UNIVERSITY OF
NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE

FACULTY OF
SCIENCE, AGRICULTURE & ENGINEERING

DEGREE PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION

1.	**Awarding Institution**	University of Newcastle upon Tyne
2.	**Teaching Institution**	University of Newcastle upon Tyne
3.	**Final Award**	MSc or Diploma
4.	**Programme Title**	Wildlife Conservation and Management
5.	**Programme Accredited by:**	N/A
6.	**UCAS Code**	N/A
7.	**QAA Benchmarking Group(s)**	N/A
8.	**Date of production/revision**	1 December 2004

9. Programme Aims:

The broad educational purposes are to provide students with the theoretical and practice training to equip biology, physical geography or environmental science graduates with the knowledge and skills needed for successful careers in the UK and European wildlife conservation. The programme informs and explains the rationale for wildlife conservation and enables students to understand the implementation of conservation policy. It develops knowledge and understanding of underpinning ecological science and improves key skills in experimentation, survey and monitoring methods for wildlife. Students experience habitat and species management methods and learn to write management plans.

Specifically the programme aims to provide graduates with:

(i) a systematic understanding of the range of temperate zone ecosystems and wildlife species, and a critical awareness of contemporary UK and European conservation issues and/or insights, much of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of knowledge about how environmental, management and land-use factors influence ecosystems and wildlife species;

(ii) a comprehensive understanding of scientific survey and experimental techniques and the ability to identify common species from selected UK habitats;

(iii) had an opportunity to demonstrate originality in the application of knowledge, together with a practical understanding of how established techniques of research and enquiry are used to develop effective management plans for species and ecosystems;

(iv) conceptual understanding that enables them to critically evaluate current research and advanced scholarship in the discipline; and to evaluate methodologies and develop critiques of them and, where appropriate, to propose new hypotheses.

The programme also equips graduates with key skills such that they are able to:

(a) deal with complex wildlife issues both systematically and creatively, make sound judgements in the absence of complete data, and communicate their conclusions clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences;

(b) demonstrate self-direction and originality in tackling and solving problems, and act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks at a professional or equivalent level;

(c) continue to advance their knowledge and understanding, and to develop new skills to a high level; and will have:

(d) develop the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring: the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility; decision making in complex and unpredictable situations; and the independent learning ability required for continuing professional development.

This provision will address the needs of employers such as English Nature, Department for Environment, Agriculture and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the voluntary conservation movement, and environmental consultancies. These organisations need suitably trained staff to implement conservation schemes and manage wildlife.

The programme will enable students to meet the masters level (M, level 4) of the QAA framework for higher education qualifications for England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

10. Intended Learning Outcomes; Teaching and Learning Strategies and Methods; Assessment Strategies and Methods

Strategies to achieve learning outcomes are presented below as descriptive statements of the methods used. They can also be seen in Tables 1-4, the learning outcomes coded A1-A4, B1-B4, C1-C5 and D1-D8. Methods are chosen because they are appropriate for the delivery of an outcome. For example, specialist knowledge and understanding of the core material is taught via lectures (A1-A4) and field classes (A1-A3). Lectures are an appropriate technique for describing the range of variation in ecosystems and species (A1), highlighting important contemporary issues (A2) and describing the effects of land use and management (A3). These learning outcomes are also well demonstrated in field classes, bringing students into direct contact with the systems under study.

A Knowledge and understanding

The programme provides opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate:

A1 a systematic understanding for the range of temperate-zone ecosystems and wildlife species

A2 a critical awareness of, and/or new insights into, contemporary UK and European conservation issues

A3 advanced knowledge and understanding of the influence of environmental, management and land-use factors on ecosystems and wildlife species

A4 a comprehensive understanding of scientific survey and experimental techniques

Teaching Strategy

Specialist knowledge and understand of the core material is taught via lectures (A1-A4) and field classes (A1-A3) in the compulsory modules. Compulsory and optional residential field classes allow students to experience a wide range of upland and lowland habitats in Britain (A1, A3 and A4). Optional modules enable students to concentrate on particular aspects of individual interest, and/or remedy deficiencies in information technology (A4). Other teaching methods include practical classes (A4), literature reviews (A2) and the design and implementation of research projects (A1, A3 and A4), with the latter also being an important part of the learning strategy.

