

**Recanati-Kaplan Centre Postgraduate Diploma in  
International Wildlife Conservation Practice  
Programme Specification**

1. **Awarding Institution / Body:** University of Oxford
2. **Teaching Institution:** University of Oxford, Wildlife Conservation Research Unit (Department of Zoology) and Continuing Professional Development (Department for Continuing Education)
3. **Programme Accredited by:** University of Oxford
4. **Final Award:** Postgraduate Diploma
5. **Programme Title:** Recanati-Kaplan Centre Postgraduate Diploma in International Wildlife Conservation Practice
6. **UCAS Code:** N/A
7. **QAA Benchmarking Group:** N/A
8. **Date of Programme Specification/last revised:** May 2014

**9. Aims of Programme:**

The aims of the Recanati-Kaplan Centre 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 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 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, camera-trapping).
- 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, including dead ones (post-mortem).

#### ***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.

## **10.2 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 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, Units, Credits and Awards

The Postgraduate Diploma programme will involve the study of five units 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 five weeks each.

The weight given to each type of teaching will depend upon the individual units 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.

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

### 11.1 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.*

#### ***Unit 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 ranging patterns and dietary analysis

- Quantifying behaviour: choosing what behaviours to record and why.
- How to collect and analyse behavioural data
- Analyzing radio-tracking data to determine home-ranges, habitat utilisation, and intra-specific interactions.
- 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/Presence” software and R “SECR” package to analyse trapping data.
- “Presence” software to analyse presence/absence 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 unit)

- 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, t-test, ANOVA) and modelling (general linear models) and what questions they answer.
- Use of R statistical software

### ***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.
- “Vortex” software to undertake population viability analysis

#### 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, 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
- QGIS/GRASS software for storage and analysis of spatial data (vector/raster)

## ***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.
- 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.
- 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).

Health and Safety (to be covered in field sessions)

- 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 UNIT***

#### ***Knowledge and Understanding:***

At the end of the unit, 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 camera trapping equipment.
- Independently approach behavioural research.

#### ***Cognitive / Intellectual Skills:***

At the end of the unit, 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 unit: once in the style of that unit'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 the first draft of project/placement reports.
- The tutor will provide individual guidance on developing project/placement activities.

## **11.2 Summative Components**

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

- Unit assignments x 4, each worth 10%, totalling 40% of the final grade.
- Placement/Project reports x 2, each worth 30% of the final grade.

The assignment for the first unit, Wildlife Ecology and Behaviour, will be formative only. Marks for that assignment will not contribute to the final award.

### ***Unit 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 unit. The following are examples of potential unit 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.

### ***Placement/Project Report***

The two reports will be based on a conservation project/placement that will build on the material studied in the taught units. All projects/placements will be overseen by an academic supervisor, and in addition students on placements will have a placement-based mentor (to ensure that the project has sufficient rigour and relevance to the student's career. Projects will be arranged either using datasets provided by the students or obtained within the diverse family of WildCRU programmes, and placements will be organised, under Memorandums of Understanding as appropriate, with a range of partner institutions, after a couple of years of running the course. 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 along the lines of peer-reviewed manuscripts, to enable students to demonstrate a range of skills and conceptual understanding. Specifically:

- A summary of the conservation objectives addressed by the project, how they will be achieved by the proposed data analysis.
- Evidence of understanding the data collection process and planning of the data 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 wildlife conservation in general and scientific understanding.
- Assessment of how future studies can further expand our knowledge on the topic, building on the project's findings.

## **12. Support for Learning**

### **Course Directors and Tutors undertake to:**

- (a) provide a Course Handbook which includes details of the course, Department and contact information and reading lists
- (b) provide an Induction programme to familiarise students with staff and each other, locations and use of library and computing facilities

- (c) provide support for the course programme including time management, accessing and using libraries and IT resources, reading for academic purposes, taking notes, essay writing skills, giving presentations, writing and presenting assignments and project reports
- (d) give detailed feedback on assignments in the form of script comments, summary of strengths and weaknesses and verbal discussion (in tutorials) of the assignment, comments and broader issues surrounding the question
- (e) provide feedback to students through a tutor's report
- (f) provide specific support from a supervisor in the selection, preparation and writing of the project reports
- (g) give detailed feedback on aspects of the projects reports in the form of written comments on draft sections, summary of strengths and weaknesses and verbal discussion (in tutorials)
- (h) offer help, advice and, where required, referral to University support systems in cases of student disability such as dyslexia
- (i) encourage students to reflect constructively upon their own strengths and weaknesses
- (j) give advice on progression to further study
- (k) seek and respond to student feedback on the course.

