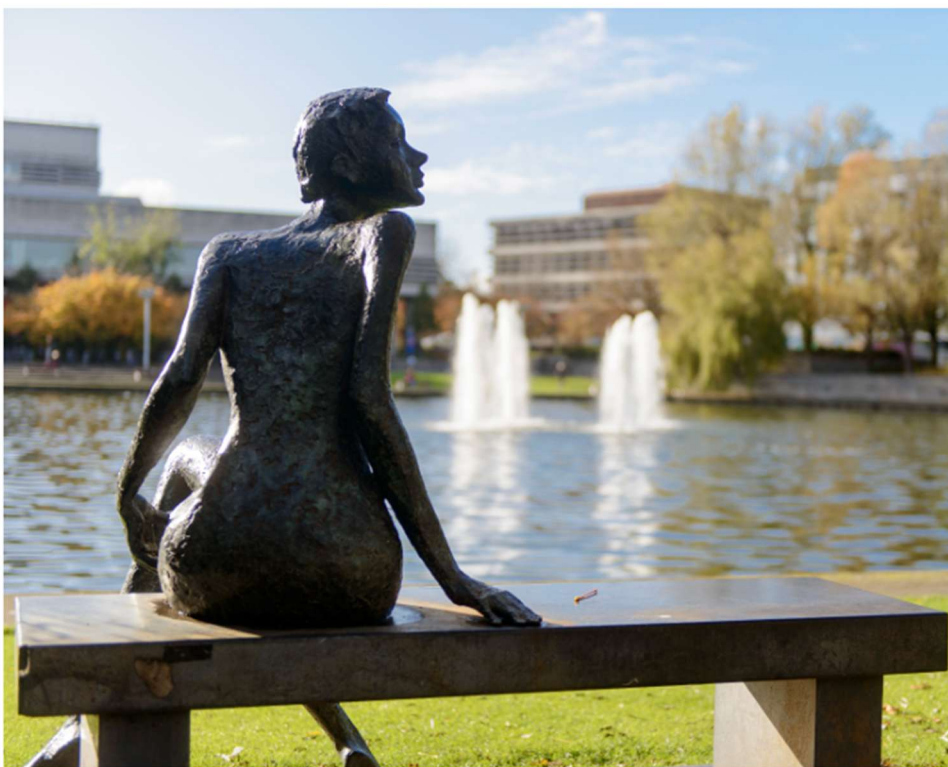


Figure 1 Rendezvous sculpture by the Belfield Lake (c) University College Dublin Vincent Hoban

The MA Archives and Records Management in the School of History in UCD is an exciting degree which qualifies students to manage a range of records and archives from medieval manuscripts to born digital records. The MA programme equips students with the skills to practically care for and provide access to the historic and future memory contained in records. It also provides students with a strong theoretical foundation in the discipline, underpinning their practical knowledge with an understanding of the ethical and legal role of the contemporary record keeper.

UCD has been the home of education and training for archivists and records managers in Ireland for over 50 years. The strong relationships established between UCD School of History and contemporary practitioners, professional bodies, and national and local repositories ensures that full-time and part-time MA students are involved in a range of collaborative workshops, projects and seminars throughout their training. Modules on the programme are taught by academics and practitioners with active research interests in archivistics, who combine professional training and experience as record-keepers with a strong academic record. The programme collaborates with other Schools within the University, such as the School of English and the School of Information and Communication, to ensure that students receive a broad and diverse range of optional modules.

UCD's MA Archives and Records Management programme has long-standing professional accreditation by the Archives and Records Association. This accreditation ensures that this qualification is recognized globally as being of a high standard. The ARA competency framework creates the foundation for students to map their professional development as recordkeepers throughout their careers. Graduates from the UCD programme are currently working in Ireland, the UK, Europe, Africa, North America, Asia, Australia and New Zealand. For more information about the history of our programme and our graduates see the archivistics page on the School of History website

<https://www.ucd.ie/history/study/postgraduateprogrammes/archivistics/>

This prospectus is divided into three parts:

- 1. MA Archives and Records Management - vision and value statement, learning outcomes, structure and syllabus**
- 2. MA Archives and Records Management - entry requirements, procedures, fees, accommodation and participation**
- 3. General information on a career in archives and records management**

If you have inquiries, please contact:

Dr Elizabeth Mullins e. elizabeth.mullins@ucd.ie (subject header: MA Archives and Records Management).

