

Programme Specification

MSc Ecological Survey Skills with placement (full-time)

PFTZECOSSPHM

MSc Ecological Survey Skills (full-time)

PFTZECOSSXHM

For students entering in 2027/28

This document sets out key information about your Programme and forms part of your Terms and Conditions with the University of Reading.

Awarding Institution	University of Reading
Teaching Institution	University of Reading
Length of Programme	MSc Ecological Survey Skills with placement (full-time) - 12 months MSc Ecological Survey Skills (full-time) - 12 months
Accreditation	N/A
Programme Start Dates	September
QAA Subject Benchmarking Group	N/A

Programme information and content

Our planet faces an unprecedented human-caused global extinction crisis. More than a century of habitat destruction, pollution, the spread of invasive species, overharvesting from the wild, climate change, population growth and other human activities have pushed nature to the brink. Addressing the extinction crisis will require leadership from politicians and others alongside bold, courageous, far-reaching initiatives that attack this emergency at its root.

Development for housing, transport and infrastructure continues apace and there is an ever growing need for individuals with expert knowledge of how to identify plant and animal species, understand their conservation needs and the relevant survey methods required to document their presence abundance and the likely impacts of development.

The Chartered Institute for Ecological and Environmental Management (CIEEM) has identified serious specialist and transferable skills gaps in the market that impede recruitment – the so-called taxonomic skills-gap (<https://cieem.net/resource/closing-the-gap-rebuilding-ecological-skills-in-the-21st-century-ieem-2011/>). To help plug some of these gaps, the School of Biological Sciences at Reading University has teamed up with a number of Ecological Consultants in Reading and further afield to deliver the MSc (Ecological Survey Skills with Placement). The programme focusses on appropriate learning and skills to generate well-trained highly employable graduates for the ecological, conservation and consultancy sectors. As an important part of this philosophy, students work on a placement with a consultancy for 6 months (April-September inclusive).

Programme Learning Outcomes

-MSc Ecological Survey Skills with placement (full-time)

During the course of the Programme, you will have the opportunity to develop a range of skills, knowledge and attributes (known as learning outcomes) For this programme, these are:

Learning outcomes	
1	Have a sound understanding of the UK ecological consultancy industry, and related wildlife legislation, development planning, ecological impact assessment, and biodiversity assessment.
2	Understand and analyse the legislation and legislative restrictions associated with the survey of plant and animals in the UK.
3	Be able to discuss and evaluate the pros and cons of different survey methods (including cutting edge molecular identification and survey techniques) and to recognise how and when to apply these techniques for environmental monitoring and understand how to design and carry out such surveys.
4	Understand how to carry out professional level plant, animal and habitat surveys (including molecular surveys) and analyse the data and present the results competently in written and spoken formats to industry standards and to appreciate how to cost such surveys and appraisals.
5	Be able to identify a wide range of plants and animals and habitats in the UK accurately using material in the lab and in the field using keys and other ID aids.
6	Be competent working in a team undertaking environmental projects, including designing a sampling strategy, interpreting spatial data and evaluating environmental data to achieve objectives to a tight deadline and present the findings of an environmental investigation to a client.
7	Be competent operating as part of an Ecological Consultancy in the field and the office and to learn first-hand what is required to work in the sector alongside colleagues and with clients.
8	Writing up the achievements from the MSc and placement in terms of skills and competencies gained as an illustrated work portfolio communicated in clear English.

You will be expected to engage in learning activities to achieve these Programme learning outcomes. Assessment of your modules will reflect these learning outcomes and test how far you have met the requirements for your degree.

To pass the Programme, you will be required to meet the progression or accreditation and award criteria set out below.

Module information

The programme comprises 180 credits, allocated across a range of compulsory and optional modules as shown below. Compulsory modules are listed.

Compulsory modules

Module	Name	Credits	Level
BIMASA	Animal Survey and Assessment	20	M
BIMCPS	MSc Consultancy Work Placement	20	M
BIMESS	Ecological Survey Skills	20	M

BIMFBS	Field Botany Skills	20	M
BIMHAS	Habitat Assessment	20	M
BIMMSIS	Molecular Methods for Species Identification and Survey	20	M

Students must select either:

Module	Name	Credits	Level
BIMCWP	MSc Consultancy Work Placement	60	7
or			
BIMRPS	MSc Research Project	60	7

Students who are unable to undertake the placement module BIMCWP may take the MSc Research Project module BMRPS. These students will be eligible for an MSc Ecological Survey Skills if they meet the requirements for award of a Masters degree.

Part-time or flexible modular arrangements

N/A

Placement opportunities

Students undertake a 6-month 60 credit summer work placement with one of our partner ecological consultancies. Placements are allocated using a CV and interview process in Semester 1. The Programme Director works with consultancies and students to ensure as far as possible that placements are allocated for all students that want one.