**The Department for Continuing Education will provide:**

- (a) Study skills courses aimed at adult learners
- (b) Access to the services of a Student Advisor who has specific experience of the needs of adult learners
- (c) An on-line discussion forum for students
- (d) Access to library facilities at OULS, Rewley House and specialist libraries
- (e) An OU card and access to OUCS services
- (f) Access to hardship funds and advice
- (g) A Complaints and Appeals system

Please note: Although OUDCE does not have direct provision for welfare and counselling and career services as provided by the wider University, advice can be given on other sources of support in these areas.

### **13. Criteria for Admission and Admission process**

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. Have first-hand experience of field work and conservation issues in the developing world.
3. 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).

4. Provide three 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 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.

Applicants will be expected to demonstrate an approach to their study which includes demonstrable skills of critical analysis, wide contextual knowledge and the ability to manage their own time.

The ability of students to finance their study is not one of the criteria for academic acceptance. However, applicants may not subsequently be admitted to the course if they are unable to provide evidence of their ability to pay the course fees.

### **13.1 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.

### **13.2 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.

### **13.3 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.

### **13.4 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.

## **14. Evaluation and Improvement of Quality and Standards:**

The principal methods of evaluation are through:

- Board of Examiner meetings, examiner reports, student and tutor feedback, joint standing committee meetings, Joint Boards of Studies, and periodic reviews of the subject area;
- Management information such as data on requests for extensions and late submissions and marking turn round times;
- The Joint Board of Studies, which ensures that any points raised by external examiners are addressed. A further layer of scrutiny is then provided by EdC.

These all contribute to ongoing and regular evaluation of the syllabus, teaching methods, assessment methods and course structure and delivery.

Improvements are carried out through:

- Proposals to make significant changes to the syllabus or assessment methods will be discussed by Departmental committees, MPLS Division and the Continuing Education Board, with Education Committee having the final say on major changes.
- Encouraging staff to make use of the resources offered by the Oxford Learning Institute, to enhance their professional and vocational skills.
- The sharing of best practice through the Joint Board of Studies: a yearly report is produced which goes to the Department’s Academic Board and the Continuing Education Board.
- Dissemination of best practice from other HEIs, identified through reports from external examiners, attendance at conferences, reading journals and other forms of academic communication.

## 15. Regulation of Assessment

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 Methods of Assessment

The students will be assessed on the basis of submitted work, including two substantial project/placement reports, and five minor assignments to assess each of the taught units. The first of the written assignments will be formative only, to allow students to become accustomed to the conventions of academic writing in a language that may not be their own. Each project/placement will generally involve a 5 week period engaged in a practical project, 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 the four summative assignments.

Information about failure to submit, failure of assessed work, extensions and intermissions can be found in the course examination conventions.

Assignments will be marked on the following criterion-based numerical scales, developed for five different styles of assignment. The comments are intended as a guide to the levels and content looked for by the markers.

#### Marking System: Essays and Short Answer Questions

<b>Distinction</b> 85 – 100%	<i>Exemplary answer of professional standards worth retaining for future reference, demonstrating particular excellence in more than one of the following criteria.</i>	
	Understanding & Analysis	Thorough understanding of topic with insightful and creative analysis, supported from wide range of sources  Confident, convincing expression of argument with penetrating and balanced critical judgment  Independent and original thought and execution throughout
	Selection & Coverage	Deep understanding of the subject of high intellectual quality  Comprehensive presentation of information with original contribution to the subject and without repetitions.

