

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION



1	Awarding Institution	Newcastle University
2	Teaching Institution	Newcastle University
3	Final Award	MSc
4	Programme Title	Biodiversity, Conservation and Ecotourism
5	UCAS/Programme Code	5143P
6	Programme Accreditation	Not Applicable
7	QAA Subject Benchmark(s)	Not Available
8	FHEQ Level	Masters
9	Date written/revised	October 2007

10 Programme Aims

Overall this MSc is designed to provide a holistic approach to Ecotourism i.e. will provide students with abilities to develop ecotourism in an environmentally and socially sustainable fashion. It is aimed at students from a variety of science and social science backgrounds. The structure of the MSc requires students to select a balance of modules concerning environmental, social and business topics which enhances the holistic nature of the degree. Modules often require students to take this holistic approach in case studies and students will be encouraged to consider all aspects of ecotourism where appropriate.

On completing the degree students should be able to realise ecotourism opportunities, take up employment in the tourism sector or continue in research in biodiversity, social or business related areas. The degree is particularly suited to enhanced employment prospects in the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) as this organisation requires staff to have a higher degree. The degree will be useful for academic staff in the South East Asia region to further their professional development and improve their English Language skills. The major research project taken towards the end of the degree enables students to study in depth an area of biodiversity or ecotourism of particular personal interest. The length of the study is such that it will allow a significant report to be made on business or social ecotourism studies or for a laboratory or field based project therefore providing a sound research training basis useful for further national or international PhD. studies.

In summary the degree aims :

- To provide multidisciplinary studies on biodiversity and ecotourism
- To provide fundamental economic knowledge relevant to ecotourism
- To provide a qualification assisting graduates to recognise opportunities and therefore enhance employment prospects in ecotourism
- To develop and improve key skills (written and oral communication and teamwork)
- To develop and improve skills in the use of literary resources and information technology
- To encourage creativity skills
- To develop skills in critical assessment of information and/or data.
- To provide an opportunity to develop laboratory and/or field based research skills.

The programme meets the descriptors of the Masters level (M, level 4) of the QAA framework for higher education qualifications for England, Wales and Northern Ireland

11 Learning Outcomes

The programme provides opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate knowledge and understanding, qualities, skills and other attributes in the following areas :

Knowledge and Understanding

On completing the programme students should:

- A1 Fundamental knowledge and understanding of the science of biodiversity and human activities which utilise and affect it. **NAR8001**, *NAR8002*, **NAR8004**, **NAR8005**, *NAR8007*, *NAR8008*, *NAR8017*, *NAR8019*
- A2 Advanced knowledge and understanding of a chosen specialist area relating to biodiversity and/or ecotourism : **NAR8013**
- A3 A knowledge and understanding of the social and/or ecological impacts of ecotourism. *NAR 8003*, **NAR8004**, **NAR8006**, *NAR8012*, *NAR8019*
- A4 An understanding of sustainable development and the links between socio-economics, biodiversity and ecotourism. *NAR8002*, **NAR8004**, **NAR8006**, *NAR8012*, *NAR8017*, *NAR8018*, *NAR8019*

Teaching and Learning Methods

Teaching Strategy

The primary means of imparting knowledge and understanding in all the above (A1-A4) is through direct lectures (Naresuan University and intensive teaching “missions”) and structured online materials in the Blackboard Virtual Learning Environment. The proportions vary between modules. A2 is primarily achieved through the individual research project and literature review with supervision and tutorials from academic staff. A4 is stressed through a number of modules and not confined to the core. This is also developed through exploring issues in discussion boards (online) and seminars (classroom). All (A1-A4) are supplemented by practical sessions e.g. laboratory classes, fieldwork, case studies and preparation of project proposals. Independent learning is encouraged by supply of reading lists and ready access to information technology resources via on line means. Adequate time is provided in all modules for private study for independent learning.

Learning Strategy

Throughout the programme students are encouraged to supplement taught material by self-study of reading materials and appropriate information on the internet to which they are directed by staff. Information Literacy, critical appraisal of sources and effective use of academic resources will be reinforced.