1. MA Archives and Records Management – vision and value statement, learning outcomes, structure, and syllabus

1.1 Vision and Value

The MA Archives and Records Management programme is aimed at graduates who wish to acquire the theoretical knowledge and practical skills to enable them to ethically manage records and archives in all formats, and to select, curate and ensure access to the historic and future memory they contain.

The programme is based on the conception of the record-keeper as a reflective professional, who is informed in terms of adherence to international best practice, creative in the delivery of services, sensitive to cultural difference, and dynamic in relation to technological change.

Teaching, learning, and assessment is based on enabling students to complete assignments, both individually and in groups, which practically simulate the work of the professional record-keeper. An engagement with the theory behind contemporary practice is encouraged through presentations, essays, and a minor research dissertation.

The programme's learning environment comprises lectures, seminars, field trips, practitioner visits and work placements. Onsite facilities allow students to gain practical experience of archival preservation and processing.

1.2 Learning Outcomes

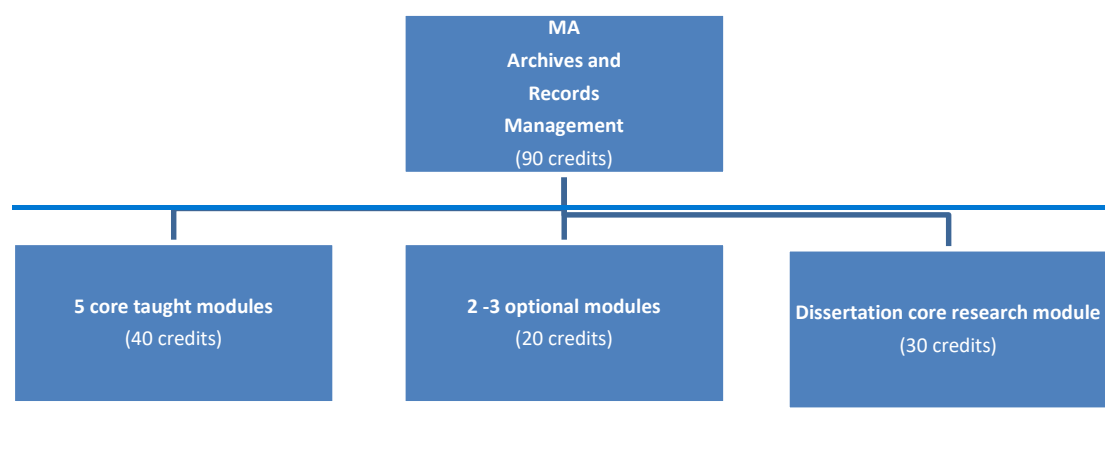
On completion of the MA Archives and Records Management Programme students should be able to:

- Demonstrate a thorough grounding in and knowledge of the principles underlying the theory and practice of the care and management of archives and records in all formats;
- Understand the specific historic, administrative and legal context of records and archives, and the relevance to these of national and international legislative provision and standards;
- Engage critically with current research trends and methodologies in archives and records management and appreciate their relevance to the workplace;
- Autonomously apply the skills of the archivist and records manager in a variety of working environments;
- Actively embrace the ethical and cultural responsibilities of the professional record keeper in line with the ARA Code of Ethics;
- Assume responsibility for their professional career progression in line with the ARA competency framework including the acquisition of new skills, the development of their leadership and management potential and engagement with the ARA registration scheme;
- Identify with the national and international community of archivists and records managers.

1.3 Structure

1.3.1 Overview

The MA consists of a maximum of eight modules each of which is worth 5 or 10 credits and a dissertation worth 30 credits. Five taught core modules amounting to 40 credits are mandatory. Two to three additional optional modules amounting to a total of 20 credits are usually taken from a choice of 7, subject to availability.



1.3.2 Core and optional modules

The five core modules, which form the basis of the taught syllabus, provide students with the fundamental knowledge, competencies, and skills relevant to a career in archives and records management. These taught core modules are complemented by the core dissertation module which allows students to develop research skills and refine their professionalism in a given area. Details of the various core modules are contained in the section 1.3. Note that these are subject to change depending on curriculum and professional requirements.

The optional modules broaden the knowledge base of students. They afford students the opportunity to go on a short work placement and to specialise in areas such as digital curation and palaeography. Optional modules are taught by staff in the School of History, the School of Information and Communication, the School of English and the School of Classics. The choice and content of optional modules may also vary from one year to the next.

Although some core and optional modules on the programme are available only to those taking the MA Archives and Records Management, a number are also open to other students in the School of History and to students in other schools and colleges within the university.