	Structure & Presentation	Excellent structure throughout, with a focused good synthesis of different sources  Professionally presented with comprehensive correct citations
<b>Distinction</b> 70 - 84%	<i>Thoughtful answer informed by wider reading, showing clarity of thought and personal insight</i>	
	Understanding & Analysis	Advanced understanding of topic and key literature, with overall consistent and well supported argument.  Evidence of independent and original thought and execution.
	Selection & Coverage	Relevant and comprehensive knowledge  Selective presentation of information to support all sides of the argument
	Structure & Presentation	Clearly structured answer with logical presentation of arguments  High quality presentation throughout, with correct citations
<b>Pass</b> 50 – 69%	<i>Good understanding with clear synthesis and analysis, may be lacking originality</i>	
	Understanding & Analysis	Good understanding of topic and wider implications, some initiative shown  Convincing and critical judgment but lacking consistency in places
	Selection & Coverage	Reasonably thorough knowledge and appropriate material, but some omissions  Clear expression of argument but may not address all viewpoints
	Structure & Presentation	Well-structured and generally logical, largely correct and consistent citations  High-quality presentation in some areas or well-presented in all
<b>Fail</b> 40 – 49%	<i>Demonstrates basic knowledge but with limited depth, breadth or logical flow</i>	
	Understanding & Analysis	Basic understanding of the main principles  Some attempt at synthesis and analysis, but may be flawed and unreflective
	Selection & Coverage	General knowledge but limited in depth or breadth  Superficial in expression of argument, or biased towards a single viewpoint
	Structure & Presentation	Reasonable structure overall but confusing or disjointed in some areas  Low quality of presentation in places, inconsistent citations
<b>Fail (resubmit)</b> 20 – 39%	<i>Some basic knowledge but with evidence of gross conceptual misunderstanding, poor depth, breadth or logical flow</i>	
	Understanding & Analysis	Some but overall deficient knowledge of main topics  Little evidence of original thought or critical judgment

	Selection & Coverage	Some inaccuracies, and very poor/limited knowledge Evidence of irrelevance, brevity and superficiality
	Structure & Presentation	Poor structure overall Low quality of presentation overall, inconsistent and missing citations
<b>Fail (resubmit)</b> 0 – 19%	<i>Confused, incomplete or inaccurate</i>	
	Understanding & Analysis	Virtually no evidence that topic has been properly understood No evidence of original thought or critical judgment Confused expression of arguments
	Selection & Coverage	Unsystematic and/or incomplete May include grave inaccuracies or be largely irrelevant
	Structure & Presentation	Disjointed throughout and/or well below the word limit. Careless presentation, lacking proper citations

**Marking System: Technical and Analytical Assignments**

<b>Distinction</b> 85 – 100%	<i>Exemplary command of analytical techniques, with well-argued interpretation of results and excellent presentation</i>	
	Understanding & Analysis	Excellent interpretation and insightful appraisal of results, drawing on robust theoretical knowledge Calculations excellently documented, reasons for analytical choices clearly indicated with reference to context Evidence of initiative and innovation
	Selection & Coverage	All quantitative questions correctly answered A complete and well-rounded piece of work with excellent integration of results and theory
	Structure & Presentation	Excellent structure of answers throughout with a focused, logical presentation of results and conclusions Professionally presented figures and tables, including all information necessary for interpretation Appropriate level of precision, accurate and thorough citations
<b>Distinction</b> 70 - 84%	<i>Strong presentation, thorough analysis, good interpretation</i>	
	Understanding & Analysis	Advanced analytical approach, confident and well-argued interpretation of results supported well by literature Calculations well documented
	Selection & Coverage	Most quantitative questions answered correctly with only a small number of minor mistakes All data and results clearly and correctly displayed

	Structure & Presentation	Citations correct, clear logical structure, well-presented with examples of calculations, and all figures and tables clearly explained High quality presentation of figures and tables
<b>Pass</b> 50 – 69%	<i>Generally sound analysis, interpretation and presentation of results</i>	
	Understanding & Analysis	Plausible analytical approach, supported by reference to the literature most of the time but may be lacking originality or precision Good interpretation of results, conclusions justified by the data
	Selection & Coverage	A strong attempt at all quantitative questions, with few major mistakes Data and/or results extracted and displayed correctly
	Structure & Presentation	Well-structured answers with clear explanations Clearly presented figures and tables but explanatory detail or visual clarity may be lacking
<b>Fail</b> 40 – 49%	<i>Demonstrates basic grasp of analytical techniques but flawed in key areas</i>	
	Understanding & Analysis	Some weaknesses in analytical approach or grasp of relevant theory Attempt at interpretation and justification, but key points missed
	Selection & Coverage	A fair attempt at all quantitative questions but with major mistakes in one area, or smaller flaws throughout
	Structure & Presentation	Poorly structured or confused in places Some figures or tables poorly presented or difficult to interpret
<b>Fail (resubmit)</b> 20 – 39%	<i>Evidence of gross conceptual misunderstanding of analytical techniques, multiple mistakes and poor presentation</i>	
	Understanding & Analysis	Analytical approach fundamentally flawed with some major errors Data and/or results largely displayed and extracted incorrectly Attempts at interpretation largely incorrect, justification of analytical methods lacking
	Selection & Coverage	Major mistakes in more than one area Evidence of irrelevance, brevity and superficiality
	Structure & Presentation	Lacking structure, figures and tables poorly formatted and difficult to interpret or illegible Low quality of presentation overall, inconsistent and missing citations
<b>Fail</b>	<i>Largely incomplete or incorrect</i>	

