



## **POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION**

**Programme Title: Suite of Ecology & Conservation Awards**

**Awarding Body: Staffordshire University**

**Teaching Institution: Staffordshire University**

**Final Awards:**

MSc in Invertebrate Ecology and Conservation

MSc in Ecology & Conservation

**Intermediate Awards:**

Postgraduate Diploma in Invertebrate Ecology and Conservation

Postgraduate Certificate in Invertebrate Ecology and Conservation

Postgraduate Diploma in Ecology & Conservation

Postgraduate Certificate in Ecology & Conservation

**Mode of Study Full-time or part-time**

**UCAS Codes: N/A**

**QAA Subject Benchmarks: N/A**

**Professional/Statutory Body: N/A**

**Date of Production: 20/5/2010**

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## EDUCATIONAL AIMS OF THE PROGRAMME

- To provide focused and *vocationally relevant* advanced-level training that will enable you to critically evaluate and integrate complex theoretical, practical and ethical considerations to the conservation and management of wildlife.
- To develop a deep understanding of EITHER:
  - **Invertebrate Ecology & Conservation**, which embraces the challenging need to understand the ecology and conservation needs of the 99% of fauna that are not vertebrates. Over the last decade the plight of invertebrates has become better known and there is now more demand for consultants with expertise in both aquatic and terrestrial invertebrates (especially insects). This course, provides the knowledge and skills base relevant for a range of careers in freshwater and terrestrial invertebrate conservation. **OR**
  - **Ecology & Conservation** where you negotiate the contents of an advanced course that fulfils your own particular academic and career interests within the broad discipline of nature conservation. The course may be particularly attractive to people in employment who want to tailor the course to their specific job-related needs.
- To foster the generic *and specialist practical* skills necessary to enable you to apply your training in future employment.
- To provide you with an intellectually demanding and stimulating course that will enable you to receive information critically, to assess and process it analytically, and to communicate it effectively
- To enable you to apply practical and research skills to original research.

### What is distinctive about this programme

- Courses are vocationally oriented and have been developed in consultation with employers
- Available full- or part-time

- Courses are taught with a mix of academics and active practitioners
- 'Invertebrate Ecology & Conservation' is the first specialist course of its type in the UK
- The Invertebrate Ecology & Conservation and Ecology & Conservation courses include the option to negotiate the content of one module to reflect personal academic interests
- Our postgraduate students have an excellent record of employment
- We have our own Nature Reserve
- We have easy access to urban and rural wildlife sites

## PROGRAMME OUTCOMES

What will this programme teach me to do? At the end of your studies you should be able to:

### PgCert/PgDip/ MSc in Invertebrate Ecology and Conservation

**Postgraduate Certificate & Diploma:** The Certificate and Diploma are distinguished by the number of modules taken (4 in the Certificate, 8 in the Diploma). The Diploma would result in the first six programme outcomes having been achieved with the Certificate resulting in a subset, depending on the modules taken, but would include as a minimum Outcomes 1 and 2 (which cover the University Learning Outcomes of Knowledge & Understanding, Analysis, and Communication).

1. Demonstrate advanced-level knowledge and understanding of ecological concepts and evaluate their application to the management and conservation of Invertebrates and their habitats (Knowledge and Understanding, Analysis)
2. Communicate a range of ecological concepts and express your informed opinions clearly and concisely using appropriate media and styles to specialist and non-specialist audiences (Communication)
3. Demonstrate independent learning skills required to advance your knowledge and understanding of ecological concepts (Learning)
4. Demonstrate a range of practical and professional skills necessary to work as a ecologist (Reflection)
5. Demonstrate critical evaluation of current research and problems relating to invertebrate conservation that is informed by the forefront of conservation science (Analysis)
6. Evaluate complex ecological and conservation-related issues and make sound judgements in complex and unpredictable situations (Problem Solving)

**Masters:** The Master's degree is differentiated from the Postgraduate Certificate and Diploma by the research project and outcomes 7 to 10 reflect the nature of the Master's project and the intellectual progression that it brings.