Learning Strategy

The understanding of lecture material is encouraged through independent reading (A1-A4) assisted by the

provision of prioritised reference lists. Such learning is reinforced by formative feedback provided by literature reviews (A3, A4), with active participation in fieldwork and research projects (A1, A3 and A4), with some workshops (A3) and independent problem solving exercises (A4). The 80-credit research project enables survey and/or management knowledge to be learnt through supervised tuition in the study of a particular habitat or species of interest to the student (A3, A4).

Assessment strategy
Most assessment of knowledge and understanding is by formal unseen examination (A1-A4), usually of two hours 2-3 out of 5 questions are answered. Essays submitted as part of coursework provide a fuller test of student understanding of the relevant literature (A2, A3). Field class and other reports are also assessed (A1-A4).

B Subject –specific/professional skills
The programme provides opportunities for students to demonstrate:

B1 ability to identify common plant and/or animal species from selected UK habitats

B2 originality in the application of knowledge

B3 the use of established techniques of research and enquiry are used to develop effective management plans for species and habitats

B4 ability to develop effective conservation policy and biodiversity action plans

Teaching Strategy
Research and enquiry skills are taught via lectures, seminars and literature reviews and practical classes (B3, B4), with policy planning taught via seminars (B4). The research project is particularly important to consolidate and extend these skills (B1-B4).

Learning Strategy
Independent reading of recommended references is important in understanding how knowledge is applied and techniques used (B2-B4). However, research projects (B1-B4), problem solving exercises (B3, B4) and coursework (B2-B4) are also important and fieldwork is of great importance in learning to identify plant species (B1).

Assessment strategy
Formal examination (B3) is used to assess some subject specific/professional skills, particularly when additional reading reinforces learning. However, most of these skills are assessed by reports on research projects and coursework (B1-B4).

C Cognitive skills
The programme provides opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate conceptual ability to:

C1 critically evaluate current research and advanced scholarship in conservation

C2 evaluate conservation methodologies and develop critiques of them

C3 to propose new hypotheses, when appropriate

C4 deal with complex wildlife issues both systematically and creatively

C5 make sound judgements in the absence of complete data

Teaching Strategy
The compulsory modules are important for developing cognitive skills. In these modules the evaluation of

complex management situations and the development of good judgement are important features of seminars (C1-C4), lectures (C1, C2, C4 and C5), research projects (C1, C4 and C5) and literature reviews (C1, C2). These skills are taught in a few of the optional modules.

Learning Strategy
Understanding of the taught material is reinforced by reading (C1, C2, and C3) and particularly through experience of case studies and course work (C1, C2, C4 and C5) and problem solving (C2, C4, and C5). The design of the research projects us also important and is particularly useful for understanding the development of hypotheses (C3).

Assessment strategy
Cognitive skills are assessed by both formal examination (C1, C2, C4, C5) and reports (C1-C5), including that produced for the main project.

D Key (transferable) skills
The programme provides opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate ability to:

D1 communicate conclusions clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences

D2 direct their own work programme

D3 show originality and initiative in tackling and solving problems

D4 act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks at a professional or equivalent level

D5 take personal responsibility to independently advance their knowledge and understanding, and to develop new skills to a high level

D6 use library and other information sources skilfully and appropriately

D7 use IT resources skilfully and appropriately

D8 to make decisions in complex and unpredictable situations

Teaching Strategy
The teaching of key skills is an important part of the MSc throughout many modules. Verbal presentations are encouraged in seminars (D1) and all aspects (D1-D8) are important in the research project. Field classes (D1-D4), workshops (D1, D3-D5, D7 and D8) and independent problem solving (D2-D8) teach students about the importance of communication skills, information sources and originality and independence in the professional implementation of their knowledge.

Learning Strategy
A wide range of methods is used to reinforce the teaching of key skills and aid understanding. Whilst there is some recommended reading (D1-D8) most key skills are better developed through the use of field work (D1-D6), case studies (D1-D4, D6-D8), the research project (D1-D8), workshops (D1, D3-D5, D7), problem solving exercises (D2-D8) and presentations (D1). The project is particularly important in providing students with an opportunity for developing and demonstrating creativity and originality.

Assessment strategy
Reports (D1-D8) and coursework (D1-D4, D6-D8) are the main methods of assessment.
Presentations test verbal communication skills (D1).

