

Postgraduate Diploma in International Wildlife Conservation Practice Programme Specifications

1. Awarding Institution / Body:

University of Oxford

2. Teaching Institution:

University of Oxford,
Wildlife Conservation Research Unit
(Department of Zoology)
Continuing Professional Development Centre
(Department for Continuing Education)

3. Programme Accredited by:

University of Oxford

4. Final Award:

Postgraduate Diploma

5. Programme Title:

Postgraduate Diploma in International Wildlife Conservation Practice

6. UCAS Code:

N/A

7. QAA Benchmarking Group:

N/A

8. Date of Programme Specification:

May 2008

9. Aims of Programme:

The aims of the Postgraduate Diploma in International Wildlife Conservation Practice are to provide developing world conservationists not only with the practical skills for conservation action, but also an understanding of the theory behind these skills, and the related issues, enabling them independently to plan, analyse and appraise their research and conservation actions, and to manage conservation projects. The goal will be to produce highly trained

practitioners, with especial reference to the conservation of large mammals (a charismatic umbrella group) and most especially Carnivores, in particular felids.

First and foremost graduates of the Postgraduate Diploma will be qualified to work as practitioners in the conservation and protected area service of developing countries. They will also be qualified to work in captive management of wildlife, train others in practical conservation techniques, apply for jobs with international NGOs and national wildlife services, and for some, the Postgraduate Diploma will act as a stepping stone to enable them to progress to a further degree e.g. Masters or DPhil.

10. Intended Learning Outcomes:

Including the means by which they are achieved and demonstrated.

10.1.1 Intended Learning Outcomes

Theoretical (Substantive) Knowledge and Understanding

- The global, anthropocentric and interdisciplinary nature of conservation problems and solutions.
- Aspects of wildlife (particularly carnivore) behaviour and ecology relevant to conservation.
- The process of scientific research: (defining the question, developing testable hypotheses, collecting appropriate data, rejecting and refining hypotheses), demonstrated by the ability to formulate appropriate and targeted questions, and decide what data are required to answer them.
- Why and how to apply the scientific method to conservation research and action.
- The problems commonly encountered in conservation (lack of data, evolving situations) and how to overcome them (decision-making and adaptive management in a data-poor situation).
- Monitoring and evaluation to determine and enhance the effectiveness of conservation action.

Practical (Procedural) Knowledge and Research Skills

- How to design and deploy a conservation research project, including literature review, problem identification, data collection, analysis and reporting.
- Methods for surveying for terrestrial vertebrate behaviour and population size (e.g. sign, direct observation, radio-tracking).
- Analytical techniques and software associated with each survey method (e.g. distance transects, mark-recapture).
- Use of specialised technical equipment.
- Safe practice when trapping and handling animals.

Cognitive / Intellectual Skills:

- The ability to make connections between explicit conservation actions and their impact on the ground.
- The willingness and ability to synthesise information and techniques from different disciplines to further conservation goals.
- Improved ability to evaluate data, techniques, analysis and conclusions drawn from these. Directing this evaluation at both themselves and others.
- Using this evaluative ability to explain the rationale behind their choice of research design and conservation action, based on knowledge about appropriateness and effectiveness of techniques.
- An improvement in their self-reflective ability to identify their own current learning gaps and weaknesses.

Transferable Skills

- Skills in managing their own learning and research and conducting independent and effective study.
- Analytical problem specification.

- Synthesising sources of information, and making decisions on the best available information.
- Project planning, operation and management skills.
- Team-work, including clarification of roles within the team, working towards a team goal.
- Communicating with stakeholders, including local communities, government, NGOs and the scientific community, by media and in a style appropriate to the audience.
- Public speaking skills - projecting voice/body language.

10.1.2 Achievement of Learning Outcomes

The intended learning outcomes (above) will be achieved using the following teaching and learning strategies.

Guided Reading (Including Online Material):

- Recommended texts, key articles and other materials, some specified in advance of lectures and group work, other material to be referred to once a problem has been presented.
- Provide the nuts-and-bolts substantive knowledge necessary for involvement in workshops.
- In particular, appropriate case-studies will generate interest and allow for discussion of strengths/weaknesses of different approaches in the workshops.
- Allow interested students to delve deeper into a particular subject area.
- Develop self-study skills, including selection of resources and note-taking (to be supported by guidance during practical sessions).