Assessment Strategy

A variety of strategies are used to assess knowledge, understanding and application including some unseen written examinations and a large proportion of continuously assessed material in the form of essays, oral presentations, case study reports, practical reports from field and laboratory based work, project proposals and project theses. Computer Aided (formative) Assessment is used in a number of online modules for self assessment of progress and to emphasise key knowledge outcomes. Students are required as part of their research project to make either a poster or oral presentation.

Intellectual Skills

On completing the programme students should be able to:

- B1 Critically evaluate information from many sources, including novel research data, in terms of its relative contribution to knowledge and understanding. **NAR8005**, **NAR8001**, **NAR8013**, *NAR8018*
- B2 Interpret scientific information, both quantitative and qualitative, and explain complex ideas concisely in written and oral form. **NAR8005**, **NAR8001**, *NAR8007*, *NAR8009*, *NAR8008*, **NAR8013**

B3 Problem solving **NAR8013**, *NAR8017*, **NAR8005**, *NAR8008*, *NAR8009*, *NAR8019*

B4 Design and execution of research relevant to biodiversity and/or ecotourism

Teaching and Learning Methods

Teaching Strategy

Skills in critical evaluation of information (B1) will be acquired during production of detailed literature reviews, case study reports, development of research proposals and a significant research thesis which also aid with developing skills in design and execution of experiments or report production (B4).

Concise presentation of information (B2) is developed in many areas including the research thesis, case study reports, practical reports, seminars and literature reviews.

Problem solving skills (B3) are acquired by provision of case studies requiring in depth analysis and provision of reports combining socio-economic, biodiversity, cultural and environmental issues e.g. development issues involving sites of high biodiversity in the South East Asia region.

Learning Strategy

Students are encouraged to consider information and experimental data in a critical manner and to justify interpretation by logical development of ideas and reference to known facts. Planning, executing and reporting on their research project enhances the learning of these skills

Assessment Strategy

Cognitive skills are assessed through various forms of coursework (including laboratory reports, case studies and essays), culminating in assessment of the final research project dissertation.

Practical Skills

On completing the programme students should be able to:

C1 Critical evaluation of data and information in terms of its quality, objectivity and relevance **NAR8001**, **NAR8005**, **NAR8006**, **NAR8004**, *NAR8007*, *NAR8009*, *NAR8008*, *NAR8019*

C2 Research skills including development of a hypothesis and the design, execution and evaluation of experiments/studies using quantitative/qualitative techniques **NAR8013**

C3 An ability to obtain, record and interpret data from experiments/studies and information in various forms including electronic sources *NAR8007*, **NAR8005**, *NAR8003*, *NAR8009*, *NAR8008*, *NAR8019*, *NAR8017*,

C4 Skills in quantitative techniques, including statistical analysis **NAR8005**, *NAR8008*, **NAR8013** (and core learning skills module – not assessed)

C5 The ability to present data/argument in written format according to accepted conventions for academic communication; **all modules**

C6 The use of established techniques to assist sustainable tourism development (e.g. EIA, SVM, remote sensing and habitat classification, eco-footprinting, eco-efficiency analysis, business analysis) **NAR8001**, **NAR8004**, **NAR8005**, **NAR8006**, *NAR8007*, *NAR8003*, *NAR8009*, *NAR8019*, *NAR8017*

C7 Familiarity with selected tropical habitats, their ecology and ability to identify key plant and/or animal species **NAR8001**, **NAR8005**, *NAR8007*, *NAR8009*

Teaching and Learning Methods

Teaching Strategy

Subject specific and professional skills (C1-C7) are imparted within specific modules by a combination of lectures, practical examples (field trips, laboratory work), case studies and an in depth research thesis focusing on students individual interests. On-line learning will be able to deliver problem solving case studies involving students in small groups. Specific techniques will be useful for employment in the tourism sector or for enhanced career progression (C6).

Learning Strategy

C1 is practiced throughout whilst C2-5 are developed most in the course of the research project. Specific techniques (C6) are primarily contained within specific optional modules chosen by students. C7 is developed in fieldwork and the Virtual Field Trip.

Assessment Strategy

Subject-specific and professional skills are assessed by unseen written examinations and a large proportion of continuously assessed material including case studies, production of posters, project proposals, group reports (including written and oral presentations) and a research thesis. Production of web pages is assessed in several modules to determine students abilities to provide informative synopses of information in a creative fashion.