7. Demonstrate originality in the application of ecological knowledge and approaches to problems related to the conservation of invertebrates (Application)
8. Demonstrate advanced and comprehensive understanding and critical evaluation of methodologies and approaches to your own ecological research (Analysis, Enquiry, Knowledge & Understanding)
9. Demonstrate the ability to present, analyse and interpret complex data appropriately (Problem Solving, Communication)
10. Demonstrate self-direction, initiative, originality and personal responsibility in undertaking an empirical research project (Reflection)

## PgCert/PgDip/ MSc in Ecology and Conservation

**Postgraduate Certificate & Diploma:** The Certificate and Diploma are distinguished by the number of modules taken (4 in the Certificate, 8 in the Diploma). The Diploma would result in the first six programme outcomes having been achieved with the Certificate resulting in a subset, depending on the modules taken, but would include as a minimum Outcomes 1 and 2 (which cover the University Learning Outcomes of Knowledge & Understanding, Analysis, and Communication)

1. Demonstrate advanced-level knowledge and understanding of ecological concepts and evaluate their application in the management and conservation of wildlife and their habitats (Knowledge and Understanding, Analysis)
2. Communicate a range of ecological concepts and express your informed opinions clearly and concisely using appropriate media and styles to specialist and non-specialist audiences (Communication)
3. Demonstrate independent learning skills required to advance your knowledge and understanding of ecological concepts (Learning)
4. Demonstrate a range of practical and professional skills necessary to work as a ecologist (Reflection)
5. Demonstrate critical evaluation of current research and problems relating to ecology and conservation that is informed by cutting-edge knowledge (Analysis)
6. Evaluate complex ecological and conservation-related issues and make sound judgements in complex and unpredictable situations (Problem Solving)

**Masters:** The Master's degree is differentiated from the Postgraduate Certificate and Diploma by the research project and outcomes 7 to 10 reflect the nature of the Master's project and the intellectual progression that it brings.

7. Demonstrate originality in the application of ecological knowledge and approaches to problems related to nature conservation (Application)
8. Demonstrate advanced and comprehensive understanding and critical evaluation of methodologies and approaches to your own ecological research (Analysis, Enquiry, Knowledge & Understanding)
9. Demonstrate the ability to present, analyse and interpret complex data appropriately (Problem Solving, Communication)
10. Demonstrate self-direction, initiative, originality and personal responsibility in undertaking an empirical research project (Reflection)

## PROGRAMME STRUCTURE, MODULES AND CREDITS

- All award routes can be studied full time (15 months for the MSc<sup>1</sup>) or part-time (normally 27 months for the MSc<sup>1</sup>). Individual programmes can be tailored for students wishing to do an award over a longer time scale (up to a maximum of 5 years for the MSc).
- The PgCert, PgDip and MSc in Invertebrate Ecology and Conservation has a prescribed core of modules unlike the PgCert, PgDip in Ecology and Conservation. Modules are mainly 15 credits in size apart from one 30-credit module in Invertebrate Taxonomy with Fieldcourse, and the 60-credit Masters Research Project.
- The PgCert and PgDip in Ecology and Conservation are free of compulsory modules, for the MSc in Ecology and Conservation the Research Project is compulsory, and any module that is available (subject to timetable clashes) can be chosen. Students studying in part-time mode will be able to avoid many such clashes, and as such the courses offer a high degree of flexibility. There are a small number of restrictive conditions:
  - If the modules chosen are the same as in one of the other named awards, or contains the compulsory modules for a named award, then the student will graduate with the named award
  - The correct number of credits must have been accumulated for the appropriate award (60 for PgCert, 120 for PgDip, 180 for MSc)
  - To qualify for the MSc in Ecology & Conservation, one of the chosen modules must be the Research Project

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<sup>1</sup> Courses are slightly longer than the traditional 12 month full-time (and 24 month part-time) duration of many Masters degrees due to the seasonal nature of the subject