Lectures:

- Initial presentation of key concepts and techniques, building on reading, making connections between different parts of the course, providing a framework in which students can place their previous experience and new knowledge.
- Introduce problems in conservation research and action, demonstrate breadth of problems and solutions, inspire curiosity.
- Summarise new knowledge acquired by students, and re-emphasise how it fits into the broader curriculum, and overall aims of conservation in the developing world.

Expert (Guest) Lectures:

- Provide an opportunity to interrogate the experience and knowledge of renowned scientists and conservationists.
- Inspire interest in different approaches to conservation, showcase current research and activities, provide a variety of role models for students.

Workshops/Discussion Groups:

- Foster individual involvement and engagement with the subject matter.
- Promote discussion, debate and sharing of ideas in the practice of wildlife conservation, peer-learning.
- Allow an opportunity to reflect collectively upon experiences using case studies.
- Critical evaluation of own and peers' ideas.
- Provide an opportunity for self-reflection on own progress and existing knowledge gaps.
- Enable students to gain experience in team-work.
- Provide an opportunity for the tutor to assess progress, identify conceptual gaps and give informal feedback.

The discussion groups will provide students with an opportunity to make connections between the various biological and conservational disciplines in the context of a structured discussion forum. The integration of conservation issues with other aspects of wildlife management makes these discussions unique within the field of biological conservation. In some sessions, students will be required to give a 10–15 minute presentation on a subject chosen in consultation with the Course Tutor, for discussion by the group. Students will be strongly encouraged to draw widely from different disciplines in preparing their presentations.

Practical Sessions:

- Provide an opportunity for students to familiarize themselves with equipment that may be used to study wildlife.
- Provide a structured opportunity for students to practise data collection and analysis techniques.
- Worked examples, demonstrating how the tutor would approach and solve a problem as a professional.

Individual Self-Study (Including Course Assignments):

- Give students the opportunity to synthesise information, draw conclusions from their results.
- Enable students to demonstrate their understanding of learnt concepts and techniques.
- Allow students to practise communication of their work and findings through writing reports, preparing posters and verbal presentations.
- Planning projects/placements.
- Enable students to tackle problems in conservation relevant to the analysis of data and communication of findings to various audiences.
- Allow students to reflect on their learning in the context of the wider curriculum, and make connections between different subject areas.

Individual Tutorials:

- Enable tutor to evaluate conceptual understanding and identify gaps
- Provide an opportunity for individual feedback and targeted assistance, in confidence
- Allow tutor to aid students in planning their projects/placements and assessing their progress

Conservation Project-Based Projects/Placements:

- Present students with a unique challenge.
- Allow students to develop and practise their skills in the context of a working conservation project.
- Provide an opportunity for students to advocate solutions based on learnt material and understanding.
- Expose students to different institutional and team environments.
- Allow students to network and create mentor-mentee links.

Projects/placements will be designed to ensure a broad scope of practical experience, offering opportunities to put a variety of newly-learned techniques into practice. Projects will:

- Include comprehensive experience with collecting and analysing data, e.g. distance sampling, and the two projects will focus on different types of expertise.
- Be examinable through reports, as their success in achieving the learning outcomes will be partly evaluated from their two project write-ups, and,
- Be useful, contributing to the host projects. In some cases we expect successive generations of Postgraduate Diploma students to contribute to a given project, helping assemble long-term data sets with which, in turn, their successors may work.

11. Programme Structures and Requirements, Levels, Modules, Credits and Awards

The Postgraduate Diploma programme will involve the study of five modules in two broad subject areas: 'Ecology and Population Biology', and 'Conservation as an Interdisciplinary Field'. The topics will be taught with the emphasis that all the subjects are related and will allow students to understand ecological/biological principles within the context of wildlife biology and conservation. In additions, students will arrange two projects/placements of six weeks each.

The weight given to each type of teaching will depend upon the individual modules and their aims. Students will receive a detailed course handbook in February, including pre-sessional

reading material, access to the VLE and contact information for the course tutor and project/placement organisations.

MONTH	ACTIVITY
February	Pre-sessional reading, English and IT
March	Taught courses
April	Taught courses
April-May	Project/placement 1
June	Taught courses
July	Taught courses
July-August	Project/placement 2
September	Taught courses, moderation

11.1.1 Required and Formative Components

The proposed learning and assessment methods have been given in greater detail for one of the practical/procedural components: 'Ecology and Behaviour'.

PRINCIPLE 1 - ECOLOGY, POPULATION BIOLOGY AND HABITATS

Overall key concept: The necessity of clear research questions, and hypothesis testing based on robust data and standard analytical methods.

