



‘Rewilding’ later prehistory workshop 4:

OASIS+ modules for plant and animal remains – feedback, live testing & looking forward

Date/time: Wednesday 11 December 2024, 11-16.30

Location: School of Archaeology, University of Oxford, 1/2 South Parks Road, Oxford OX1 3TG

Key workshop aims are to:

1. Process feedback from the online testing of the development version of the OASIS+ modules.
2. Undertake in-person testing of the OASIS+ modules with data specialists from the ADS
3. Co-design the search interface for querying these data in future

Programme:

11.00 Arrival & welcome *(Anwen Cooper) with coffee/tea*

11.30 Feedback on the initial period of online OASIS+ module testing *led by the ADS (Tim Evans)*

12.30 Lunch *(provided)*

13.30 In-person OASIS+ module testing *led by the ADS (Tim Evans & Jo Gilham)*

14.45 Tea/coffee

15.00 Interface design, future proofing and next steps *led by Poly Baker, Gill Campbell & Fay Worley (HE)*

16.00 Concluding remarks and close *(Anwen Cooper)*

To remember!

1. Please bring x2 recent specialist reports/datasets to test out on the OASIS+ module prototypes
2. We can issue Wi-Fi access codes but do download workshop material before you arrive to save time
3. Bring laptops, charging cables, etc. (although do ideally ensure devices are charged in advance)

Joining online: *If you are unable to join us in person you can access a Teams meeting using the following link, although note that part of the day will involve in-person group work:* [*https://shorturl.at/zz7jI*](https://shorturl.at/zz7jI)

**Workshop 4 11.12.2024**

Notes

# Session 1. Feedback on the initial period of online OASIS+ module testing led by the ADS (Tim Evans (TE))

## General

* When OASIS forms are started within the lifetime of a project currently depends on the organisation
* Importance of establishing workflow highlighted in OA testing session
* Priorities for OASIS+ forms: simple-signposting-synchronised-doable
* Overall, feedback was constructive

## Feedback on plant module

### Overall

**Interface**

* Users were divided on how it was organised – some were not sure about ‘accordion approach’- some reported jumping around between sections - TE flagged up aim to diagnose these issues during testing session

**Help text**

* Some are obscured on screen - and some need more help text on page itself
* Not all help text was passed on from TE to Jo Gilham (JG)
* ***AP: TE/JG to address and consult with Historic England (HE) as needed***

### Specific fields

**Environmental report summary**

* Need to ask people to use both common and Latin names in this - in standards and guidance - when we produce documentation
* ***AP: Working Group (WG)/HE to revisit***

**Location of online digital data**

* DOI is technically not a URL - but can improve with help text (digital data)- auto-populated? It might be tricky to automatically fill - theoretically possible but only link directly to archive
* linking to DOI in homepage for specialist repositories is best for futureproofing
* ***AP: TE/JG will revisit***

**Phases**

* Add in link to FISH period
* Update FISH vocabularies for Roman sub-periods- people can vote for new ones- not all specialists are familiar with them.
* Some difficulties with entering periods- just typing is not enough- need to type and click
* ***AP: TE/JG will do***

**Sample metadata**

* These need to follow HE guidance - could add a physical link to the Historic England technical guidance (<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/environmental-archaeology-2nd/>)
* There is an issue with the sample number being mandatory and with it being ambiguous (analysed vs assessed) - clarify with help text
* Revisit option of separating the number of samples actually analysed and the number of samples taken/assessed – it’s currently ambiguous which is being recorded – should record both?
* ***AP: WG/TE/JG to revisit***

**Material type**

* Question if ‘wood charcoal’ should be used. Charcoal is an approved material type in FISH (Archaeological object type)

**Physical evidence for plant macrofossils**

* Name for this was considered to be ambiguous/confusing. People weren’t sure why cereal remains etc weren’t included- field needs renaming to show it is referring to additional forms of macrofossil evidence outside what is otherwise recorded.
* ***AP: TE/JG/WG to revisit***

**Taxa (Plant macrofossil)**

* Large drop down - difficult to use
* Wild/uncultivated taxa currently not represented – presence and potentially key taxa should be included
* Don’t have a cereal indeterminate category, which is very commonly used
* We could encourage people to add only the highest taxonomic level we can identify to, or structure it in a way that makes you pick one on each taxonomic level (e.g highest identification level of wheat).
* Need to revisit how to structure and order taxa - needs to be hierarchical - would like to apply method from the animal form - our list would be searched
* It will be difficult to have hierarchical lists that allow you to pick more than one taxa
* Definition of superabundance needs to be given on the page itself
* Request to include indication of dominant taxa - was discussed on GitHub but rejected
* ***AP: TE/JG/WG will look at new structure for plant remains and revisit superabundant & dominant taxa options***