1.3 Syllabus

Core modules

ARCV 41340 Archival Representation (School of History) 10 credits

Aim: On successful completion of this module, students should be able to: Create item, series and fonds level descriptions in line with current international standards; Describe and arrange a collection of archival material; Create authority records in line with current international standards; Appreciate the significance of archival theory to the practice of representation.

Scope: One of the key tasks of the archivist is to create a series of finding aids to allow for the professional management of archives and for their discovery by users. This module introduces students to the theory and practice of archival representation, the way in which the archivist establishes physical and intellectual control over collections. It provides a practical introduction to the method for describing and arranging traditional textual archives in line with current Irish and international standards. The module explores the applicability of current standards to the representation of born digital archives and situates the key standards for archival description in the context of the broader metadata environment. The module explores ways of maximizing the discovery of archives, particularly focusing on the role of indexing and the creation of archival authority records. It introduces the software options available for cataloguing archival collections and considers the role of AI technologies in description. The module explores the theory of archival representation, introducing the key concepts of provenance and original order and examining the extent to which the archivist mediates between the user and the record and the need for a person-centred approach to this. It also explores ideas about the revisiting of collections and examines the significance of approaches like More Product Less Process to address practical issues of backlog and time management.

ARCV 40040 Archives and their users: advocacy and the archival gateway (School of History) 5 credits

Aim: On successful completion of this module the student should be able to: Identify ways to better understand users and user needs in developing appropriate frameworks for access; Experience person-centred approaches through using archives as a family history researcher; Develop an access policy; Formulate best practice procedures for running a physical research room and for managing access in online spaces; Recognise digitisation as a key means of supporting enhanced access and plan a digitisation project; be familiar with a range of outreach strategies.

Scope: This module considers the ways that archivists provide and promote access to collections in both physical and digital spaces. Drawing on more person-centred approaches, the module emphasises the need to understand users and their needs as well as recognising the barriers to access that exist. Access is situated in the context of international frameworks and best practice, and the role of an access policy is discussed. Students will develop understanding of the main practical and ethical considerations that arise when providing access to collections and will be introduced to the ways that archives can actively promote access via a range of outreach strategies.

ARCV 43450 Deciding What to Keep (School of History) 5 credits

Aim: On successful completion of this module students should be able to: Demonstrate familiarity with the theoretical framework for carrying out the appraisal and acquisition of archives; Critically assess the nature, purpose, and application of a range of appraisal strategies; Formulate and

implement effective and inclusive collecting policies and acquisition procedures; Design collection deposit and accessioning protocols for paper and digital material

Scope: One of the most challenging and arguably most significant tasks of the archivist is managing the process of deciding what records are of continuing value and warrant preservation in archives. This module broadly discusses ideas of collective memory and archival inclusiveness, addressing the issues of whose records should be preserved and the relationship of professional archivists to other collectors of records, particularly to community archives. The module then focuses on the strategies the profession has devised to appraise records, covering use based and societal approaches, documentation strategies, macroappraisal, and functional analysis. Taking a case study approach, the module examines the practical application of these strategies to both public and private records and explores their continued applicability to the appraisal of digital material. The module introduces the frameworks the profession uses to facilitate the acquisition of archives in terms of collecting and acquisition policies and deposit agreements. It covers the practical and ethical issues that can arise when acquiring archives, discusses the value of person-centred approaches to this area of archival work and introduces the processes of accessioning and deaccessioning collections.

ARCV 40070 Managing records and information in public and private organisations (School of History) 10 credits

Aims: On successful completion of this module, students should be able to: Recognise and communicate the significance of records at individual, organisational and societal level; Understand the purpose, nature and scope of records management and how this has evolved; Develop familiarity with the main theories, laws and standards relevant to information and records management; Identify the components of a records management programme and the key considerations when implementing these in practice; Reflect on the implications of people-centred approaches to recordkeeping and of technology-driven change on records management theory and practice.

Scope: This module considers the management of current records and information in public and private sector organisations. These information assets are crucial for organisational governance and accountability as well as the rights of individuals and wider society. Records professionals are core participants in their management and occupy a defining role whether as records or information managers, in roles encompassing combined archival and records management responsibilities, as members of a multi-disciplinary information governance team, or in a consultancy role. Specifically, the module addresses the defining characteristics of records, the scope of records management as a discipline and as a profession, and the challenges it faces. It introduces students to the theories, laws and best practice standards which underpin approaches to managing records and identifies the key aspects of records management programmes including the development of effective retention strategies. Students gain understanding of the main approaches and systems deployed to manage records in different kinds of organisations and how these are being impacted by the development of AI technology. The module considers the reasons why achieving good records management remains a challenge for many organisations and explores the people-centred approaches now informing records management with a focus on employees, information cultures and organisational cultures. Underpinning the module is consideration of the dynamic between people, technology and records.