11 Programme Features, Structure and Curriculum

A Programme Features

This is a one-year, fulltime modular Masters degree programme. If conforms to the modular structure of other MSc programmes taught in the Department in three phases similar to the undergraduate semester system. It consists of 100 credits in the taught component (60 credits in the MSc phase 1 and 40 credits in the MSc phase 2) and 80 credits for a research project (AES891) which takes place in MSc phase 3, University summer term and the summer vacation. The taught component is assessed in the examination period in January, at the end of MSc phase 1, and through phase 2, with most phase 2 modules examined by course work. The report for the project has to be submitted by 31 August.

Most taught modules are of 10 credits with one 20-credit module. There are 40 credits of compulsory modules in phase 1, (AES835, BIO803, AES827) and 30 credits of compulsory modules in the second phase (BIO802, AES854, AES845). These compulsory modules are part of the core wildlife conservation material for the degree. They focus on the management of conservation projects and appropriate field techniques, conservation policy, issues and management of species and ecosystems. The core conservation material given in conservation biology issues (BIO802) and ecosystem management (AES854) will normally be taken by all students. Optional modules are chosen from a limited list that enables students to substitute and add relevant specialist topics according to their preferences and their prior knowledge.

Students will have to satisfy the standard MSc regulations that apply to MSc degrees in the School of Biology. Decisions on fail, pass, diploma, MSc merit and MSc distinction awards will be made by the Board of Examiners in October after completion of the project work (AES891) and will be based on overall performance in all aspects of the subject.

The MSc degree utilises a wide range of environmental expertise available in the Faculty of Science, Agriculture and Engineering. It is innovative in enabling wildlife conservation to be studied as applied ecology in the wider context of UK land use, particularly agriculture and amenity. Additionally it offers opportunities for students to understand how expertise might be used in subsequent employment and includes links with local and national, statutory and non-governmental conservation organisations. Practical skills are emphasised with local links to practical management problems on nature reserves and field work that provides experience in plant identification from a wide range of upland and lowland habitats. The experience of practitioners is utilised in a programme of visiting speakers and visits to conservation sites in a number of modules, including BIO803 (DEFRA, Northumberland Wildlife Trust, RSPB, National Trust, English Nature), AES835 (RSPB, English Nature) and AES854 (Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust). The project (AES891) is an important vehicle for allowing practical, experimental and survey skills to be applied to a specific conservation problem with possible links to a conservation organisation.

B Programme Structure

The compulsory modules are spread across the three phases and together meet all the knowledge and understanding and skills outcomes for the degree. The structure provides flexibility of choice and, with the agreement of the Degree Programme Director, matches students' prior individual knowledge by offering a limited range of optional and specialist modules without forcing students to participate in modules that repeat material they have met as undergraduates. All students will be expected to take modules BIO802 and AES854, unless they can demonstrate prior knowledge and skill.

The degree structure will fit within the normal modular MSc programme run by the School of Biology. The 12- month course starts in mid-September, comprises 100 credits of taught modules and a conservation project (80 credits)

The programmes are divided into Phase 1 (Sept-Jan), Phase 2 (Jan-April) and Phase 3 (May-Sept). The start of MSc phases 1 and 2 broadly corresponds to the start of undergraduate semesters 1 and 2. MSc phase 2 ends in April and the MSc project phase 3 starts at the beginning of the Easter term in May, extending to the end of August. Wildlife Conservation Policy and Practice (BIO803 10 credits) forms a key

area of the programme throughout Phase 1 and involves a substantial input from practitioners and 'learning in the workplace'. Field techniques in Environmental Survey (AES835, 20 credits) includes Newcastle-based field trips spread over the first semester.
In Phase 3, MSc candidates undertake an independent project (80credits) leading to a report (submitted late August). This will normally be a survey or a management plan for a habitat or species, or applied ecological science concerned with a conservation issue. An initial project proposal is developed towards the end of Phase 1 (mid January) and requires students to submit a costed project with links to a conservation organisation. Although not finalised or committed, students are encouraged to further develop their proposal plans during Phase 2, in view of the need to make the most of opportunities presented by independent work. The viva with the external examiner will be in May when the exam board considers the exam and coursework results for the taught component of the degree. The external examiner will discuss conservation project proposals will all or a selection of students at that time and moderate all final project reports in September for the October Board of Examiners.