Module 1 - Wildlife Ecology and Behaviour

- Why study predator/community ecology and behaviour for conservation? How knowledge of these enables more effective and targeted conservation action.

Theme 1 - Predator and Community Ecology

- The role of predators in ecological systems, their impact on other components of the community, top-down vs. bottom-up regulation.

Theme 2 - Behaviour, including radio-tracking and dietary analysis

- Quantifying behaviour: choosing what behaviours to record and why.
- How to collect and analyse behavioural/ethological data - focal animal sampling, scan-sampling, timing activities, calculating time-budgets, counting events, outcomes of interactions.
- Analysing video data.
- Radio-tracking to determine home-ranges, habitat utilisation, intra-specific interactions.
- 'Ranges' software to analyse home ranges.
- Collection and preservation of faecal samples for dietary analysis.
- Microscopy to identify species in diet, and quantifying contributions to diet.

Species and Biodiversity Monitoring

- Why monitor population size and community species composition? How knowledge of these enables long-term assessments of conservation effectiveness, and rapid-response in crisis scenarios.
- Ecological consequences of biodiversity loss, including ecosystem services.

Species/Population Monitoring Techniques

- The importance of knowing population size, and detecting trends.
- The difference between absolute and relative abundance.

Species and Individual Identification

- Species identification from sightings and sign, using a key.
- Identifying and marking individuals using physical features, tracks, genetics.
- Using sign to determine presence/absence, density and individuals.

Trapping

- Know what information can be deduced from trapping data.
- Types of traps and appropriateness of different arrays/trapping densities for different species.
- How to set and bait traps, and handle small mammals safely.
- 'Mark' software to analyse trapping data.
- Appreciate the role of welfare in conservation.

Audio and Visual Recording, including Camera-Trapping (linked to Behaviour)

- How to set up a camera traps and audio and video equipment.
- How to analyse camera-trap records.

Distance Sampling

- Understanding how distance sampling can give absolute density estimates.
- Importance of sample size, how to determine transect length and placement.
- How to use 'Distance' software to analyse transect data.

Scientific Method and Statistics (to be introduced gradually during the module)

- The scientific method: developing relevant, testable hypotheses, planning appropriate data collection and analysis, summarising results, comparing with previous research and drawing conclusions.
- Designing data collection worksheets for their own purpose.
- Importance of metadata (ancillary information on how data was collected, by whom, for what purpose, what processing has been done on it).
- Understand the principles of good data management, hard-copy and electronic (labelling, back-up copies).
- Be able to enter and manipulate data in Excel (formatting, sorting).
- Different types of data (categorical vs. continuous, nominal, ordinal).
- Descriptive statistics (spread, location) and properties of the population versus the sample (confidence of estimates).
- Different types of statistical comparison (means, regressions, t-test, ANOVA) and what questions they answer.

Population Management (linked to Species Monitoring)

- The necessity for managing rare/vulnerable species.
- Techniques for population management - in-/ex-situ, re-introduction, translocation, meta-populations.
- Concepts behind modelling population viability under different threat and/or management scenarios.

Genetics (sample collection linked to trapping)

- Understand genetic diversity in populations, gene flow and bottlenecks.
- How to collect, store and ship genetic and epidemiological samples.

Disease (sample collection linked to trapping)

- Do parasites matter? Infectious diseases and the conservation of host populations
- Methods of preventing disease transmission.
- Case studies including rabies in Europe, the current bird flu situation and historic spread, TB in badgers, distemper in lions.

Habitat Assessment

- The role of habitat in determining a species' distribution (vs. disease, predation, colonisation/extinction).
- Potential impacts of habitat loss and degradation on populations and communities.
- Principles of assessing habitat quality and change for a particular taxon.

GPS and Basic GIS

- How to collect GPS waypoints
- Familiarity with the power and uses of GIS to manage, analyse and display spatial data
- The importance of metadata in GIS
- How to map GPS points, tracks and remotely-sensed imagery for visualisation

PRINCIPLE 2 - CONSERVATION AS AN INTERDISCIPLINARY FIELD

Overall key concept: Conservation problems occur within the context of biophysical and socio-cultural and political landscapes, and solutions must be multi-disciplinary to be truly effective.

Human Populations/Actions and Conservation

Conservation Overview

- Familiarity with the range of current conservation problems, their anthropogenic nature, and the range of solutions to them.
- The need for an interdisciplinary approach in conservation - the interface of social science, economics, biology, politics - be open to idea from other disciplines.