<b>(resubmit)</b> 0 – 19%	Understanding & Analysis	Gross conceptual or technical mistakes throughout Limited to simple descriptive information on dataset Lacking interpretation of results
	Selection & Coverage	Large sections unanswered or major mistakes throughout Unacceptably sparse, repetitious and imprecise answers
	Structure & Presentation	Disjointed throughout and/or well below the word limit Careless or unintelligible presentation

**Marking System: Research Planning and Design**

<b>Distinction</b> 85 – 100%	<i>Innovative design demonstrating excellent theoretical and practical understanding of research methods</i>	
	Understanding & Analysis	Excellent conceptual understanding, research question clearly understood, well-stated and strongly linked to conservation problem  Excellent understanding of ecological, human and logistical context Innovative and robust research design, sound application of theory.
	Selection & Coverage	Excellent research plan addressing flawlessly background, field methods, analysis and application  Problems anticipated and solutions proposed Excellent background research of relevant literature
	Structure & Presentation	Excellent structure throughout, with a focused, logical synthesis of the connection between question and research plan  Professional presentation with excellent attention to detail
<b>Distinction</b> 70 – 84%	<i>Thorough, comprehensive planning, showing some innovation and broad theoretical understanding</i>	
	Understanding & Analysis	Advanced conceptual understanding, well-considered research design with no obvious flaws  Comprehensive understanding of the conservation context
	Selection & Coverage	Comprehensive research plan including background, field methods, analysis and application  Some level of problem anticipation and logical solutions considered
	Structure & Presentation	Clearly structured research design with a sound grasp of the connection between question and research plan  High quality presentation throughout
<b>Pass</b>	<i>Coherent plan demonstrating a good understanding of research design principles</i>	

50 – 69%	Understanding & Analysis	<p>Research question clearly stated, generally well-considered research design but with some minor flaws</p> <p>Understanding of the conservation context and the potential limitations imposed by field conditions</p> <p>Correct use of terminology</p>
	Selection & Coverage	<p>Appropriate data collection and analysis methods, with sufficient detail to assess suitability of approach</p> <p>Evidence of background research into the conservation context and/or methods</p>
	Structure & Presentation	<p>Well-structured and generally good grasp of the connection between question and research plan</p> <p>High-quality presented in some areas or well-presented in all</p>
<b>Fail</b> 40 – 49%	<i>Basic understanding of research methods but partially flawed in application</i>	
	Understanding & Analysis	<p>Adequate grasp of basic principles but some areas of confusion in conceptual understanding.</p> <p>Application of theory or techniques flawed in places, poor use of terminology</p>
	Selection & Coverage	<p>Research plan only partially complete, or not supported by background information</p> <p>Missing vital information on one aspect of research design, or superficial and/or vague in several areas.</p>
Structure & Presentation	<p>Mostly logical but some areas disjointed or contradictory.</p> <p>Low quality of presentation in some places</p>	
<b>Fail (resubmit)</b> 20 – 39%	<i>Unsystematic or flawed research plan, with inappropriate use of methods</i>	
	Understanding & Analysis	<p>Deficient understanding of basic principles and concepts</p> <p>Terminology misused or incorrect, data collection and analysis inadequate for task</p>
	Selection & Coverage	<p>Skeletal plan, major areas superficially covered</p> <p>Inadequate background research</p>
Structure & Presentation	<p>Lacking overall systematic structure</p> <p>Low quality of presentation overall</p>	
<b>Fail (resubmit)</b> 0 – 19%	<i>Confused, incomplete or inaccurate</i>	
	Understanding & Analysis	<p>Gross conceptual misunderstanding of basic principles and concepts, heavily flawed data collection or analysis methods</p> <p>Research question not stated, or of dubious relevance to problem scenario</p>

Selection & Coverage	Unsystematic and/or incomplete plan, major areas entirely missing Background research absent or irrelevant.
Structure & Presentation	Disjointed throughout and/or well below the word limit Careless or unintelligible presentation

