

Programme Specification

MSci Zoology

For students entering Part 1 in September 2027

UCAS Code: C303

UFZOOLM

UFZOOLMPX

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	4 years
Length of Programme with placement/year abroad	MSci Zoology with Professional Experience - 5 years (UCAS Code: C304)
Accreditation	N/A
QAA Subject Benchmarking Group	Biosciences

Programme information and content

The MSci Zoology degree is a comprehensive four-year programme designed to provide you with advanced skills and knowledge across the breadth of zoological science. Building on the foundations of zoology, the programme offers a holistic exploration of whole organism biology, animal physiology, ecology, evolution, conservation and cutting-edge research methodologies. The additional year provides enhanced training in research methods and advanced study, ensuring you are equipped with the depth of expertise and independent research experience required for a career at the forefront of zoology.

As with the BSc, you will be able to tailor your degree to your interests by selecting from a wide range of optional modules. From the outset, you will develop strong laboratory and field skills, which will be reinforced and expanded throughout the programme. In the laboratory, you will gain advanced analytical skills in animal anatomy, physiology, diversity, taxonomy and cell biology. In the field, you will have the opportunity to undertake local, national and international fieldwork, gaining essential experience in animal ecology, behaviour and conservation.

The extended MSci pathway culminates in a substantial independent research project in your final year, allowing you to conduct original research alongside academics at the forefront of zoological science. This experience will give you valuable insight into the design, execution and communication of scientific research, as well as preparing you for future doctoral study or high-level professional roles. Overall, the programme will enable you to develop subject-specific expertise, your professional and transferable skills, and your readiness to succeed in a wide range of zoological, ecological, conservation and research-focused careers.

Part 1:	In the first year, you will be provided with the scientific foundation required to be able to study zoology and will develop your intellectual and academic skills required to succeed at university-level study. In the core
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	modules, you will be introduced to and gain fundamental knowledge in animal diversity, form and function, ecology and evolution, conservation and global change, and cellular and molecular biology. Lectures will be complemented with a series of practical classes in which you will develop laboratory and field skills and learn how to collect handle, interpret and present data.
Part 2:	In the second year, you will gain a deeper understanding of comparative zoology, animal diversity and physiology and develop a set of quantitative skills essential in the analysis of zoological data. You will be given the opportunity to focus on and specialise in particular interests including animal behaviour, ecology, conservation science and/or cellular and molecular biology, allowing you to tailor your degree towards a particular career progression pathway. You will continue to enhance your practical and transferable skills, including creativity, enterprise and commercial awareness. Optional residential field courses, both national and international, will allow you to put the skills and knowledge gained in the lectures into practice, further developing core practical and transferable skills.
Placement/Study abroad year:	You will have the opportunity to undertake a placement year and discover what it is like to work in a professional setting. This will allow you to develop your skills further, expand your network and enhance your career prospects. The school has numerous contacts within and beyond the UK, ranging from ecological consultancies to local zoos/aquaria and conservation organisations. Students can express their interest to the school and receive guidance and support throughout the placement application process.
Part 3:	The third year of the programme places a strong emphasis on the application of knowledge and skills in a range of specialist options that appeal to your zoological interests, such as animal diseases, forensics, or advanced conservation biology. Alongside chosen modules from across the breadth of zoology, the highlight of the final year is the opportunity to work alongside an expert in the field on a unique research project. This capstone experience will allow you to develop an advanced understanding of your chosen topic and apply the skills that you have acquired from their first and second year. You will be encouraged to engage in critical review and evidence-based learning which will prepare you to move into the workplace or further study.
Part 4:	In the fourth year of the programme you will gain advanced scientific and technical skills to solve complex research questions. You will undertake an 80-credit research-intensive project over a period of five months. This substantial project will provide you with the opportunity to independently plan, execute, analyse and communicate your research in a specialised area of zoology. You will develop valuable transferable skills that are highly desirable for employers, offering you excellent preparation for postgraduate research or a wide variety of future careers.