**PgCert/PgDip, MSc in Invertebrate Ecology and Conservation**

Module	Credits	PgCert 60 credits	PgDip 120 credits	Masters 180 credits
Invertebrate Conservation Management	15	C or O	C	C
Invertebrate Taxonomy with Field course	30	O or C	C	C
GIS for Ecology & Conservation	15	O	C	C
Field Course	15	O	C	C
Professional Practice	15	O	C	C
Managing Terrestrial Habitats	15	O	C	C
Managing Freshwater Habitats	15	O	C	C
Work Experience for Ecologists	15		O	O
Research Placement for Ecologists	15		O	O
Greening the Grey	15		O	O
Negotiated Learning Module	15		O	O
Research Project	60			C

C = Compulsory module; O = Option module (for the specific level)

TB1 (Autumn)	Invertebrate Conservation Management (15)	Professional Practice (15)	Greening the Grey (15)	GIS for Ecology & Conservation (15)	Work Experience for Ecologists (15)	Research Placement for Ecologists (15)	Negotiated Learning Module (15 – over one TB)	Research Project (60)
TB2 (Spring)	Managing Terrestrial Habitats (15)	Managing Freshwater Habitats (15)	Invertebrate Taxonomy with Field course (30)					
TB3 (Summer)								
TB1 (Autumn)								

## PgCert/PgDip, MSc in ECOLOGY AND CONSERVATION

Module	Credits	PgCert 60 credits	PgDip 120 credits	Masters 180 credits
Professional Practice for Ecologists	15	O	O	O
GIS for Ecology & Conservation	15	O	O	O
Field Course	15	O	O	O
Ecological Survey and Identification Skills	15	O	O	O
Managing Terrestrial Habitats	15	O	O	O
Managing Freshwater Habitats	15	O	O	O
Work Experience for Ecologists	15	O	O	O
Research Placement for Ecologists	15	O	O	O
Greening the Grey	15	O	O	O
Invertebrate Conservation Management	15	O	O	O
Invertebrate Taxonomy with Fieldcourse	30	O	O	O
Negotiated Learning Module	15	O	O	O
Research Project	60			C

C = Compulsory module; O = Option module (for the specific level)

TB1 (Autumn)	Invertebrate Conservation Management (15)	Professional Practice (15)	Greening the Grey (15)	GIS for Ecology & Conservation (15)	Ecological Survey and ID Skills (15)	Work Experience for Ecologists (15)	Research Placement for Ecologists (15)	Negotiated Learning Module (15 – over one TB)	Research Project (60)
TB2 (Spring)	Managing Terrestrial Habitats (15)	Managing Freshwater Habitats (15)	Invertebrate Taxonomy with Field course (30)						
TB3 (Summer)	Field Course (15)								
TB1 (Autumn)									

This module with its high degree of flexibility means that it is very important that you appreciate the implications of your module choices on your future career path(s). We do carefully discuss with each student the implications of their choices.

## HOW WILL I BE TAUGHT AND ASSESSED?

### How we teach

The nature of Ecology and Conservation is such that it needs face-to-face delivery and practical experience. The course team of academics is supplemented by professional ecologists working in a range of jobs (e.g. for a Local Authority, a consultancy company or an environmental charity).

Our approach is to give you a varied learning experience, so some classes may consist of formal lectures, whilst others will be more in the form of workshops or tutorials where the lecturer and student group actively exchange information and debate issues. Not all teaching and learning happens within the confines of the classroom. In a vocationally-oriented group of courses, such as these, practical work may be carried out in a laboratory (for example learning to use identification keys), but is just as likely to be off-site in a local nature reserve, 'green space' or away from the area in a residential field course. One module combines extremes: 'GIS (Geographical Information Systems) for Ecology and Conservation' combines fieldwork with using computer mapping software in an IT suite.

### How we assess

In the same way that the teaching is delivered in a variety of ways we assess you in a variety of different ways; each module has no more than two 'assessments' and in some cases there is only one. Whilst we do not have formal examinations in large sports halls, we do have some 'in-class' tests especially to assess identification skills. Whilst the majority of assessments are 'reports', the nature of them varies, depending on what is most appropriate for the module content. Examples include a

- Nature Reserve Management Plan
- 'briefing paper' on management options
- literature review
- field report in the style of a popular nature journal
- newspaper article
- scientific 'short communication'
- reflection on work experience

For those taking a Masters dissertation, there will also be a write-up in the format of a scientific paper.