ARCV41510 Archives Preservation (School of History) 5 credits

Aim: To develop a high level of competency in aspects of preservation management for analogue and digital collections, to identify preservation threats and to implement solutions, and to make informed choices about preservation strategies.

Scope: Using international standards and best practice, the module considers the preservation of archives and special collections, in both analogue and digital forms. It introduces students to the nature and characteristics of different formats, as well as the immediate and longer-term threats to their ongoing preservation and access. Being able to identify risks to collections and assess organisational preservation capabilities, in order to prioritise, plan for and manage preservation activities, are emphasised as key aspects of professional work. The module will provide students with an overview of the practical approaches that can be taken to mitigate preservation risks as well the importance of operating under the guiding framework of a preservation policy.

ARCV41470 The Recordkeeping Professional (School of History) 5 credits

Aims: On successful completion of this module students should be able to: Recognise the issues involved in managing, leading and resourcing archives and records management services; Understand ways of supporting environmental sustainability within our services; Articulate the value of recordkeeping professionals to organisations and wider society; Understand the importance of professional organisations and frameworks in particular the ARA Competency Framework in career planning and in supporting continuing professional development; Describe the ethical dimensions of archives and records management work.

Scope: This module supports students in making the transition from student to new professional and aims to raise students' awareness of the role of professionalism and continuing professional development as hallmarks of their professional lives. The module focuses on two main areas: first, it considers the management of archives and records services including strategic planning, resource management, and monitoring and measuring service performance. Secondly, it explores what it means to be a recordkeeping professional including awareness of ethical codes, the value of membership of relevant professional bodies and the importance of career planning benchmarked to a professional competency framework, in particular the ARA Competency Framework. In-class discussions and activities are supplemented by field trips to the island's two national archival repositories.

ARCV40200 Dissertation (School of History) 30 credits

Aim: To complete a thesis appropriate to a postgraduate student of archives and records management demonstrating a firm grasp of research skills

Scope: The 30-credit dissertation of c 10,000 -12,000 words in length completes the programme. The dissertation allows students to develop research skills and refine their professionalism in a given area. It may also lead to further research-driven endeavors in their careers. The dissertation topic is based largely on core and optional module subjects. Seminars to prepare students for the dissertation are given over the course of the autumn and spring semesters. Students submit dissertation proposals, carry out core reading and consider the ethical dimension of their research during the two taught semesters with the main write up of the research carried out in the summer semester.

1.3.2 Optional modules

LAT 10090 Beginners Latin 1 (School of Classics) 10 credits

This module is an introduction to the Latin language aimed at beginners who want to develop their language skills and their knowledge of Roman culture. We will translate stories from Greek and Roman mythology, adapted from the writing of the Roman poet Ovid. You will learn elementary Latin grammar and syntax and develop your understanding of principles of grammar and the Latin roots of the English language. The textbook is *Latin via Ovid* (Norma W.Goldman), supplemented by online interactive learning activities.

ARCV 41330 Introduction to Palaeography: Medieval and Early Modern Scripts (School of History) 5 credits

This module provides an introduction to medieval and early modern palaeography. Using mainly Irish and British manuscripts and archives as case studies, students will learn how to identify, describe and transcribe a series of medieval and early modern scripts. These scripts include Insular majuscule and minuscule, Gothic *textura*, *anglicana* and secretary. The module sets the development of handwriting in the context of broader social and political change within Ireland and Great Britain and explores how scripts were influenced by European scribal traditions. It outlines the basic principles and the key practices of editing a medieval text and introduces students to both the diplomatic and AI tools, which assist the understanding of a range of medieval and early modern archives. The module combines university seminars with visits to archives to view original material when this is possible.