Transferable/Key Skills

On completing the programme students should be able to:

- D1 Communicate orally in English via well prepared student presentations. **NAR8013** and core learning skills module (not assessed)
- D2 Write clearly and effectively conveying complex information concisely. All modules practice this to some extent
- D3 Use computer based library and database resources ; *NAR8009*, **NAR8001**, **NAR8005**, **NAR8006**, **NAR8013**
- D4 Work independently and as part of a team. **NAR8005**, *NAR8017*
- D5 Apply learned skills and knowledge in unfamiliar circumstances **NAR8005**, **NAR8013**
- D6 Interpret experimental/survey data : **NAR8005**, *NAR8007*, **NAR8013**, *NAR8017*
- D7 Effectively plan projects/experiments: **NAR8013**

Teaching and Learning Methods

Teaching Strategy

Knowledge on the use of computer literary resources (D3) is mainly delivered by lectures and practiced by using online material. Understanding of material is backed up by computer based practicals and a student based oral presentation (D1) where skills developed are used practically. Independent study and team work (D4) and written report abilities (D2) are enhanced by problem solving practicals and case studies where findings are required to be written as concise reports and in some cases oral presentations. Report writing is further practiced in literature reviews and individual research projects. Application and creativity (D5) is mainly encouraged by novel research carried out in individual research projects and by adopting novel approaches to solving problems presented in case studies. Creativity is also enhanced by designing web sites and oral/poster presentations. Advanced data interpretation (D6) and project/experiment planning skills (D7) are gained during a research project.

Learning Strategy

While skills D1-D3 are formally taught, and the students obtain feedback to enhance their learning, the same skills are applied in many subject-specific modules with students required to find information and give oral or written presentation throughout all years of study. In these cases the student is learning not only subject-specific information but also D1-D3.

Assessment Strategy

Written and oral communication skills (D1,D2) are assessed in project reports, literature reviews, research thesis and oral presentations. IT skills (D3) are assessed indirectly in both oral presentations and extensive use of internet based resources. As this degree is partly achieved by distance learning all students should become familiar with searching for and using internet information. Teamwork (D4) is formally assessed in group case studies and problem solving issues involving teams. Independent work is assessed in literature reviews/research projects. Creativity (D5) is assessed in research projects, group discussions and reports, web-site design and oral/poster presentations. Data interpretation and experimental planning (D6, D7) are assessed in the research project.

12 Programme Curriculum, Structure and Features

Basic structure of the programme

Taught component

Compulsory modules (12/60 credits in total)

Four compulsory modules (3/15 credits each) are dedicated towards advancing knowledge in general and specific relevant environmental issues related to conservation of biodiversity and fundamental economics related to ecotourism. An extra compulsory module which is not assessed (equivalent to 3/15 credits) is devoted to improving key skills in use of information technology resources especially literary resources provided on-line by Newcastle University, presentation skills (written and oral) and some basic statistics. There is some crossover, revision and application of skills in the different modules.

Optional modules (12/60 credits)

There are a total of 9 optional 3/15 credit modules (see curriculum) which are divided into two groups (Environmental Science group and Socio-economic group) to reflect the diversity of topics covered by ecotourism. Students are required to select 12/60 credits of modules from the available selection. To ensure that students receive training in all aspects they will be required to select at least 2 modules from each group.

Research thesis (12/60 credits)

This is a significant part of the degree and will be of 6 months duration. The research projects could be field, laboratory or desk based and from a wide variety of areas in environmental science, business or social studies. It is intended that students will be able to select topics that match their interests. Where possible students will be co-supervised by staff in Naresuan and Newcastle Universities. A certain number of Newcastle staff will visit Naresuan University each year to assist with research projects. Student driven independent desk based projects will lend themselves more easily to co-supervision but assistance with field or laboratory based research topics could be given on-line for research plans, literature reviews and final thesis writing.