Community Involvement

- Human culture in conservation: the importance of taking into account human rights, traditional resource access, cultural importance of exploitation - balancing social and environmental issues, environmental ethics.
- The role of individuals, communities, institutions and governments in conservation, taking all stake-holders into account.
- The 'Tragedy of the commons', traditional approaches to resource use and community management, and situations where they continue to work.
- A role for local communities in conservation problems and solutions.

Wildlife Utilisation (linked to economics)

- The role of utilisation and the risks of over-utilisation (humans as predators).

Human-Wildlife Conflict

- Appreciation of the range of human-wildlife conflict situations, and the array of mitigation activities (barriers, compensation, education, problem-animal removal, translocation).

Human Beliefs, Attitudes and Education

- The potential for environmental education to change attitudes and gain conservation impact.
- Techniques for assessing human behaviour, attitudes and beliefs (interviews, focus groups, willingness to pay).

Economics

- The use of economics in defining and solving conservation problems.
- Cost-benefit analysis, and how it can be applied to conflict situations.
- The role of economic incentives in modulating human behaviour.

Conservation as a Global Problem

- Conservation at different spatial scales: species/habitat/ecosystem/biodiversity.
- Species-based approaches, umbrella species, IUCN (World Conservation Union) red-listing.
- The value of biodiversity, its role in ecosystem processes and function, and ecological consequences of biodiversity loss.
- Habitat-, landscape- and ecosystem-level approaches, Protected Area designation and ecosystem services.
- Global conservation: prioritisation, hotspots, eco-regions, complementarity, congruence.

Climate Change

- An appreciation of the extent, potential severity and rapidity of climate-change, and its impact on biodiversity, habitats and humans.
- The green-house gasses responsible and their origin (nationally and biochemically)

- Global climate change policy, carbon-trading, carbon-offsets.

Invasive Species

- How invasive species arrive.
- The ecological consequences of invasive species, and how to remove them or reduce their impact.

OPERATIONAL SKILLS

Project Management and Reporting (throughout course)

- Importance of monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of conservation interventions.
- Familiarity with standard methods of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E).

Driving, Health and Safety (to be covered in field sessions)

- Understanding of the driving techniques for use in different situations (sand, mud, snow, rivers), how to remove a stuck vehicle, replace a tyre.
- The use of risk assessment to minimise risk to workers and species of conservation concern.
- Basic first aid.
- Maintenance of equipment and safe storage of chemicals/biological samples.

EXAMPLE OF DETAILED LEARNING OUTCOMES: WILDLIFE ECOLOGY AND BEHAVIOUR MODULE

Knowledge and Understanding:

At the end of the module, students should be equipped to:

- Design data collection and analysis protocols to answer a specific ecological/behavioural question.
- Deploy practical techniques and equipment to monitor wildlife behaviour, including video-recording and radio-tracking equipment.
- Independently approach behavioural research.

Cognitive / Intellectual Skills:

At the end of the module, students will be able to:

- Explain how knowledge of wildlife behaviour can inform the probable effectiveness of a conservation intervention.
- Appraise different methods of collecting and analysing behavioural data, explain how the appropriateness of a particular method depends on context.

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENTS

Students' understanding and deployment of knowledge and skills will be tested twice per module: once in the style of that module's summative assessment, and once in a different, informal style. A range of formative assessments will be used, including:

- Multiple-choice questions on conservation problems, interdisciplinary solutions, analytical skills and research techniques. Immediate scoring and access to worked answers will enable students to measure their own progress and determine areas to improve.
- Self- and peer-evaluation will be undertaken in a workshop at the end of each theme, with verbal comments from the tutor.
- During tutorials (and workshops where appropriate), the tutor will give individual feedback on progress and knowledge gaps.
- The tutor will be available to comment on either the outline or first draft of a written piece of summative work, including project/placement reports.
- The tutor will provide individual guidance on developing project/placement activities.

11.1.2 Summative Components

The following summative components will be assessed to determine each student's grade:

- Module assignments x 5, totalling 40% of the final grade.
- Placement reports x 2, each worth 30% of the final grade.

Module Assignments

Most assignments will be short-answer questions, presenting problems for which the students have to design solutions, or information which the students then synthesise into a brief report/recommendation. Summative assessments will be timetabled at the end of each module. Initial assignments will be worth fewer marks and later assignments worth more, to allow students to become accustomed to learning and assessment styles. The following are examples of potential module assignments:

- Short written answers on conservation theory and practice, including appropriate reference to case studies and interpretation of the effectiveness of actions in achieving conservation goals.
- Writing a grant proposal.
- Writing a paper on chosen topic using current journal (e.g. Oryx) as template or equivalent.
- Designing an education activity/tool or equivalent.