ARCV 41490 Placement (School of History) 5 credits

This module facilitates students undertaking a short work placement (one or two weeks) in an archives or records management service. The placement enables students to experience the day-to-day work of an archive or records service, reflect on how the theory, standards and best practice of the classroom relate to different workplace contexts, and consider the issues and challenges in running archives and records services. The content of each placement will be determined by consultation between the student, the module coordinator and the host service but students will generally have the opportunity to see and hear about a range of functions as well as work on one or more small projects for the duration of their placement. Placements generally take place in either January before the teaching recommences or in the March mid-term period. Students are provided with a list of services with which placements have been agreed and nominate a number of services where they would like to get experience. The module coordinator allocates placements and organizes the placement process in line with UCD's internship and placement policies. Where students would like to do a placement in a service with whom there is not an established link either in Ireland or abroad, the module coordinator will explore the possibility for a placement. Note that the number of places in this option can be limited due to circumstances outside the School's control in particular the ability of services to facilitate placement opportunities due to resource issues.

IS40630 Digital Curation: Core Concepts (School of Information and Communication) 10 credits

Digital material is ubiquitous. However, if this data is not cared for, it will not be accessible in the future. Until recently, preservation, applied well after the digital item was created, had been the main method used to maintain digital materials over time. However, new technologies have raised additional challenges beyond which preservation can address. It has become clear that maintaining digital material needs to start before the point of creation, to ensure continued access over time. This course provides an introduction to the digital curation lifecycle as a strategy to manage the creation, conservation, and preservation of and long-term access to digital materials. On successful completion of this module students should be able to summarize the challenges and approaches to maintaining digital material; Identify the key requirements for digital curation; Describe the elements of the digital curation lifecycle; Critique the different approaches to selecting and appraising digital material; Compare and contrast case studies of digital curation projects.

IS40560 Digital Libraries (School of Information and Communication) 5 credits

Mobile technologies, new media, and pervasive computing are shifting the ways we think about digital libraries. They are no longer just "online" but offer exciting possibilities for integrating the real world and the virtual world. This module will examine the concept of digital libraries and examines the technical, managerial, and social issues associated with the concept of digital libraries. Topics will include the evolution of digital libraries; their social, technical, and related dimensions; the creation and management of digital resources, including data and data repositories; and digital library services, use, and users. Students will be asked to think creatively, work collaboratively, and contribute to the state of the art in digital library development and research.

IS40760 Research Data Management (School of Information and Communication) 5 credits

Increasingly, data are viewed as products to be managed, shared, and reused. Managing data is a complex process and involves technology, knowledge organization, information policy, and knowledge of the research process. This module will survey practices, services, technologies, and policy involved in managing research data: data management practices; national and international data policy, and the role and nature of data in diverse disciplines and institutions. The module is intended for postgraduate students and professionals in information studies or in any domain that requires the management of research data.

ENG40060: Digital Methods Information (School of English) 10 credits

This module offers an opportunity for students to enhance their digital competence and build their capacity to work digitally. It will familiarize students with basic machine reading techniques from the interdisciplinary field of digital humanities. It will enhance transferable digital skills and build student capacity to work with content management systems such as Wordpress and to experiment with digital tools and methods relevant to their academic discipline and beyond. Classes are taught mainly online with Weeks 1 and 11 held in person.

2. MA Archives and Records Management – entry requirements, application procedures, fees, accommodation and participation

2.1 Entry requirements

2.1.1 General

The M.A. Archives and Records Management is a postgraduate course. Applications are generally received from arts and humanities' graduates, but graduates of other faculties and disciplines are welcomed.

As the number of places on the course is limited, the allocation of places is on a competitive basis. Applications for the programme generally open from the 1 October in the year prior to the programme start date.

2.1.2 Requirements

Applicants must possess the following minimum qualifications:

- Ireland and the UK: 2nd class honours, grade I in the primary degree.
- Canada USA and other: a primary degree which is an internationally recognised equivalent of a UCD 2H1 or 3.2 GPA.
- Applicants whose first language is not English must demonstrate English language proficiency of IELTS 6.5 or equivalent.

In applying for this course applicants will have a distinct advantage if they have

- a very good academic record,
- relevant pre-course experience where this is possible,
- very good interpersonal skills and maturity of attitude,
- relevant digital skills,
- motivation.

2.1.3 Experience

While pre-course experience is strongly recommended, it is not mandatory for application. Often those intending to apply for the course seek pre-course experience by working on a voluntary basis in an archives or records management service or by availing of studentships and other funded trainee schemes. Pre-course experience does not have to be extensive but will allow applicants to develop a good understanding of the work of a professional record keeper. Experience is particularly important for those seeking a career change and for those whose experience of archives has been dictated by research use.