Key features of the programme (including what makes the programme distinctive)

This is a two year part-time modular programme that consists of 2 parts: a taught component which runs for 18 months, and a research project of approximately 6 months duration, for which a thesis is submitted. Students will be based in Naresuan University Thailand. Modules from Newcastle University will be delivered by on-line methods and short teaching missions while modules from Naresuan University will be delivered by direct contact. To meet Thailand MSc regulations the MSc consists of 36 credits and modules are 3 credits in duration (equivalent to 150 hours study each or 15 Newcastle credits). There are 24 taught credits and the research thesis corresponds to 12/60

credits. This equates to the UK MSc total of 1800 hours study. Modules will generally be run over a 16 week period corresponding to Naresuan University semester dates (see below timetable).

The key features are the multidisciplinary nature of the MSc (Biology, business, social skills developed) and delivery by academics from Thailand and UK all of which provide a unique learning experience. Students are encouraged to develop independent learning skills and are given a longer than average time to complete an in depth research project.

Programme regulations (link to on-line version)

<http://www.ncl.ac.uk/regulations/programme/2007-2008/programme/5143php.php>

13 Criteria for admission

Entry qualifications

Minimum of a lower second class BA or BSc honours degree. Equivalent work experience may be considered if the work experience is appropriate.

Admissions policy/selection tools:

Applicants who meet the criteria for admission are automatically sent an offer by the University. Applicants with qualifications and experience outside the normal criteria are referred to the Postgraduate admissions team within the School of Biology for a decision

Non-standard Entry Requirements

None

Additional Requirements

None

Level of English Language capability

IELTS 6.5 except countries exempted by University policy

14 Support for Student Learning

Induction

During the first week of the first semester students attend an induction programme (one week) given by the degree programme directors. New students will be given a general introduction to University life and the University's principle support services and general information about the School and their programme, as described in the Degree Programme Handbook. New and continuing students will be given detailed programme information and the timetable of lectures/practicals/labs/ tutorials/etc. The International Office offers an additional induction programme for overseas students. Additional help is given in the use of distance learning teaching material, help with electronic library resources and the standards expected of MSc students – in the form of development of essay writing skills using electronic databases and e-journals.

Study skills support

Students will learn a range of Personal Transferable Skills, including Study Skills, as outlined in the Programme Specification. Some of this material, e.g. time management is covered in the appropriate Induction Programme. Students are explicitly tutored on their approach to both group and individual projects.

Numeracy support is available through Maths Aid.

Help with academic writing is available from the Writing Centre.

Academic support

The initial point of contact for a student is with a lecturer or module leader, or their tutor (see below) for more generic issues. Thereafter the Degree Programme Director or Head of School

may be consulted. Issues relating to the programme may be raised at the Staff-Student Committee, and/or at the Board of Studies.

Pastoral support

All students are assigned a personal tutor whose responsibility is to monitor the academic performance and overall well-being of their tutees. In addition the University offers a range of support services, including one-to-one counselling and guidance or group sessions/workshops on a range of topics, such as emotional issues eg. Stress and anxiety, student finance and budgeting, disability matters etc. There is specialist support available for students with dyslexia and mental health issues. Furthermore, the Union Society operates a Student Advice Centre, which can provide advocacy and support to students on a range of topics including housing, debt, legal issues etc.

Support for students with disabilities

The University's Disability Support Service provides help and advice for disabled students at the University - and those thinking of coming to study. It provides individuals with: advice about the University's facilities, services and the accessibility of campus; details about the technical support available; guidance in study skills and advice on financial support arrangements; a resources room with equipment and software to assist students in their studies.

Learning resources

The University's main learning resources are provided by the Robinson and Walton Libraries (for books, journals, online resources), and Information Systems and Services, which supports campus-wide computing facilities. The students on this MSc benefit from access to resources from both Newcastle and Naresuan Universities

All new students whose first language is not English are required to take an English Language Proficiency Test. This is administered by INTO Newcastle University Centre on behalf of Newcastle University. Where appropriate, in-session language training can be provided. The INTO Newcastle University Centre houses a range of resources which may be particularly appropriate for those interested in an Erasmus exchange.

15 Methods for evaluating and improving the quality and standards of teaching and learning

Module reviews

All modules are subject to review by questionnaires which are considered by the Board of Studies. Changes to, or the introduction of new, modules are considered at the School Teaching and Learning Committee and at the Board of Studies. Student opinion is sought at the Staff-Student Committee and/or the Board of Studies. New modules and major changes to existing modules are subject to approval by the Faculty Teaching and Learning Committee.