Module Assignment 1 - Wildlife Ecology and Behaviour (detailed example of short-answer question)

1) Identify an endangered nocturnal predator that you know about, either from previous experience or from the literature. You need to survey this species to provide the following:

- An estimate of home-range size and overlap, for males and females.
 - The behavioural response of individuals to predator deterrence.
- a) Identify the elements of survey design that need to be determined before surveys begin.
 - b) Make suggestions for how you would design your survey, or what further information you would require to create a sensible and effective survey design.
 - c) Explain which software tools you would choose to analyse your survey data, and what statistical tests you would perform to provide answers to the bullet points above. For each software tool and statistical test, justify your choice.

2) Explain how you could use the results of this survey to inform conservation management of this species.

Placement Report

The two reports will be based on a conservation project-based project/placement that will build on the material studied in the taught modules. All projects/placements will be overseen by an academic supervisor, and in addition students on placements will have a placement-based mentor (to respectively ensure that the project has sufficient rigour and relevance to the student's career). Projects will be arranged within the diverse family of WildCRU programmes, and placements will be organised with a range of appropriate partner institutions, after a couple of years of running the course. We understand that it will be necessary to arrange an MoU with each partner, and await the new University template for this. Overseas placements may be arranged if appropriate support can be provided to the student, and visas obtained.

Reports will aim to test students' understanding of key concepts, by allowing them to apply these to new situations. Reports will be structured as follows, to enable students to demonstrate a range of skills and conceptual understanding:

- A summary of the conservation objectives of the organisation, how it aims to achieve these, and the extent of its success.

- Evidence of planning, data collection and analysis, including justification of the methods used.
- Results and conclusions drawn from the above analysis, including a critique of previous work, and how these results contribute to the aims of the organisation and scientific understanding.
- Assessment of how the organisation utilises an inter-disciplinary approach, and how it could further extend this to enhance its conservation objectives.
- A self-reflective component, allowing the student to reflect upon the most important things they have learnt during the course in general, and placement in particular, and how their experiences have changed their understanding of, and attitude towards different conservation activities.

12. Support for Learning

12.1.1 Recommended Reading List

- Bright, P.W. and Morris, P.A. (2000) *Rare mammals, research and realpolitik: Priorities for biodiversity and ecology?*, Cambridge University Press
- Burgman, M. (2005). *Risks and Decisions for Conservation and Environmental Management*. Ecology, Biodiversity and Conservation Series, Cambridge University Press.
- Davies, G and Brown, D (2007) *Bushmeat and Livelihoods*. Wiley Blackwell.
- De Levie, R. (2004) *Advanced Excel for Scientific Data Analysis*. Oxford University Press.
- Gibbs, J.P., Hunter, M.L. and Sterling, E.J. (1998) *Problem-solving in Conservation Biology and Wildlife Management: Exercises for Class, Field and Laboratory*. Cambridge University Press.
- Gittleman, J.L., Funk, S.M., Macdonald, D.W. and Wayne, R.K. (Eds.) (2001) *Carnivore Conservation*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Hunter, M.L., Lindenmayer, D.B. and Calhoun, A.J.K. (2007), *Saving the Earth as a Career: Advice on Becoming a Conservation Professional*. Blackwell Publishing
- Jacobson, S.K. (2007) *Conservation Education and Outreach Techniques*. Oxford University Press.
- Lindenmayer, D.B and Hobbs, R.J. (2007) *Managing and Designing Landscapes for Conservation: Moving from Perspectives to Principles*. Blackwell Publishing.
- Macdonald, D.W., Moorhouse, T.P., Enck, J.W. and Tattersall, F.H. (2002) *Encyclopedia of Mammals*, Cambridge University Press.
- Macdonald, D.W. and Service, K.M. (2006) *Key Topics in Conservation Biology*, Oxford, Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Magurran, A.E. (2007) *Measuring Biological Diversity*. Blackwell Publishing.
- Martin, P. and Bateson, P. (2007) *Measuring behaviour: an introductory guide*. 3rd Edition. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Packer, C. (1986) The ecology of sociality in felids. IN Rubenstein, D. I. and Wrangham, R. (Eds.) *Ecological Aspects of Social Evolution: Birds and Mammals*. Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press.
- Sodhi, N.S., Brook, B.W. and Bradshaw, C.J.A. (2007) *Tropical Conservation Biology*. Blackwell Publishing.
- Sunquist, M.E., Karanth, K.U. and Sunquist, F. (1999) Ecology, behaviour and resilience of the tiger and its conservation needs. IN Sidensticker, J., Christie, S. and Jackson, P. (Eds.) *Riding the Tiger: Tiger Conservation in Human-dominated landscapes*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Sutherland W.J. (2006) *Ecological Census Techniques: A Handbook*. Cambridge University Press