**Marking System: Poster Presentations**

<p><b>Distinction</b> 85 – 100%</p>	<i>Highly informative poster of striking and memorable design</i>	
	Understanding & Analysis	Informative poster, demonstrating excellent understanding and broad knowledge of theory and practice All ideas communicated with clarity and flair
	Selection & Coverage	Excellent illustrations including all information necessary for interpretation Excellent use and crediting of appropriate sources
	Structure & Presentation	Beautifully presented and aesthetically-pleasing, striking and/or innovative design Use of visual emphasis to catch attention and rapidly communicate message Excellent attention to detail, clear structure leads the reader through a logical narrative sequence
<p><b>Distinction</b> 70 - 84%</p>	<i>Attractive and informative poster</i>	
	Understanding & Analysis	Comprehensive understanding of the concepts and/or scenarios illustrated by the poster Demonstrates a good understanding of the purpose of poster presentations
	Selection & Coverage	Illustrations well-chosen and informative, including most information necessary for interpretation Balanced use of appropriate sources, credit given to authors and organizations
	<i>Structure &amp; Presentation</i>	Attractive poster with clever use of space, with clear diagrams and illustrations. Reader can follow information easily Attention to detail is evident
<p><b>Pass</b> 50 – 69%</p>	<i>Well-designed poster that communicates the message clearly</i>	

	Understanding & Analysis	Good understanding of the concepts and/or scenarios illustrated by the poster Effective communication of the main message presented by the poster
	Selection & Coverage	Good range of accurate Information summarized concisely Appropriate use of terminology and citations
	Structure & Presentation	Good use of space, but may be lacking visual excitement Text and graphical elements of an appropriate size, colour, spacing and font
<b>Fail</b> 40 – 49%	<i>Basic message not fully communicated, considerable design flaws</i>	
	Understanding & Analysis	Basic principles/information presented but lacking advanced understanding or individual insight Some conceptual or factual inaccuracies
	Selection & Coverage	Most areas covered but one or more crucial omissions Lacking breadth or depth, or overly repetitive
	Structure & Presentation	Confusing structure or poorly formatted elements detract from ease of communication Illustrations unclear, difficult to interpret
<b>Fail (resubmit)</b> 20 – 39%	<i>Uninformative poster due to poor design or lack of structure, and with low information content</i>	
	Understanding & Analysis	Some conceptual mistakes apparent, information does not convey central message Limited understanding of the purpose of a poster or of the concepts presented within
	Selection & Coverage	Several crucial omissions Information supplied largely inaccurate or irrelevant Illustrations illegible or incorrect
	Structure & Presentation	Formatting and language obscures information Some spelling and grammatical errors
<b>Fail (resubmit)</b> 0 – 19%	<i>Disorganized and insubstantial poster, lacking illustrations and accurate information</i>	
	Understanding & Analysis	Confused, inaccurate or unacceptably sparse information
	Selection & Coverage	Unsystematic and/or incomplete cover of topic Illustrations irrelevant or absent altogether
	Structure & Presentation	Disjointed throughout and/or well below the word limit Careless presentation with inappropriate formatting A large number of grammatical or spelling errors

**Marking System: Research Project Reports**

<b>Distinction</b>  85 – 100%	<i>Exemplary and original research of professional standards, showing keen insight, technical proficiency and excellent communication skills</i>	
	Understanding & Analysis	Hypothesis-driven research with excellent understanding of theoretical concepts and ecological context, supported from wide range of sources  Originality and flair, clear application of results for conservation benefit, excellent interpretation of results and justification of conclusions
	Selection & Coverage	Excellent report with all sections informative and precise  Relevant and wide-ranging literature cited, a range of advanced analytical approaches used
	Structure & Presentation	Excellent logical structure connecting all parts of the report in a strong narrative story, writing is clear, concise and well-phrased, with good use of terminology,  Professional presentation with good attention to detail, correct citations throughout, figures and tables skilfully constructed to replace text, including all information necessary for interpretation
<b>Distinction</b>  70 - 84%	<i>Rigorous research grounded in theory, and well-communicated conclusions of comprehensive analysis</i>	
	Understanding & Analysis	Thorough conceptual and ecological understanding, showing some originality with strong analysis throughout and supported by comprehensive citations  Perceptive interpretation of results and sound justification of conclusions, research has some conservation value
	Selection & Coverage	All sections of report presented, with reasonably thorough literature review and analysis  A range of methods used with correct terminology, review of analysis has depth and is well-focused, citations are all correct and all assistance is credited
Structure & Presentation	Writing is strong with a clear structure, figures illustrate arguments well and the document has a sense of flow and purpose	
<b>Pass</b>  50 – 69%	<i>Sound research grounded in theory, with appropriate analysis and conclusions</i>	
	Understanding & Analysis	Good conceptual and ecological understanding, but may be lacking originality  Some weaknesses in analysis but generally thorough and appropriate, conclusions generally justified but research may be of limited conservation value
Selection & Coverage	All sections of report adequately presented but may be vague or repetitive in some areas, reasonably thorough literature review and analysis	