Programme reviews

The Board of Studies conducts an Annual Monitoring and Review of the degree programme and reports to Faculty Teaching and Learning Committee.

External Examiner reports

External Examiner reports are considered by the Board of Studies. The Board responds to these reports through Faculty Teaching and Learning Committee. External Examiner reports are shared with institutional student representatives, through the Staff-Student Committee.

Student evaluations

All modules, and the degree programme, are subject to review by student questionnaires. Informal student evaluation is also obtained at the Staff-Student Committee, and the Board of Studies. The National Student Survey is sent out every year to final-year undergraduate students, and consists of a set of questions seeking the students' views on the quality of the learning and teaching in their HEIs. With reference to the outcomes of the NSS and institutional student satisfaction surveys actions are taken at all appropriate levels by the institution.

Mechanisms for gaining student feedback

Feedback is channelled via the Staff-Student Committee and the Board of Studies.

Faculty and University Review Mechanisms

The programme is subject to the University's Internal Subject Review process. Every five years degree programmes in each subject area are subject to periodic review. This involves both the detailed consideration of a range of documentation, and a two-day review visit by a review team which includes an external subject specialist in addition to University and Faculty representatives. Following the review a report is produced, which forms the basis for a decision by University Teaching and Learning Committee on whether the programmes reviewed should be re-approved for a further five year period.

16 Regulation of assessment

Pass mark

The pass mark is 50 (Postgraduate programmes)

Progression is subject to the University's Masters Degree Progress Regulations, Taught and Research and Examination Conventions for Taught Masters Degrees. Limited compensation up to 40 credits of the taught element and down to a mark of 40 is possible and there are reassessment opportunities, with certain restrictions.

The University employs a common marking scheme, which is specified in the Taught Postgraduate Examination Conventions, namely:

Summary description applicable to postgraduate Masters programmes

Summary description applicable to postgraduate Certificate and Diploma programmes

<50	Fail	<50	Fail
50-59	Pass	50 or above	Pass
60-69	Pass with Merit		
70 or above	Pass with Distinction		

Role of the External Examiner

An External Examiner, a distinguished member of the subject community, is appointed by Faculty Teaching and Learning Committee, after recommendation from the Board of Studies.

The External Examiner is expected to:

- See and approve examination papers
- Moderate examination and coursework marking
- Attend the Board of Examiners
- Report to the University on the standards of the programme

In addition, information relating to the programme is provided in:

The University Prospectus (see <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/postgraduate/>)

The School Brochure (contact enquiries@ncl.ac.uk)

The University Regulations (see <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/calendar/university.regs/>)

The Degree Programme Handbook

Please note. This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and of the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve if she/he takes full advantage of the learning opportunities provided. The accuracy of the information contained is reviewed by the University and may be checked by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.

Mapping of Intended Learning Outcomes onto Curriculum/Modules

Module	Type	Intended Learning Outcomes			
		A	B	C	D
NAR8001	Compulsory	1	1,2,	1,5,6,7	1,2,3
NAR8004	Compulsory	1,3,4		1,5,6	2
NAR8005	Compulsory	1	1,2,3	1,3,4,5,6,7	2,3,4,5,6
NAR8006	Compulsory	3,4		1,5,6	2,3
NAR8013	Compulsory	2	1,2,3,	2,4,5,	1,2,3,5,6,7
<i>NAR8007</i>	<i>Optional</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>1,3,5,6,7</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>NAR8003</i>	<i>Optional</i>	<i>3</i>		<i>3,5,6</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>NAR8009</i>	<i>Optional</i>		<i>2,3</i>	<i>1,3,5,6,7</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>NAR8008</i>	<i>Optional</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2,3</i>	<i>1,3,4,5</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>NAR8019</i>	<i>Optional</i>	<i>1,3,4</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>1,3,5,6</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>NAR8017</i>	<i>Optional</i>	<i>1,4</i>		<i>3,5,6</i>	<i>2,4,6</i>
<i>NAR8002</i>	<i>Optional</i>	<i>1,4</i>		<i>5</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>NAR8018</i>	<i>Optional</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>NAR8012</i>	<i>Optional</i>	<i>3,4</i>		<i>5</i>	<i>2</i>