Study abroad opportunities

N/A

Optional modules

The optional modules available can vary from year to year. An indicative list of the range of optional modules for your programme can be found online in the Course Catalogue. Details of optional modules for each part, including any additional costs associated with the optional modules, will be made available to you prior to the beginning of the Part in which they are to be taken and you will be given an opportunity to express interest in the optional modules that you would like to take. Entry to optional modules will be at the discretion of the University and subject to availability and may be subject to pre-requisites, such as completion of another module. Although the University tries to ensure you are able to take the optional modules in which you have expressed interest this cannot be guaranteed.

Teaching and learning delivery

Teaching is by a variety of methods, including lectures, small group seminars, discussion sessions, field and lab-based practicals, individual feedback on written work and one-to-one advice.

After the end of the spring term students embark on their 6 month placement with an ecological consultancy.

Elements of your programme will be delivered via digital technology.

The scheduled teaching and learning activity hours and amount of technology enhanced learning activity for your programme will depend upon your module combination. In addition, you will undertake some self-scheduled teaching and learning activities, designed by and/or involving staff, which give some flexibility for you to choose when to complete them. You will also be expected to undertake guided independent study. Information about module study hours including contact hours and the amount of independent study which a student is normally expected to undertake for a module is indicated in the relevant module description.

Accreditation details

N/A

Assessment

The programme will be assessed through written, oral and practical assignments. Further information is contained in the individual module descriptions.

Progression

N/A

Classification

The University's taught postgraduate marks classification is as follows:

Mark Interpretation

70 - 100% Distinction

60 - 69% Merit

50 - 59% Good standard (Pass)

Failing categories:

40 - 49% Work below threshold standard

0 - 39% Unsatisfactory Work

For Master's Degree

The following conditions must be satisfied for the award of a Master's degree:

Award of a Master's degree

(i) an overall weighted average of 50% or more over 180 credits

(ii) a mark of 50% or more in at least 120 credits

- (iii) no credits with a mark below 40%
- (iv) a mark of 50% or more for the Dissertation

Students who were unable to undertake the placement module BIMCWP and took the MSc Research Project module BMRPS instead will be eligible for an MSc Ecological Survey Skills if they meet the requirements for award of a Masters degree.

In addition to the threshold conditions for the award of a Master's degree, the following **further** conditions must be satisfied for a classification of Distinction or Merit:

Distinction

An overall weighted average of 70% or more over 180 credits

OR

an overall weighted average of 68% or more over 180 credits and marks of 70% in at least 90 credits

AND

Where the dissertation is included in the conditions for the award of a Master's degree, a mark of at least 60% in the dissertation

AND

No marks below 40%.

Merit

An overall weighted average of 60% or more over 180 credits

OR

an overall average of 58% or more over 180 credits and marks of 60% in at least 90 credits

AND

No marks below 40%.

For Postgraduate Diploma

The following conditions must be satisfied for the award of a Postgraduate Diploma:

Award of a Postgraduate Diploma

(i) an overall weighted average of 50% or more over 120 credits

(ii) a mark of 50% or more in at least 80 credits

(iii) no credits with a mark below 40%

In addition to the threshold conditions for the award of a Postgraduate Diploma, the following further conditions must be satisfied for a classification of Distinction or Merit:

Distinction

An overall weighted average of 70% or more over 120 credits

OR

an overall weighted average of 68% or more over 120 credits and marks of 70% in at least 60 credits

AND

No marks below 40%.

Merit

An overall weighted average of 60% or more over 120 credits

OR

an overall average of 58% or more over 120 credits and marks of 60% in at least 60 credits

AND

No marks below 40%.

For Postgraduate Certificate

The following conditions must be satisfied for the award of a Postgraduate Certificate:

Award of a Postgraduate Certificate

(i) an overall weighted average of 50% or more over 60 credits

(ii) No credits with a mark below 40%

Details of the classification method is given in detail in the [Assessment Handbook](#) under:

- Section 19: Awards: Postgraduate Master's, Postgraduate Diploma, Postgraduate Certificate

Please note that there may be a specific version for your year of entry.

Additional costs of the programme

There are a small number of costs e.g. text books associated with the MSc. The placement module is a paid placement and the salaries vary slightly between companies but are made clear to students during the placement allocation process.

Costs are indicative and may vary according to optional modules chosen and are subject to inflation and other price fluctuations. Estimates were calculated in 2026.

Students may consider purchasing a laptop to help support their learning. Information on recommended device specifications can be found on the [DTS Student Hub](#).

For further information about your Programme please refer to the Programme Handbook and the relevant module descriptions, which are available at <http://www.reading.ac.uk/module/>. The Programme Handbook and the relevant module descriptions do not form part of your Terms and Conditions with the University of Reading.

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23 July 2026

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