The University Of Sheffield.

Programme Specification

A statement of the knowledge, understanding and skills that underpin a taught programme of study leading to an award from The University of Sheffield

Programme Details

1. Programme title	Biodiversity and Conservation
2. Programme code	APST14 / BIST03
3. QAA FHEQ level	7
4. Faculty	Science
5. Department	School of Biosciences
6. Other departments providing credit bearing modules for the programme	None
7. Accrediting Professional or Statutory Body	None
8. Date of production/revision	December 2022

Awards	Type of award	Duration	
9. Final award	MSc	Yes	12 months
10. Intermediate awards	PGDip	No	9 months
	PGCert	No	9 months

Programme Codes

11. JACS code(s) *Select between one and three codes from the HESA website.*	C184	C181	
12. HECoS code(s) *Select between one and three codes from the HECoS vocabulary.*	101318	100864	

Programme Delivery

13. Mode of study	Full-time
14. Mode of delivery	Face to face

15. Background to the programme and subject area

Biodiversity conservation is of global importance as the human population grows towards 10 billion and pressure on natural resources and ecosystems increases. Indeed, UN Sustainable Development Goal 15 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is devoted to "protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss". Equipping graduates with the knowledge to understand these challenges and the skills to address them is therefore a priority. The University of Sheffield is a centre of research excellence in biodiversity and conservation of a wide range of ecosystems from the tropics to the Arctic and from forests to seas. We harness this expertise to deliver a course which combines fundamentals of biodiversity and conservation science together with practical applications across a range of natural, agricultural, and urban ecosystems.

16. Programme aims

MSc Biodiversity and Conservation aims to:	
A1	Provide an in-depth coverage of current theory, main methods, and key issues in biodiversity and conservation science.
A2	Equip students with the skills to critically analyse current topics in biodiversity, conservation, and global change.
A3	Provide training in the key skills required to plan and manage a scientific project, and develop students' abilities to independently research a topic in depth.
A4	Show students how they can apply their academic knowledge to effect positive societal and economic change.

17. Programme learning outcomes

Knowledge and understanding

On successful completion of the programme, students will be able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of:

		Links to Aim(s)
K1	Major conservation issues affecting a range of global ecosystems and their human and environmental drivers	A1, A2
K2	Major ecosystem types and broad patterns of biodiversity in space and time	A1
K3	The principles of robust scientific enquiry	A3
K4	How to apply subject-specific knowledge to new settings, context and challenges to make a positive difference in the world	A3, A4

Skills and other attributes On successful completion of the programme, students will be able to:		
S1	Summarise and classify key topics in biodiversity and conservation biology	A1
S2	Critically interrogate contentious ideas in biodiversity and conservation biology	A2
S3	Demonstrate creative and strategic approaches to problem solving both independently and through effective group work	A3
S4	Apply critical and analytical skills, in particular design of experiments, data analysis and the use of statistics	A3
S5	Communicate complex or contentious ideas effectively, in both writing and orally, to peers, other specialist audiences, and the general public	A3
S6	Identify questions or knowledge gaps in the field, and design, plan, conduct and report on a rigorous investigation to address these	A4

18. Learning and teaching methods

Learning objectives will be delivered through a range of teaching methods including lectures, seminars, tutorials and discussion groups, practical and field classes, and individual research. K1 and K2 are delivered primarily through lectures and discussions delivered mainly by School of Biosciences academic staff supplemented by external guest speakers. K3 and K4 are delivered primarily through seminars, tutorials and practical classes. Skills will be developed through hands-on practical classes and master-classes, group and individual projects. Delivery will build on the School of Biosciences' reputation for research-led teaching, and will be provided by a range of academic and teaching staff. Skills sessions in semester 1 will focus on key skills required for students to become self-directed learners, including for example sessions on critical reading of scientific literature and literature research skills. Links to key resources will be provided on the dedicated programme Blackboard area and within module-level Blackboard sites.