	Structure & Presentation	Well-organized and presented report with appropriate use of illustrations, figures and tables generally easy to interpret, but may lack explanatory detail in places  Methodical citation and clear acknowledgement of assistance with data provision and analysis
<b>Fail</b> 40 – 49%	<i>Demonstrates basic theoretical grounding, but with limited depth, breadth or logical flow and some flaws in theory and data/analysis</i>	
	Understanding & Analysis	Good grasp of most basic concepts, but some flaws in understanding of critical areas  Weakness in research design or application of techniques  Over-interpretation of results, lack of justification of conclusions or of dubious relevance to conservation
	Selection & Coverage	Some report sections covered superficially  Biased or limited literature review or analysis, documentation of methods vague or confusing at times, documentation of methods vague or confusing at times
	Structure & Presentation	Some structure present, but weak presentation in some areas, inconsistent citations  Figures and tables generally acceptable but lacking precision or explanation
<b>Fail (resubmit)</b> 20 – 39%	<i>Weak theoretical grounding and significant flaws in application or interpretation</i>	
	Understanding & Analysis	Deficient understanding of basic concepts, weaknesses in research design or application of analytical techniques  Evidence of irrelevance, brevity and superficiality in the interpretation of results and conclusions, little evidence of original thought or critical judgment
	Selection & Coverage	An entire report section missing and some covered superficially  Biased or limited literature review or analysis, incomplete documentation of methods
	Structure & Presentation	Poor structure overall  Low quality of presentation overall, inconsistent and missing citations, figures and tables generally lack precision or explanation
<b>Fail (resubmit)</b> 0 – 19%	<i>Poorly presented, insubstantial report, lacking theoretical grounding or technical expertise</i>	
	Understanding & Analysis	Major conceptual misunderstandings, lacking a systematic or scientific approach  Research of no relevance to conservation, conclusions not justified by the research

	Selection & Coverage	Multiple sections omitted or insubstantial Analysis missing or biased towards inappropriate techniques, no documentation of methods
	Structure & Presentation	Confusing or illogical structure, no understanding of the purpose of different report sections Poor presentation throughout

## 15.2 Roles of Examiners and Boards

A Board of Examiners will be appointed under the procedures governing the Nomination of Examiners laid down in the Examination Decrees. The Board will be constituted of two internal examiners (one of whom who may also be the course director) and an external examiner, appointed by the Vice-Chancellor and Proctors on behalf of the University. Work is marked by the appointed assessors (who are normally the tutors who have taught the unit to which the assignment is related

The external examiners comment on assignment topics and examination papers, review a sample of examination and coursework scripts to ensure consistency in marking, attend all Board of Examiner meetings and submit an annual report on the standards of the course, its content, structure and arrangements for its delivery to be considered by Departmental and University committees.

The Board of Examiners meets annually to discuss and agree marks progression and awards.

The Chairman of the Board of Studies responds on a day to basis to requests for extensions and appeals.

The course/programme committee will meet at least once per year:

- i) To discuss the examiner reports, student data, student and tutor feedback,
- ii) To confirm the ongoing validity of the syllabus, the course delivery and the assessment methods,
- iii) To check accuracy of course documents and
- iv) To draft a reply to the external examiner.

Where possible the course committee will include a student representative.

The Department's Board of Studies will then receive the examiners' reports for each course and a note of the course committee meeting. The Board of Studies will reply formally to the external examiner.

The University Proctors carry overall responsibility for examinations, including issuing guidance to students and examiners and dealing with cases of potential breaches of examination rules (e.g. cases of suspected plagiarism) and approving any special arrangements.

The Education Committee sets the general policy framework for examinations and issues policy guidance and bears overall responsibility for educational standards within the University.

## **16. Indicators of Programme Quality:**

- Student data: admissions, retention, completion and results
- Student and tutor feedback
- Destination data, including where a student progresses to an award bearing course within Oxford or elsewhere
- External examiner reports
- Reports from periodic reviews of subject area
- RAE ratings of departments
- Reports from five year reviews of new courses

*Please Note. This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if he/she takes full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided. More detailed information regarding the PG Diploma can be found in the course handbook.*

May 2014