C Programme Curriculum

Programme Regulations as given on University web site
Code: 5026
1. (a) All candidates on the degree programme shall take the following taught modules:

Code	Credits	Descriptive title
AES835	(20)	Field Techniques in Environmental Survey
BIO803	(10)	Wildlife Conservation: Policy and Practice
AES845	(10)	Trees: Growth, Management and Environmental Impacts
AES827	(10)	Quantitative Techniques, Experimental Design and Data Analysis
BIO802	(10)	Conservation Biology Issues
AES854	(10)	Ecosystem Management

(b) All candidates shall select, subject to the approval of the Degree Programme Director, further modules to a total value of 30 credits, normally chosen from the following:

Code	Credits	Descriptive title
AGR805	(10)	Environmental Assessment: Land and Water Resources
AES828	(10)	Environmental Systems and Modelling
AES856	(10)	Ecological Survey and Identification Field Course
AES806	(10)	GIS and Remote Sensing
AEF873	(10)	Environmental and Rural Resource Economics
AES829	(10)	Sustainable Development and Environmental Change
AES847	(10)	The Environmental Business

(c) With the approval of the Degree Programme Director, candidates may substitute BIO802 Conservation Biology Issues and/or AES854 Ecosystem Management with modules from the list under (b) above or AEF878 (20) Countryside Management
(d) Other modules may be selected, subject to the approval of the Degree Programme Director.
(e) All MSc candidates shall undertake the following 80 credit research project:

Code	Credits	Descriptive title
AES891	(80)	Habitat/Species Survey/Management Project

Details of the assessment are provided in the Degree Programme Specification.
2. MSc programmes are normally 12 months full-time study, but with the permission of the Degree Programme Director, can also be taken part time.
Diploma Programmes
3. Diploma Programmes normally require nine months' full-time study and require the candidate to undertake study equivalent to 120 credits. Diploma students would not do a research project but, with the approval of the Degree Programme Director, would be expected to undertake a short, library-based dissertation (AES794). With the permission of the Degree Programme Director, the Diploma programme may also be taken part-time.

Development of specific Intended Learning Outcomes occurs through the following modules (compulsory modules in bold text, optional modules in normal, italic text)

A1 a systematic understanding of the range of temperate-zone ecosystems and wildlife species
AES835, AES854, *AES856,* **AES845**
A2 a critical awareness of, and/or new insights into, contemporary UK and European conservation issues
AES829, **BIO802,** *AEF878,* **BIO803**
A3 advanced knowledge and understanding of the influence of environmental, management and land-use factors on ecosystems and wildlife species
AES891, *AES824, AES847,* **BIO802, AES854,** *AES856,* **AES845**
A4 a comprehensive understanding of scientific survey and experimental techniques
AES835, AES891, AES827, AES854, *AES806,* **AES845**
B1 an ability to identify common plant and/or animal species from selected UK habitats
AES835, AES891, *AES856*
B2 originality in the application of knowledge
AES891, BIO802
B3 how established techniques of research and enquiry are used to develop effective management plans for species and habitats
AES891, *AES828,* **BIO802, AES854,** *AES806,* **AES845**
B4 ability to develop effective conservation policy and biodiversity action plans
AES891, BIO802, AES854, *AEF878,* **BIO803**
C1 critically evaluate current research and advanced scholarship in conservation
AES891, *AES829,* **BIO802, AES854**
C2 evaluate conservation methodologies and develop critiques of them
AES835, AES827, *AES828, AES829,* **BIO802, AES854,** *AEF878*
C3 to propose new hypotheses, when appropriate
AES835, AES891, AES827, *AES828, AEF878*
C4 deal with complex wildlife issues both systematically and creatively
AES891, *AES828,* **BIO802, AES854,** *AEF878*
C5 make sound judgements in the absence of complete data
AES835, AES891, *AES828,* **BIO803**
D1 communicate conclusions clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences
AES835, AES891, *AES829, AES847,* **BIO802, AES854,** *AES856, AES806, AEF878,* **AES845, BIO803**
D2 direct their own work programme
AES835, AES891, *AES829***, BIO802,** *AES856, AEF878,* **BIO803**
D3 show originality and initiative in tackling and solving problems
AES835, AES891, *AES828, AES829,* **BIO802, AES854,** *AES806, AEF878*
D4 act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks at a professional or equivalent level
AES835, AES891, AES827, *AES828, AES829, AES847,* **AES854, AES845, BIO803,** *AES856, AES806*
D5 take personal responsibility to independently advance their knowledge and understanding, and to develop new skills to a high level
AES891, AES827, *AES828, AES829, AES847,* **BIO802, BIO803**
D6 use library and other information sources skilfully and appropriately
AES891, BIO802, AES854, *AES856, AEF878,* **BIO803**
D7 use IT resources skilfully and appropriately
AES835, AES891, AES827, BIO802, AES854, *AES828, AES847, AES856, AES806*
D8 to make decisions in complex and unpredictable situations
AES891, AES827, *AES828,* **BIO802, BIO803**