**Interpretative fields (Interpretation, Habitat type)**

* To be moved up (within the phase level) - useful to have at period level for research purposes
* ***AP: TE/JG will do***

**Wood/charcoal**

* Question as whether objects should go back into wood form
* ***AP: Working Group (WG)/HE to revisit***

## Feedback on animal module

### Overall

* Some data entry bugs reported and tested in afternoon session
* Some help text that needs adding
* User guide will be needed, potentially to be developed by user community
* ***AP: TE/JG/WG to revisit***

### Specific fields

**Sample/report metadata**

* ‘There was a problem adding the specialist’- error message needs to be updated, needs to be more obvious whether already entered
* ***AP: TE/JG to update***

**Scientific techniques applied**

* Request to put ‘zooarchaeology’ at top of list - maybe we don’t need zooarchaeology as a method?
* Not all techniques are relevant and could be shortened
* Move most frequently applied techniques to the top of the list?
* Potentially list can ‘learn’ best order based on usage
* ***AP: TE/JG/WG to revisit***

**Taxa and other dropdowns**

* Difficult to see the drop down lists in terms of the window size
* Is there an option for an expanding box so you can see the whole lists?
* Could have auto complete with typing - but then you can’t see the full list – seeing the full list was the preferred option in the room
* Hierarchical taxa list may be possible so that you can select first list - and second list pops up- and then a third- where you can check all relevant options
* Users would like entering the list to make them appear in their hierarchical order - this won’t be easy to do- might be possible.
* Query regarding whether you can edit the order of taxa if you forget one
* ***AP: TE/JG/WG to revisit***

**Age/metric data/ABG**

* Mandatory age and metric fields - add a don’t know option? Might need to simplify options
* Query regarding whether ABG should be mandatory
* ***AP: Working Group (WG)/HE to revisit***

**Phasing**

* Automatic phase labelling can be misleading e.g. phase 1, phase 2 regardless of original phase name in report or chronological order.
* JG: it’s a placeholder – it does show full phase name when you hover over- could put in a box that says phase name where you can name it.
* Can we re-label as phase A- or use abbreviations?
* The dates that correspond to periods aren’t currently in the OASIS+ form database- so automatic chronological not currently possible but could be?
* ***AP: TE/JG to revisit and feedback to WG***

**Faunal NISP**

* Some species not appearing for NISP counts - that was agreed already by WG.
* NISP by period is not always available, should it therefore not be mandatory?
* ***AP: HE/WG to revisit whether latter should be mandatory***

## Feedback on workflow

**Embedding module completion within routine practices within fieldwork organisations**

* ADS are planning a new function – where the archivist can assign OASIS records to a named specialist, including external freelance faunal specialists once the project record is created. Archivists can then give specialists access to records on an individual basis.
* Specialists will be alerted when they are given access to the record
* This will work if OASIS record is set up at the time the WSI is issued
* TE/JG are not sure if it will be possible for specialists to search for projects they’ve worked on in OASIS – it might be possible to do this if the specialist knows the ID and can search for this and request access
* ***AP: TE/JG to check***
* Alternatively: (a) specialists can start an OASIS record – they would need to enter location and then add the unit to the record OR (b) you can link two OASIS records to each other
* Completing OASIS+ forms need to be costed in at the beginning
* It will require some units time to change their systems - project managers haven’t been involved this in process - so we need to communicate this on a broader PX level
* ***AP: Anwen (AC) to look into options for PM data management/OASIS training***

**Embedding the forms in workflow beyond fieldwork organisations**

* OASIS+ is not currently flagged up as mandatory in the briefs issued by development control officers – this means that completion does not affect the core status of the OASIS form – making the modules mandatory is quite a big decision – depends on engagement and standards and guidance
* HER and DC communication – TE/JG are looking at tightening up protocol – this could be broadened to include ensuring the OASIS record is created at the start of a project
* Lewis Busby advises discussing with ALGAO to ensure it – OASIS+ modules don’t appear on the OASIS summary forms which are usually replicated at the end of reports (neither does geophysics) – this would also be useful in terms of embedding form completion in practice
* ***AP: AC to discuss with ALGAO; Rose Callis (HE) to present modules to ALGAO SW shortly***

**Linking from modules to other parts of the OASIS form**

* Modules are associated with an OASIS ID but there’s currently no direct link e.g. to multiple reports – would be good to access all associated reports in the interface
* Would it be possible to put a field in the plant and animal modules to select which OASIS report is relevant to the assemblage being described (you might then need to go back to the bibliography section and make sure your specified report is in this)?