Townsend, C.R. (2008) *Ecological Applications: Toward a Sustainable World*. Blackwell Publishing.

Townsend, C.R., Begon, M. and Harper, J.L. (2008) *Essentials of Ecology*. 3rd Edition. Blackwell Publishing.

Willis J. (2004) *Data analysis and presentation skills*. Wiley Blackwell, Oxford.

Recent research articles and case studies from the following Conservation and Ecology Journals:

- African Journal of Ecology
- Animal Conservation
- Biodiversity and Conservation
- Biological Conservation
- Conservation Biology
- Conservation Ecology
- Diversity and Distributions
- Journal of Applied Ecology
- Journal of Wildlife Management
- Oryx
- Wildlife Society Bulletin
- Wildlife Research

13. Criteria for Admission

Applicants will be assessed on their individual merits and potential based on their CVs, a statement of their career plans and their referees' statements. Decisions will be based on the application of selection criteria appropriate to the course of study in a competitive context.

All candidates will need to:

1. Hold a minimum of an appropriate biological qualification equivalent to BSc (in which case an academic transcript is required) or demonstrate equivalent experience in the field of wildlife conservation practice.
2. Satisfy the minimum required English language criteria set by the University, being either a native English speaker, having completed their first degree in English, or having a minimum IELTS score of 7.5 (or equivalent in other University-accepted examinations).
3. Have a senior supporter from their home institution or country who is a referee for the individual.
4. Provide two additional references, at least one of whom is qualified to comment on their academic potential.
5. Provide a Curriculum Vitae.
6. Provide a Statement detailing why they want to take the course, and their subsequent career plans.
7. Have a good working knowledge of email, internet and word processing (for communications with course members, teachers and administrative staff).
8. Show evidence of the ability to commit the necessary time to study the course, and an employer's commitment to allow them time to attend and complete the course.

Short-listed candidates will be interviewed by the Course Tutor, in person if possible, by telephone or video link and occasionally by a WildCRU agent in their home country.

Successful candidates will normally provide evidence of the following:

- Motivation and ability to complete the course.
- A clear and well argued understanding of the benefits of the course to the candidate's current employment and future prospects.

Additional criteria to aid decisions between candidates of similar accomplishment are:

- Experience of conservation issues in the developing world,
- Geographic origin and experience,
- Synergies with WildCRU/Panthera projects and the associated international conservation network,
- Contribution to the balance and composition of the student cohort and wider WildCRU community at Tubney House and within the Department of Zoology.

13.1.1 English Language Requirements

Students must have adequate English language skills, both as a formal university requirement for acceptance on a postgraduate course, and to ensure that students gain the maximum benefit from the course. They will need a score of 7.5 overall (with a minimum score of 7.0 in each component) on the British Council International English Language Testing System (IELTS), or the equivalent in other University-approved courses (e.g. TOEFL). Students with borderline scores may be accepted on condition that they attend a language course and gain an acceptable score. In particular cases the WildCRU may award a scholarship for pre-session intensive language tuition to enable promising students with borderline language skills to join the course, and the OU Language Centre has agreed to offer this teaching as required.

13.1.2 IT Experience/Training

Students will have to demonstrate adequate IT experience before being accepted on the course, encompassing familiarity with Microsoft Office programmes, in particular Word and Excel. In certain cases the WildCRU may award a scholarship for pre-session intensive IT tuition to enable promising students with borderline IT skills to join the course, and the OU Computing Services have agreed to offer this teaching as required.

13.1.3 Applications Process

WildCRU will have an admissions panel comprising the Course Director, Course Tutor, representative from CPD and possibly one external assessor. The admissions panel will be charged with handling applications transparently and ensuring that scholarships are allocated appropriately. The admissions policy for the course is intended to ensure that applicants are offered equality of opportunity irrespective of gender, disability, race, religion, nationality or ethnic origin.