12 Criteria for Admission:

A 2nd class degree from a UK university, or its overseas equivalent, is normally the minimum qualification for entry. Preferred first-degree subject are biology, geography or environmental science although it is expected that other relevant science and social science degrees will be acceptable. This should satisfy an expected demand from students from a wide variety of academic backgrounds.
Applicant from whom English is not a first language must provide evidence of a satisfactory command of English, preferably by means of a TOEFL score of 575 or greater, or by an IELTS score of 6.5 or greater.

Admissions policy

Upon receipt of a completed application form, UK-based applicants will be invited to visit the School of Biology to meet current students and to attend an informal interview. Offers of places will be made to suitably qualified candidates and will be conditional upon a satisfactory reference and upon the applicant achieving a minimum of a 2nd class degree, if they do not hold such a degree at the time of the interview.

Arrangements for non-standard entrants

Applicant who hold non-standard qualifications, and/or have relevant experience, will be considered on an individual basis.

13 Support for Students and their Learning:

Induction

An induction period takes place at the start of MSc Phase 1. This includes:

- An introduction to the modular MSc and Diploma programme from the Degree Programme Director and meeting with other staff and students.
- An interview with the Degree Programme Advisor/Personal Tutor.
- Registration in the School of Biology with the Degree programme Advisor to collect the Degree Programme handbook etc.
- Tour of School.
- Students report to the Language Centre is English is not their first language.
- Report to the Registrar's and the Finance Office staff in the University Ballroom to collect Union and Library cards etc.
- Module selection with Degree Programme Advisor/Personal Tutor.
- Faculty introduction to services and facilities and Faculty reception.
- Tour of University field stations and/or farms.
- Preparation for the course and IT skills audit.
- Library skills session.
- Two day field visits for AES835.
- Formal skills assessment for Information Technology. A remedial skills programme will be recommended for those who do not reach a required standard. Students will register for access to the computer system, and receive a personal e-mail address, at the start of the academic year, during Induction Week.

Study skills support

- The Robinson Library houses the major book and journal collection in the University and has a large selection dedicated to the biological sciences. These books are located on the fourth floor of the library and the liaison librarian is available on the fourth floor to provide help if necessary. A library card will be issued at the beginning of the academic year. The library has a wide range of library material from 'study skills', 'speed reading', through 'exams' to 'writing essays and dissertations'. These are available on a self study basis and are located on Level 2. There is a range of leaflets describing usage of the library, either as hard copy of through the Library's Web pages. In addition there are private study rooms, general work space and clusters of PCs. A series of Library and information skills workshops will be arranged for the MSc programmes during September and October and will be introduced in a special session during Induction Week.
- The University Computing Service provides a large number of 'Common User' computers located in clusters in various buildings around the University. The largest of these clusters is in the Old Library User Area (OLUA) where there is also a member of computing staff available to provide help if required but there are also clusters in the Robinson Library and elsewhere on campus, including the King George VI and the Ridley Buildings. Access to a machine is via a booking sheet located in the cluster room. For PCs, attempts are being made to standardise word processing and spreadsheet software across all Computing Service machines to Word for Windows and Excel but a range of other software is also available for use, e.g. graphics packages, references managers with some available on the Apple-Mac system. The Computing Service provides help sheets in the use of this software and these can be obtained from the OLUA or from the Computing Service Office in the basement of Claremont Tower. Before using the machines students must register with the Computing Service at the Computing Service Office and obtain a unique identifier and password
- The Language Centre is in the Old Library and provides facilities for learning English and a wide variety of other languages. Overseas students on arrival in Newcastle will be required to take an English Language test in the Centre, the results of this test will be used to assess whether further English language training is required. The Language Centre provides this training at specific times of year; however, remedial English classes can be arranged as and when required.
- Some students may already be in jobs, taking secondment to undertake the MSc/Diploma programme. For others the University provides a Careers Service which is located on the 2nd Floor of the Armstrong Building where advice on all aspects of career is available. There is a good reference section giving detailed information about potential employers, pamphlets to help students produce good CVs and letters of application, lists of potential vacation employment, etc. in addition, there are a number of Careers Advisors who are available to provide advice, help and guidance throughout your time at Newcastle. Although one Careers Advisor has particular responsibility for the students in the School of Biology, any immediate help required can be obtained throughout the day from whichever Advisor is on Duty and if necessary an appointment can be made to have a longer interview. Full details of all services are available on the University web site. The computer-aided careers guidance system, PROSPECTS PLANNER, is available on open access at reception.
- Additional support for future careers in conservation acknowledges the importance of relevant experience and the role of the UK volunteer conservation movement, especially with local Wildlife Trusts. Whilst at Newcastle students are encouraged to volunteer for conservation work with the National Trust, British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, British Trust for Ornithology, local Wildlife Trusts and local authority ranger services. The students are introduced to such organisations as part of their course (BIO803) and student projects (AES891) are usually linked to sites such as Forest Enterprise, English nature and Wildlife Trust Nature Reserves.