# Session 2. In-person OASIS+ module testing (relevant notes to specific forms have been moved to the relevant section of feedback notes above for ease of reference)

**General form use**

* Completing the specialist name can be confusing in both forms (as noted above)
* If a record is ‘complete’ you can still add to it- it just means core fields are completed
* Interpretation field is neat and easy in the animal bones- could this functionality be transferred to the plant form?
* Need to be able to edit specialist names so we can add ORCIDs to names not already associated with one
* Need a warning text- ‘are you sure you want to delete this?’
* ***AP: TE/JG/WG to revisit***

# Session 3. Interface design, future proofing & next steps led by Poly Baker, Gill Campbell & Fay Worley (HE)

**Data flow**

* Live querying OASIS from outside is not an option
* So, we will need to create something equivalent to the geophysical survey database (<https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/ehgsdb_eh_2011/>)
* This will automatically sync with the OASIS+ records once the OASIS record is marked as complete and reviewed by HER.
* Review window for HERs set at 6 months, so goes through if not reviewed
* Currently if you edit an OASIS record it won’t automatically be fed through to the database - but this could be built in if needed.
* Main OASIS fields can be pulled through with the OASIS+ data
* We may want to bring in associated monument types or keywords into the specialist database
* But there may be mismatch -e.g. an Iron Age hillfort that only produced medieval plant remains

**Seeding data into the database**

* Can you bring in other project data providing it’s in a similar format? Would be sensible to amalgamate regional reviews, Roman Rural Settlement project etc. In theory yes but would need to look at the fields carefully to see how compatible they are.
* ***AP: To be revisited once module format is resolved***

**Visual interface**

* We can have an interactive map
* We will need to get the location fed through from main OASIS record

**Questions we can ask of the database**

* Some questions we can clearly address- some are a bit more uncertain.
* Setting a distance based research area would require GIS
* Do we want to be able to cross-search plant and animals? Might be simpler to have separate interfaces but have an indicator as to whether there is a record for the other category of evidence (e.g. by showing a static layer of plant records on the map alongside the results of an animal remains records query).
* Do we want to search by date range as well as by period?
* You can search by research framework questions but it only will bring up those that have recorded data in the plant/animal modules.
* Boolean, special character searches to restrict whether you find whole words or parts of words would be particularly useful when looking for reference to specific taxa etc in summaries BUT these can be confusing for some users (ADS to advise on this)
* ***AP: GIS capability to be incorporated. AP: TE/JG/WG to discuss further as needed.***

**Reviewing**

* Is there a plan in place to review? OASIS management board could have environmental specialist representation on it.
* ***AP: TE/JG/HE and Rewilding to discuss***

**Outputs**

* Can we choose which fields are returned - most people would like to switch fields on and off.
* Downloadable output - yes you can download your query as a CSV.
* You can’t upload published material - but you can add the DOI/ref to the main OASIS form
* Can link through to grey literature library (ADS library) entry by joining it to respective OASIS ID
* We don’t record specialist reports separately currently, JG suggests adding a field to link to a report in the bibliography part of the main OASIS form.
* Can’t necessarily download all the complex data in a csv- needs looking into further.
* ***AP: Output as .CSV to be prioritised, as well as selecting relevant fields. TE/JG/HE and Rewilding to discuss further as needed, especially as regards bibliographic referencing.***

## Main priorities for interface

* Map function
* Search radius
* Downloadable y x data point data- can generate centroids for polygons or have a range.
* Results to be generated both as points on a map and list form
* Want to filter on all the fields we’ve entered in the OASIS+ form
* Simple indicator as to whether there is an equivalent plant/animal record
* Link directly to report in grey literature library
* AWG, PZG CWG can work on guidance documents
* FAQs guide needed to accompany interface
* ***AP: HE to pass on any further main priorities recorded on post-its during session. TE/JG/HE and Rewilding to prioritise these factors in interface design. WG, AWG, PZG, CWG to work on guidance documents/FAQs***

**Next steps**

* We can have a conversation on the interface and how well it works
* Further discussions on interface in additional working group meeting- we can take on more members
* Need to think more on how we embed this in the system.
* Future training - we have money left to do this. A YouTube video? Or a training person to visit units?
* **AP: Further WG meetings to develop further. TE/JG/HE/WG to review training options**

# Final points:

* Specialists can continue to fill in Cognito forms if they have any more feedback.
* Set a deadline for end of feedback in first week of January (Friday 10 January)