Students will be able to apply direct, either having seen the advertisements themselves, or having been identified and recommended by WildCRU's extensive international network in this sector. All potential applicants will receive a brochure detailing the scheme for the course and will have access to the detailed, and regularly updated, description of the course at the programme website. The admissions criteria above will be clearly stated in the brochure sent to enquiring potential students, in the Student Handbook for the programme, and in the e-handbook at the programme website.

Application forms will be accessible online, and a hard copy of completed applications (including references and evidence of English language ability) will be posted to WildCRU to check that applications are complete, before transferral to OUDCE for processing via the University's online admissions system.

Candidates will be short-listed based on their CV, references and statement. Interviews will be conducted as necessary to select between candidates on the short-list.

13.1.4 Timing of Course

Much of the taught course will involve fieldwork that will be more effectively, and less arduously, completed outside the winter months, and this applies also to the planned periods of project work. In addition, a proportion of the students will be travelling, often for the first time in their lives, from hot countries, making arrival in autumn an unwelcome added burden. Finally, within the University, various ancillary aspects of their course will be under less

pressure during the summer months. For all three reasons, the arrival of the students in Oxford is scheduled for March, although students will be assigned introductory reading and distance learning at the start of the course in February. Students may arrange to arrive in February for pre-sessional English and IT courses on a case-by-case basis. Pre-sessional learning will be administered through the course VLE.

13.1.5 Pilot Study

As part of the process of refining the course, WildCRU will offer scholarships to five appropriate candidates to undertake a pilot version of the course as interns during 2008, and the lessons learned by the course organisers will ensure that the first full intake in Trinity 2009 will be assured of a very high quality experience. The five interns will be given an appropriate 'Certificate of Attendance'.

14. Evaluation and Improvement of Quality and Standards:

Methods for evaluating and improving quality and standards include:

1. Student feedback and consultation: comments will be collected through questionnaires at the end of the course, through an elected representative in each annual cohort and through online feedback in the course VLE. Feedback will be considered by the Course Directors, Course Tutor and module teaching staff, and acted on where appropriate. Students will be informed of the outcome.
2. Student destination, whether employment or further study: the Course Director will report on destinations in the reports to the MPLS-CE Standing Committee. The destinations enable some assessment of the professional development achieved by the student through the course. Information will be incorporated into the HESA Destination of leavers from Higher Education survey.
3. Course team meetings will be held at which course staff consider the current course structure and delivery arrangements and make recommendations for change and improvement.
4. Oxford Learning Institute participation: the Institute supports the furtherance of excellence in learning, teaching and research at the University and promotes the professional and vocational development of staff. Staff will be encouraged to attend seminars provided by the Institute and also by OUCS as appropriate.
5. Team teaching will be used to help spread best practice for teaching and learning techniques.
6. The internal examiners' report will comment on the standards of learning and examination performance.
7. The external examiner moderates work to ensure the standards of teaching and assessment are appropriate and consistent. S/he will provide an annual report which will be considered by relevant divisional and central boards.
8. The Board of Examiners will meet annually to consider and agree marks and awards. The Course Director's report will review the past year, and report any developments to the MPLS-CE Standing Committee. Detail will be provided on admissions, retention, staffing, course changes, feedback and responses to feedback, student performance and any difficulties encountered with the course.
9. The MPLS-CE Standing Committee will receive the Course Director's Report and the Examiners' reports, review the programme of study, scrutinise and approve the course and examination arrangements.
10. The MPLS-CE Standing Committee and Board of Studies have formal responsibility for upholding the quality of the course. It has to review and give approval for any changes to regulations.
11. The Educational Policy and Standards Committee bears overall responsibility for teaching, learning and assessment in the University. It has to consider and give approval for any changes to regulations.

12. Best practice from other HEIs is identified through reports of external examiners, attendance at conferences, reading of journals and other forms of academic communication.

15. Assessment Criteria:

Dates of assignment deadlines will be presented in the Course Handbook. Lists of projects/placements will be approved by the Board of Studies and communicated to students at least one month before the project/placement is due to commence. Pass lists will be prepared by the Continuing Education Registry and students will be advised of their (un-moderated) marks within one month of the assignment deadline. One external examiner will be recruited to the Board of Examiners.

15.1.1 Methods of Assessment

The students will be assessed on the basis of submitted work, including two substantial project/placement reports, and minor assignments to assess each of the taught modules. Each project/placement will generally involve a 6-8 weeks period engaged in a practical project in the field, incorporating appropriate analytical work and the production of a written report. Passing the Postgraduate Diploma will depend upon satisfactory completion of these two reports and five minor assignments.