Academic support
A system of regular meetings with the Degree Programme Advisor provides an opportunity to discuss progress and option choices.

Pastoral support
A system of regular meetings with the Degree Programme Advisor provides an opportunity to discuss

progress and option choices

Support for Special Needs
The University of Newcastle upon Tyne welcomes applications from people with disabilities and makes every effort to provide a suitable learning environment for them. It is the policy of the University that all applicants for programmes of study and research are considered on grounds of academic and individual merit separately from any other requirements. This policy is outlined to potential applicants in the University prospectuses and in the documents 'Newcastle University and You' and 'Postgraduate Newcastle'. All applicants with special needs should discuss their needs with the admissions tutor or the Degree programme advisor before applying. Their requirements will be fully considered in the delivery of the degree programme and in its assessment processes.

14 Methods for Evaluating and Improving the Quality and standards of Teaching and Learning:
Meetings with the Degree Programme Advisor
Meetings with the Degree Programme Advisor allow monitoring of comment/feedback from students. This may relate to: the course structure; individual modules; teaching techniques; administration of modules; administration of degree programmes; timetables; and efficiency of centralised facilities (such as the library or computing provision).

Module and course questionnaires
Students will be asked to complete questionnaires relating to individual taught modules. The results are then analysed by module leaders and the Head of School then examines summaries. Pertinent results/comments are fed back to be addressed by the MSc/Diploma Standing Committee and/or the MSc/Diploma Joint Board of Study. A general evaluation questionnaire will be completed at the end of the programme to review what students think of the course, what they liked and did not like to help make improvements for the following academic year.

Programme reviews
The Board of Studies conducts an Annual Monitoring and Review of the degree programme and reports to Faculty Teaching and Learning Committee. Both individual modules and the MSc programme are periodically reviewed in the light of the following:

- Student evaluation data
- Feedback from past graduates
- Feedback from the external examiner
- Feedback from the University Annual Monitoring Review
- Feedback from the Internal Subject review
- Feedback from independent Institutional Audit (QAA, HEFCE)
- Relevance of the programme in relation to key issues
- Relevance of programme in relation to employability of graduates
- Relevance of the programme in relation to funding sources

Committees responsible for monitoring and evaluating quality and standards
Staff/Student Committee
This meets once a year and provides a forum for raising any academic-related concerns. It is also an

opportunity for staff to consult students about course developments. Students on a degree programme elect a representative to consult student colleagues and represent their views at meetings.

Board of Studies
There is a Joint Board of Studies for the MSc and Diploma MSc degrees taught within the Schools of Biology, Agriculture, Food and Rural Development (AFRD) and other Schools within the Faculty. It overseas the academic content of the course. The Degree Programme Director chairs this Board and the membership includes those involved in the teaching. It meets approximately once a term. There is student representation on the Board.

Board of Examiners
It is the responsibility of the Board of Examiners to assess students' progress and to recommend the successful award of degrees. There are internal and external examiners for the course.

School teaching and learning committee

Faculty teaching and learning Committee

University teaching Committee

External examiners reports
External Examiner reports are considered by the Board of Studies under Reserved Business, in the absence of the student representatives. The Board responds to these reports through Faculty Teaching and Learning Committee.

Accreditation reports
This degree is not accredited by any professional body.