Regardless of the extent to which candidates have prior hands-on experience, all applicants must demonstrate an understanding of the nature of records and archives, the work of the modern archives and records service and the functions of the professional archivist and records manager.

2.1.4 Overseas applications

The hands-on nature of the UCD programme and the wealth of archival repositories in Dublin means that UCD is the ideal location to train in this field and the programme welcomes overseas applicants. Over the years many participants have come from the UK and other European countries in addition to those from North America, Asia and Africa. Overseas

applicants must satisfy the same admissions' criteria as other students and they must satisfy a language requirement where English is not a mother language. All core courses are taught in English and their generic nature means their content is relevant to an archivist working in any country of the world. Overseas applicants should note that fees are higher for non-European Union member state citizens.

2.2 Application procedures

- Applicants must fill out the 'Online Application Form' available at <https://www.ucd.ie/graduateadmissions/> and submit it electronically to the university with a fee. The full-time course code is Z020, the part-time course code is Z100.
- This application requires references from two referees (one academic and one a professional archivist/records manager or from two academic referees). Queries in relation to references can be directed to the School's Graduate studies administrator at gradhistory@ucd.ie
- Students must also upload certified transcripts to the online system.
- Applicants may be called for interview as part of the selection procedure. In the case of overseas applicants interview if required are either by phone or zoom.
- Applications to the MA programme can be made at any stage from October 2025 with an initial closing date for the 2026/27 course of **31 March 2026**.
- **Late applications will be considered after this date depending on available places.**

If advice on the application procedure is sought, please contact gradhistory@ucd.ie

2.3 Fees, expenses and accommodation

2.3.1 Fees

Fees vary from year to year. Details of fees are available from <https://www.ucd.ie/students/fees/>

Students accepted for a place on the MA Archives and Records Management course are eligible to apply for a bursary from the Heritage Council which was offered for the first time for the 2025-2026 cohort. Further information about this bursary and its terms and conditions are available at the following link:

https://www.ucd.ie/history/study/postgraduateprogrammes/ma_archives/heritagecouncilbursary/

Please note in addition that Irish and UK local authority grants may be available to some students.

While we strive to keep programme expenses to minimum, students are required to pay expenses incurred going on site visits in Dublin and during periods of professional placement.

2.3.2 Accommodation

Details of accommodation in student halls of residence are available from <https://www.ucd.ie/residences/>

2.3.3 Sessional profile: Full-time students

The full-time course lasts for the duration of one academic year from September to August. Course modules are taught for two fifteen-week semesters starting in September and ending in April.

The interval between the first and second semester and an interval during the second semester are used for the preparation of some course work and for placements. A dissertation, researched and written in the third semester, must be submitted in August to complete the 90 credits required for the Masters' qualification. Degrees are usually conferred in the month of December.

2.4 Sessional profile: Part-time participation

Part-time students complete the programme in two consecutive years. Generally, in the first year, we advise part-time students to take a significant number of the core taught modules amounting to a maximum of 45 credits in the period between September and April; in the second year, part-time students take their remaining core or optional modules amounting to 15 credits and complete the 30-credit dissertation. Some further information about timetabling for of the programme is available on our [FAQ page](#).

3. A career in archives and records management

Employment

The accredited nature of the MA means that it is an internationally recognized qualification and recent graduates are now working in parts of Europe, Africa, Asia, North America, Australia and New Zealand. In relation to Ireland, course graduates usually get contract work in the first couple of months following graduation. The main current employers for graduates are archival and records management consultancy companies and the public sector. Many positions to which recently qualified archivists and records managers are appointed are new. Working as a records professional in Ireland provides a genuine opportunity to develop and shape the field. The long-standing and high-quality training provided by the MA programme in UCD means that its graduates have played a key role in establishing the archives and records management profession in Ireland. UCD Graduates occupy many of leadership positions in national, local, university and religious archives and records services.

The Archives and Records Association (UK and Ireland)

The Association, which is the principal professional association for archivists, records managers and conservators, monitors the education of archivists in the UK and Ireland through a system of accreditation and embeds this in the context of a broader professional competency framework and registration scheme. Training programmes in UCD have been professionally accredited since the system was started in the 1980s. Information about the career of the archivist and records manager, avenues for continuing professional development

and the Association itself is available at <https://www.archives.org.uk/> which also has useful links to sites providing details of similar courses in the United Kingdom. Participants taking the M.A. programme are eligible and encouraged to apply for membership of the Association, as well as for membership of the Information and Records Management Society (UK and Ireland).