19. Assessment and feedback methods

Assessment is primarily via a variety of coursework, with specific exercises designed to develop and test different skills. Coursework includes various written exercises (essays, extended project reports, policy briefing notes, statistics exercises), as well as oral presentations, with an emphasis on effective communication to a range of specific audiences. Feedback will be available to students prior to final assessment. Depending on the module, this may involve individual or small group discussions, or annotation of written work.

Formative feedback is built into the constituent modules of this programme, and includes verbal feedback in group sessions, as well as structured and open-door dedicated feedback sessions in advance of coursework deadlines, providing students the opportunity to act on feedback prior to final submission of work. In addition, there are opportunities to get detailed feedback on sections of major pieces of written work, in the form of verbal comments or written annotations. Workshops will provide the opportunity for generic feedback to be offered, as well as allowing students to raise questions and request feedback in a small-group setting. Feedback will be provided on all assessed work, primarily in the form of annotations and comments on written work. Electronic marking will be used as standard with feedback accessible via Blackboard. Links to relevant skills sessions provided either within the School of Biosciences or via other routes (e.g. 301) will be provided as appropriate in support of specific feedback comments.

20. Programme structure and student development

This course is designed to offer students a core curriculum covering a wide range of topics in biodiversity and conservation science, while providing limited module choice to enable students to gain specialist skills relevant to their own career aspirations. It offers a progression from learning fundamental concepts and core skills, through to applying these via an independent literature review and finally a significant independent research project.

Core learning is provided by 4 x 15 credit modules across semesters 1 and 2, which students will choose from available options. These include primarily lecture-delivered courses teaching principles of conservation through real-world case studies of major conservation issues, as well as the issues that arise as we try to balance sustainable food production with biodiversity conservation, practical application of modern methods in biodiversity science, a lecture-driven module on global sustainability from an ecosystem ecology perspective, and a specialist module teaching methods applicable to study and conserve birds. A dedicated field course module will include visits to field sites, learning about specific conservation issues on the ground, including, for example, the constraints posed by policy and legal frameworks and budgets, as well as the biodiversity of the field site.

In addition, all students will conduct a core 15 credit literature review (semester 1 and 2) which will allow them to develop their critical reading and writing skills, and to research in depth a topic of interest related to their learning in the taught modules. Students will also take a 15 credit (semester 1 and 2) Advanced Scientific Skills module which will provide them with the more generic writing, communications, and project-based skills required for a range of careers, and a 15 credit (semester 2) Advanced Data Handling and Analysis module which will give them the computational and analytical skills required for a range of scientific careers. Finally, students will conduct a capstone 60 credit research project, enabling them to apply their knowledge, reflecting the learning and development of critical subject-specific critical and analytical skills over the course of the programme

Students achieving 120 credits from modules excluding the research project will be eligible for a PGDip in Biodiversity and Conservation, and students achieving 60 credits from these modules will be eligible for a PGCert in Biodiversity and Conservation. Students who in addition successfully complete the Independent Research Project will be eligible for an MSc in Biodiversity and Conservation.

Detailed information about the structure of programmes, regulations concerning assessment and progression and descriptions of individual modules are published in the University Calendar available online at http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/calendar/

21. Criteria for admission to the programme

Detailed information regarding admission to programmes is available from the University's On-Line Prospectus at http://www.shef.ac.uk/courses/.

22. Reference points

The learning outcomes have been developed to reflect the following points of reference:

Subject Benchmark Statements
https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/subject-benchmark-statements

Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (2014)
https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/quality-code/qualifications-frameworks.pdf

University Vision and Strategic Plan
https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/vision

23. Additional information

None

This specification represents a concise statement about the main features of the programme and should be considered alongside other sources of information provided by the teaching department(s) and the University. In addition to programme specific information, further information about studying at The University of Sheffield can be accessed via our Student Services web site at http://www.shef.ac.uk/ssid.