Problems and Complaints
If students encounter a problem, or have any cause for complaint, they are advised to take the matter up in the first instance with the person concerned or the provider of the service. This might be a module leader or a lecturer. If it is not possible to do this they should approach the Degree Programme Advisor, who also acts as personal tutor to all students, or go direct to the Degree Programme Director.
The University has the following formal procedures to deal with specific difficulties:

- Equal opportunities Policy
- Student Policy on Sexual and Racial Harassment
- Review Procedure for Undergraduate Examinations and Taught Postgraduate Courses
- Examination Irregularities Procedure
- University Disciplinary Procedure

These documents can be obtained from the Deputy Registrar, Registrar's Office, 6 Kensington Terrace.

Postgraduate Newcastle
This document highlights aspects of the relationship between the University and postgraduate students. It indicates the mature and level of support a student may reasonably expect to receive identifies those services the University feels it can deliver, and sets out what the University believes it can expect of a student in the joint pursuit of high standards. The document is intended to supplement and not to replace the University's regulations or other documents specifying formal procedures or requirements that must be observed.

15 Regulation of Assessment:
Progress in the taught parts of the course in Semester 1 is assessed by coursework and/or by examinations

held in January at the end of semester 1 (MSc Phase 1). Modules taught before Easter in semester 2 (MSc Phase 2) are usually 100% assessed through coursework. Modules taken from schools other than those of Biology and Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, may be examined in June, e.g. AEF878. The Board of Examiners considers progress at the end of Phase 1, after which students are advised of their progress. The Board of Examiners advises progress in most of the other taught modules after the end of Phase 2. Individual modules vary in the relative weighting of examination and course work, which may include practical classes, case studies, seminars or essays. Details are given in the module outlines. Feedback on the quality of submitted coursework will vary according to the type of assignments and is the responsibility of the individual module leaders. It may take the form of written comments or verbal feedback during seminars or tutorials. The MSc conservation project report for AES891 will be assessed at the end of the course in September. MSc candidates are normally required to attend a viva that covers both their coursework and their proposed project work. This takes place in May when the practical project work has begun. For further details see *Regulations for Taught Postgraduate Masters Degrees* under Faculty Regulations for Higher Degrees on the University's web site http//:www.ncl.ac.uk/calendar/university.regs

Written Examinations
Candidates for both the MSc and Diploma will normally be examined by means of a two hour examination paper for a module. Titles of examinations will be the same as module titles and examination numbers will be the same as module codes. Each examination script submitted is assessed independently by one internal and one external examiner. A second internal examiner may moderate marks. The contribution of the course work assessment marks to the overall module mark will vary according to each module (see Module Outlines). Resit exams for modules failed in the January exam period can be taken at the end of phase 2. Resits for phase 2 modules will take the form of new course work to be submitted by 31 August.

The pass mark for the MSc degree shall be 50 on all papers or their equivalent. In the case of failed modules, Diploma level performances shall be condoned on accordance with the Faculty Regulations 6 (i) , (ii) and (iii) (**see relevant section of University Calendar 2004-2005; this can be accessed on the University website given above).** That is, the Board of Examiners may permit a candidate to qualify for the award of MSc provided that modules with a total value of no more than forty credits have a mark below 50 but not less than 40 and the average mark for all modules, including the project report, is at least 50. Candidates who fail to satisfy the Board in the written modular examinations may be awarded a Diploma is accordance with Faculty Regulations 8 (a), (b) or (c). Past examination papers, for the last two years, can be viewed on the School of Biology website.

MSc Project Report Examination
Assessment of the final project report is undertaken by at least two internal examiners, the principle of which is the candidate's supervisor. It is moderated by the external examiner and considered by the Board of Examiners meeting in October. To satisfy the examiners in the project report, candidates must normally achieve an MSc Pass mark of 50%.

MSc viva voce
The viva for the MSc degree covers all aspects of the course. The candidate may be questioned on any part of the course and a focus of discussion will probably be his or her project. The viva is not formally assessed with allocated marks. However, it is an important part of the degree programme that allows the external examiner to discuss progress with borderline candidates and inform these examiners when discussing borderline cases at the exam board.

Consequence of Failure of MSc Project
In accordance with Faculty Regulations, a candidate who fails the assessment for the project report may, at the discretion of the examiners, be permitted to re-submit the report in a revised form for assessment. This must be by such a date as the Board of Examiners shall specify. A student who achieves a diploma level performance in the project report may, at the discretion of the Board of Examiners, be awarded a Diploma

instead of a Masters degree in accordance with the Faculty Regulation 8 (a).