15.1.2 Cases of Failure and Arrangements for Re-sits

Students will not obtain the Postgraduate Diploma unless they complete the requirements to the satisfaction of the examiners. In particular, failure to submit any assignment without dispensation or to submit the project/placement reports automatically results in overall failure. The examiners may award a distinction for exceptional performance in the Postgraduate Diploma. Poor performance on one part of the course may, at the discretion of the examiners, be compensated for by excellent performance in the remaining parts.

University regulations provide that a student who has failed the overall examination for the postgraduate Postgraduate Diploma may re-submit failing assignments at most once. This means resubmitting assignments and the project/placement reports, but not re-attending modules. A re-submission of a failed assignment is only required if the student's overall mark at the end of the course is a failing mark, thus a failing marks in an assignment(s) may be compensated for by good marks in other assignments. Assignments for re-submission must be completed in a period of the same duration as the original submission, to end no longer than one calendar year after the end of the course.

15.1.3 Presentation of Coursework

During each module students will be given assignments which will usually be due within four to six weeks of the end of the module. Assignments should be submitted using the CASS submission system. A marking form AM1, supplied with the notes, should be completed and returned with each assignment.

15.1.4 Submission of Coursework

It is each student's responsibility to ensure that assignments are submitted by the deadlines listed in the Course Handbook, although the examiners will take exceptional circumstances into account. These dates will also be published in the notes for each module. Assignments must be wholly the work of the student with due acknowledgement as appropriate, and must not be plagiarised. Plagiarism consists of substantial or verbatim quotation from an

unacknowledged source. This includes, in particular, unacknowledged collaboration with another student. Plagiarised work will be discounted; there can be no subsequent submission of revised versions of work which has been judged to be plagiarised. For each submission made, students will be required to sign a declaration acknowledging authenticity of the work. This declaration appears on the AM1 marking form which will be included in each new set of notes.

All assignments will be double-marked by course tutors. A number of assignments (usually those receiving borderline or exceptionally high marks or where there is a large disparity between marks awarded by first and second-markers) will be sent to an external examiner for moderation, as will a complete set of a selection of individuals' work.

15.1.5 Extensions

Submission of assignments and the overall appraisal by the deadline is strictly regulated. If a student cannot submit an assignment (including the project/placement report) by the set deadline, they must apply **in advance of the set deadline** for an extension date, providing the reasons for the request. Failure to do so may result in marks being deducted by the examiners, or the assignment being disallowed. Applications for all types of extension (see below), in accordance with Departmental policy and course conventions, are judged using the criteria below, and will in certain circumstances require approval of the MPLS-CE Standing Committee. Students should be able to show that each of these criteria has been addressed:

- Whether the substantive argument for extension is associated with an unavoidable change in personal, employment or other relevant circumstances not anticipated at the outset of studies,
- The likely duration of the changed circumstances,
- Whether there is clear evidence of a plan to meet the requirements for submission of assignment material within a stipulated time period,
- Ill health (medical evidence to be required if period of extension is for more than two weeks).

If a student requires an extension for an assignment, one of procedures below must be followed depending upon the duration of the proposed extension.

For an extension of up to two weeks:

The student's application will be reviewed by the Course Director and if approved will be forwarded to the Board of Examiners.

For an extension of more than two weeks:

The application must be approved by the MPLS-CE Standing Committee and the Chair of the Board of Studies.

16. Indicators of Programme Quality:

1. Student results profiles will be analysed to assess overall achievement and progression during the course.
2. Destination data will be collected to demonstrate progression from the course and market recognition of the award. Further evidence of the quality of teaching and learning will be provided by the subsequent performance of students accepted onto full or part-time degrees courses at Oxford and other institutions.
3. The annual External Examiner's report will provide impartial feedback on the course and comparison with the standards achieved by similar courses in other institutions.
4. Student retention and completion rates will be analysed to assess student satisfaction and the adequacy of student support.
5. The annual evaluation of programme quality by students will provide a 'user assessment' of course content and delivery.

6. The course will be reviewed in detail every six years by a panel including external experts in the field.
7. Project/placement supervisors' assessments will indicate if a student has benefited in a vocational context, bringing benefits to both the individual and the organisation
8. Evidence of the quality of the Department: for example the quality of its staff (as attested by RAE, success in securing external funding, external testimony)
9. Produced in accordance with QAA guidelines