Programme Learning Outcomes - MSci Zoology

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	Employ and apply the methods and principles underlying taxonomy and classification to recognise and describe the major groups of animals.
2	In the context of evolutionary theory, use the evidence of comparative zoology to describe and critically evaluate the key processes and major developmental events in the lifecycle of animals and how these have shaped animal morphology, physiology, life history, and behaviour.
3	Compare, interpret and justify the principles and processes governing interactions of organisms and their environment and make evidence-based judgements of the impact of external influences on animal growth, reproduction and behaviour.
4	Effectively communicate subject-specific knowledge, concepts and research outputs to technical and non-technical audiences using a range of multimedia formats.
5	Organize and manage workload to complete tasks and projects effectively, both independently and collaboratively as part of a team.
6	Analyse experimental and observational biological data using relevant statistical tests/analytical tools and interpret the results, recognising the limitations of data collection and statistical methodology.
7	Search for, critically analyse, integrate, synthesize and evaluate scientific literature to draw conclusions, make hypotheses and suggest solutions.
8	Safely and competently use a range of practical laboratory and/or field skills and techniques to generate accurate records and robust datasets.
9	Use an evidence-based approach to propose realistic solutions for complex biological problems, recognising the nature of scientific knowledge and its development in light of continued scientific advances.
10	Independently design, execute, and critically evaluate complex research within a zoology-related field.
11	Employ diverse research methodologies, data collection techniques, and analytical tools, exhibiting a high level of adaptability and innovation in solving research problems.

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.

In addition to the learning outcomes stated above if you are on a placement or study abroad programme you will have the opportunity to develop the following learning outcome:

Additional Learning outcomes
Placement By the end of the Placement Year Programme, students will have explored and developed their professional experience, skills and knowledge, contributing significantly towards their continuous learning and career prospects as graduates.

Module information			
Each part comprises 120 credits, allocated across a range of compulsory and optional modules as shown below. Compulsory modules are listed.			
Part 1 Modules:			
Module	Name	Credits	Level
BI1AFF1	Animal Form and Function	20	4
BI1CMP1	Cellular and Molecular Principles of Life	20	4
BI1CP1	Our Changing Planet	20	4
BI1FE2	Fundamentals of Ecology	20	4
BI1FOE2	Fundamentals of Evolution	20	4
BI1HLE2	History of Life on Earth	20	4
Part 2 Modules:			
Module	Name	Credits	Level
BI2CV1	Comparative Vertebrate Biology	20	5
BI2IZ2	Invertebrate Zoology	20	5
BI2QP3	Quantitative and Professional Skills	20	5
The remaining 60 credits will be made up of an optional module from selected modules from the School of Biological Sciences or modules from an approved list, subject to timetabling constraints.			
Modules during a placement year or study year (if applicable):			
Module	Name	Credits	Level
BI2PEX	Professional Experience	120	5
Students may be permitted to undertake a placement year between Part 2 and Part 3 of the programme. In such cases students will transfer to a 4-year programme. The placement year should not normally be shorter than nine months full-time.			
If you take a year-long placement or study abroad, Part 3 as described below may be subject to variation.			
Part 3 Modules:			
Module	Name	Credits	Level
BI3RP3	Research Project	40	6

The remaining 80 credits will be made up of optional modules from selected modules from the School of Biological Sciences or modules from an approved list, subject to timetabling constraints.

Part 4 modules:

Module	Name	Credits	Level
BI4ARP	Advanced Research Project	80	7
BI4ZEE1	Seminars in Zoology, Ecology and Evolution	20	7
BIMRED1	Research Skills and Experimental Design	20	M

Placement opportunities

Placements:

You may be provided with the opportunity to undertake a credit-bearing placement as part of your Programme. This will form all or part of an optional module. You will be required to find and secure a placement opportunity, with the support of the University

Study Abroad:

You may be provided with the opportunity to undertake a Study Abroad placement during your Programme. This is subject to you meeting academic conditions detailed in the Programme Handbook, including obtaining the relevant permissions from your School, and the availability of a suitable Study Abroad placement. If you undertake a Study Abroad placement, further arrangements will be discussed and agreed with you.

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:

You will be taught through lectures, seminars/tutorials, laboratory practical sessions and supervised project work, depending on the modules you choose.

The contact hours for your Programme are dependent on module choice. Information about module contact hours can be found in the relevant module description.