MSc with Merit
MSc degrees may be awarded with merit if, in the opinion of the Examiners, the candidate has achieved an average mark of 60-69 for both written papers and the project report.

MSc with Distinction
MSc degrees may be awarded with distinction if, in the opinion of the Examiners, the candidate has achieved excellence in all components prescribed for the award of the degree, with an average mark of 70-100 for both written papers and the project report.

Assessment Criteria
All postgraduate work is graded in a scale from 0-100 as explained in the Postgraduate Marking Guide on the University website. This sets out the criteria to be used to assign grades. Most postgraduate work will be in three broad categories (Distinction, Merit and Pass). Within each broad grade, staff assigns work to a percentage within the upper, middle or lower segment of each grade.

Assessments will be made in one of three ways, as is appropriate to the teaching technique:
- Marks given for exams sat during the January examination period in Phase 1. Unless stated otherwise on the exam paper, each answer will be given an equal weight.
- Marks given for submitted work from laboratory and field classes.
- Marks given for assigned work such as projects, case studies, essays or problem solving exercises.

The module descriptions explain what form the assessment will take and the weighting of each separate element.

The following point is made in University General Regulations:

'*Candidates are responsible for retaining all forms of assessed work returned to them after marking by the examiners. Assessed work so retained may be recalled from candidates, if required by external examiners, or for examination review purposes, or for Quality Assessment or Audit purposes.'*

Role of the External Examiner
Within the modular structure of the School of Biology's suite of taught courses some modules are common to a number of taught MSc degrees. Therefore, the Faculty teaching and Learning Committee (FTLC) appoints external examiners to both the MSc degree programme and a set of modules, according to the relevant subject expertise and workload of the External Examiner. The appointment to the degree programme will be to assure the quality of the programme as well as the performance of the students on the programme. The Board of Examiners undertakes the initial allocation of modules to External Examiners, with FTLC acting as an arbiter if required.

The external examiner is a distinguished member of the scientific/conservation community whose knowledge covers the range of activities covered by the course. The external examiner is a moderator and to do this he/she :
- Sees and approves examination questions
- Sees examination scripts and comments upon standards of marking
- Sees coursework and comments upon standards of marking
- Moderates projects
- Performs viva voce examinations of some or all students
- Attends the May meeting of the Board of Examiners
- Reports to the University regarding standards and comparability of standards.

16 Indicators of Quality and Standards:

Professional Accreditation Reports
Not applicable

Internal Review Reports
This programme is due for Internal Subject Review in semester 2 in academic year 2005-2006.

In University reorganisation the School of Biology was created from staff which were previously in the Department of Agricultural and Environmental Science (AES) and other departments. The AES Department was part of a unit awarded a score of 22 out of a possible 24 points (equating to excellent) by the QAA for the quality of its undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes.

The most recent research assessment exercise gave the old AES Department a grade 4 for the quality of its research. Apart from the usual laboratories and controlled environmental facilities, the School of Biology has two excellent field stations at Close House and Moorbank, access to the Faculty farms at Cockle Park and Nafferton and to the world's oldest continuing grazing and hay cutting experiment at Palace Leas.

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. **It should be noted that there may be variation in the range of learning opportunities reflecting the availability of staff to teach them. While every effort will be made to ensure that the module or modules described in the programme specification are available, this cannot be guaranteed.**

The accuracy of the information contained is reviewed by the University and may be checked by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.

17 Other Sources of Information:

The University Postgraduate Prospectus (see http://www.ncl.ac.uk/postgraduate/)
The University and Degree Programme Regulations for Higher degree Programmes in Agriculture and Biological Sciences (see http://www.ncl.ac.uk/calendar/pdf/uniregs.pdf and http://www.ncl.ac.uk/calendar/sae/)
The University's web page http://www.ncl.ac.uk/external.phtml
The School of Biology web page: http://www.ncl.ac.uk/biol/
The School of Agriculture and Food and Rural Development
web page: http://www.ncl.ac.uk/afrd/
The Degree Programme Handbook
QAA Subject Review Report The University Postgraduate Prospectus

- The University of Newcastle upon Tyne's Masters' Degree Programme Entrance and Progress Regulations