Not all assessments are conventional written reports: one module includes a verbal presentation of a consultancy bid using power-point, another, the production of an 'electronic information portal' such as a web-site.

The assessments are designed to test whether you have achieved the desired learning outcomes for each module, be they evidence of understanding, skills development, or both. But, as well as providing marks on which to gauge your performance, all the assessments fulfil a 'formative' role: they are designed to help you learn and also provide valuable feedback on your progress and how it can be improved. In other words assessment and learning are intimately

linked.

### **You take responsibility for your own learning**

At Masters level it is expected that you will have a substantial amount of control, and responsibility, for your own learning. Modules are designed with an estimated 'learning time' of 150 hours for a standard lecture-based 15-credit module, but in most cases you will have about 24 hours in class with a lecturer for such a module. This means that the remaining 126 hours of learning is in independent study (although some modules may involve an element of co-operative group work).

Some of the independent learning time will be tutor-directed; some of the time will involve organised meetings between you and your tutor to plan and review progress and to set tasks to be completed. In other modules you may meet with a tutor to organise and plan your time in order to meet agreed outcomes. Having said that, a substantial amount of the independent learning time will involve you taking responsibility for planning, organising, researching and carrying out your work, writing assignments, etc.

The research project at Masters level is the pinnacle of independent study where there is relatively little time spent face-to-face with a tutor; it is also the module that is worth most in terms of credits (a hefty 60-credits, equal to one-third of a Masters course).

All our modules are supported by a 'virtual learning environment' called 'Blackboard'. This is essentially a space hosted on the University network which is accessible through the internet. Each module has a 'slot' which will contain such information as the module handbook, the assignments, usually the lecture notes for each session, and some additional learning materials to help you in your independent study. We are moving towards electronic submission of assignment reports and, in some modules at least, you will be expected to upload your assignment rather than to hand-in a paper document – and you do this via 'Blackboard'.

### **Developing critical evaluation skills and a professional approach**

At Masters level, you will be expected to critically evaluate the relevance, scientific integrity and relative value of information, in order to appraise how usefully it contributes to the question asked. This probably represents the biggest challenge you will face, especially with the increasing number of information sources available on-line.

Also, as a vocationally-oriented course, we try to maximize workplace-relevance at all times and this includes our expectations of the quality and presentation of your work. For example, you will be asked to produce reports as if they had been produced by a consultancy company, with numbered sections, an executive summary, a high standard of presentation, etc. You will also have to consider health and safety issues, and produce full costings to show how you will keep to budget on your task.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

### Entry Requirements (including IELTS score):

IELTS minimum score of 6.0 or equivalent

### What qualifications would I need to join this programme?

The entry requirements for the award are normally:

Minimum 2:2 degree in a biological, environmental or geographical subject and/or accredited professional qualification or vocational experience in relevant areas.

Students without standard entry qualifications/experience are invited to contact the award tutor for a discussion of their eligibility and/or advice on gaining suitable entry qualifications/ experience.

### Disability Statement

Staffordshire University operates a policy of inclusive teaching and learning to ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to fulfil their educational potential. Details about how to apply to have your needs assessed can be found at: [http://www.staffs.ac.uk/study\\_here/disabled\\_students/index.jsp](http://www.staffs.ac.uk/study_here/disabled_students/index.jsp)

## AWARD SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Further information on the courses can be found at:

[www.staffs.ac.uk/study\\_here/courses/invertebrate-ecology-and-conservation-tcm4228887.jsp](http://www.staffs.ac.uk/study_here/courses/invertebrate-ecology-and-conservation-tcm4228887.jsp) for the Invertebrate Ecology & Conservation Course

[www.staffs.ac.uk/courses\\_and\\_study/courses/ecology-and-conservation-tcm4231826.jsp](http://www.staffs.ac.uk/courses_and_study/courses/ecology-and-conservation-tcm4231826.jsp) for the Ecology & Conservation Course

**Further information about the award can be found in the relevant Student Handbook and on the University Website. This includes information about optional modules, student support, and academic regulations.**

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