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 a combination of written examinations, coursework (including class tests) and oral examinations. Further information is contained in the individual module descriptions.

Progression

Part 1

To achieve a threshold performance at Part 1, a student will normally be required to:

- (i) Obtain an overall weighted average of 40% over 120 credits taken in Part 1; and
- (ii) Obtain a mark of at least 40% in individual modules amounting to not less than 80 credits taken in Part 1; and
- (iii) Obtain marks of at least 30% in modules amounting to 120 credits. (A Fail in a Pass/Fail module will be treated as not meeting the minimum threshold requirement for progression or classification. Pass/fail modules are excluded from weighted average calculations but must be passed to avoid failure of the Part or degree.)

In order to progress from Part 1 to Part 2, a student must achieve a threshold performance.

The achievement of a threshold performance at Part 1 qualifies a student for a Certificate of Higher Education if they leave the University before completing the subsequent Part.

Students considering transferring to another programme should seek guidance from their designated Support Centre in the first instance.

Part 2

To achieve a threshold performance at Part 2, a student shall normally be required to:

- (i) Obtain a weighted average of 40% over 120 credits taken in Part 2; and
- (ii) Obtain marks of at least 40% in individual modules amounting to at least 80 credits taken in Part 2; and
- (iii) Obtain marks of at least 30% in individual modules amounting to at least 120 credits. (A Fail in a Pass/Fail module will be treated as not meeting the minimum threshold requirement for progression or classification. Pass/fail modules are excluded from weighted average calculations but must be passed to avoid failure of the Part or degree.)

In order to progress from Part 2 to Part 3, a student must achieve a threshold performance; and

- (iv) an overall average of 50% over 120 credits taken in Part 2 (of which not less than 100 credits should normally be at level 5 or above).

The achievement of a threshold performance at Part 2 qualifies a student for a Diploma of Higher Education if they leave the University before completing the subsequent Part.

Professional/placement year

Students are required to pass the professional placement year/study abroad year in order to progress on the programme which incorporates the professional placement year/study abroad year. Students who fail the professional placement year/study abroad year transfer to the non-placement year version of the programme.

Part 3

To achieve a threshold performance at Part 3, a student shall normally be required to:

- (i) achieve a weighted average of 40% over 120 credits taken in Part 3 and
- (ii) obtain a mark of at least 40% in individual modules amounting to not less than 80 credits taken in Part 3, and with no marks below 30%.

In order to progress from Part 3 to Part 4, a student must achieve a threshold performance; and

- (iii) a mark of at least 40% in BI3RP3;

Students who do not meet the above requirements to progress to Part 4, but who:

- (i) meet the requirements described in the appropriate section of the Assessment Handbook please see link below for further details; and
- (ii) gain a mark of at least 40% in BI3RP3

Will be eligible for the BSc Zoology. The classification for this exit award will be based upon an overall weighted average ratio of 1:2 (Part 2: Part 3).

Classification

Bachelors' degrees

The University's honours classification scheme is based on the following:

Mark	Interpretation
70% - 100%	First class
60% - 69%	Upper Second class
50% - 59%	Lower Second class
40% - 49%	Third class
35% - 39%	Below Honours Standard
0% - 34%	Fail

The weighting of the Parts/Years in the calculation of the degree classification is:

Part 2: 20%

Placement/Study Abroad Year: not included in the classification

Part 3: 40%

Part 4: 40%

Students who do not meet the above Part 4 requirements for obtaining the MSci Zoology degree but who have achieved all previous progression requirements will be eligible for the award of BSc Zoology. The classification for this exit award will be based upon an overall weighted average ratio of 1:2 (Part 2: Part 3).

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

- Section 17: Awards (Bachelor's), or
- Section 18: Awards (Integrated Master's programmes). Students who do not progress to Part 4 of the Integrated Master's will normally be subject to the method detailed under Section 17: Awards (Bachelor's)

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

Additional costs of the programme

Participation in any residential field based optional modules offered, is subject to fees payable by the student.

If you undertake a Placement Year, associated costs will vary according to the nature and location of the placement and/or the study abroad host institution, and individual travel and subsistence arrangements.

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.

MSci Zoology for students entering Part 1 in session 2027/28

10 June 2026

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