MSc Applied Zoo Biology
(University Centre Sparsholt )

Programme Specification

Primary Purpose
Course management and quality assurance.

Secondary Purpose
Detailed information for students, staff and employers. Current students should refer to the related Course Handbook for further detail.

Disclaimer
The University of Portsmouth has checked the information given in this Programme Specification. We will endeavour to deliver the course in keeping with this Programme Specification; however, changes may sometimes be required arising from annual monitoring, student feedback, review and update of units and courses. Where this activity leads to significant changes to units and courses, there will be prior consultation of students and others, wherever possible, and the University will take all reasonable steps to minimize disruption to students. It is also possible that the University may not be able to offer a unit or course for reasons outside of its control, for example; the absence of a member of staff or low student registration numbers. Where this is the case, the University will endeavour to inform applicants and students as soon as possible. Where appropriate, the University will facilitate the transfer of affected students to another suitable course.

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Course Details

1. Named Awards
MSc Applied Zoo Biology

2. Course Code (and UCAS Code if applicable)
R0395F
R0401P

3. Awarding Body
University of Portsmouth

4. Teaching Institution
University Centre Sparsholt

5. Accrediting Body
N/A

6. QAA Benchmark Groups
Master's Degree Characteristics Statement 2015
There are no relevant QAA subject benchmarks at postgraduate level although those listed below provide useful guidance.
The Subject Benchmark Statement for Bioscience 2015
The Subject Benchmark Statement for Earth Sciences, Environmental Sciences and Environmental Studies 2014

7. Document Control Information
July 2016

8. Effective Session
2017/18

9. Author
Dr Lisa Riley

10. Faculty
Science

11. Department
Biological Sciences
Curriculum

12. Educational Aims

- To provide students with an interesting and challenging environment based on current research and to develop the students' skills in independent scientific study at level 7
- To further develop a broad understanding of the biological sciences and environmental and conservation sciences as they relate to the conservation, health and welfare of zoo animals
- To develop and refine students' intellectual, critical and practical skills in the acquisition, analysis, interpretation, understanding, evaluation and presentation of biological information
- To enable students to form scientific judgements, critically evaluate concepts, make decisions and demonstrate competence in key transferable skills
- To provide a learning environment within which students can extend their intellectual and practical skills and move progressively towards wholly independent study, research and life-long learning in applied zoo biology
- To provide a firm foundation for further training or employment in a range of contexts in which the combination of biological knowledge and/or analytical and critical enquiry skills are required
- To produce graduates with skills and a knowledge base suitable for the employment market and with an appreciation of the value to society of an education in science, particularly in animal biology and animal conservation

13. Reference Points

- The scholarship and research expertise of academic members of staff
- UK Quality Code for Higher Education
- Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ)
- Masters Degree Characteristics Statement (QAA)
- World Zoo and Aquarium Conservation Strategy (WAZA)

14. General Learning Outcomes

Level 7

Master's degrees/Postgraduate Certificates/Postgraduate Diplomas are awarded to students who have demonstrated:

- a systematic understanding of knowledge, and a critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, much of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of their academic discipline, field of study or area of professional practice
- a comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to their own research or advanced scholarship
- originality in the application of knowledge, together with a practical understanding of how established techniques of research and enquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in the discipline
- conceptual understanding that enables the student:
  - to evaluate critically current research and advanced scholarship in the discipline
  - to evaluate methodologies and develop critiques of them and, where appropriate, to propose new hypotheses
Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:

- deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, make sound judgements in the absence of complete data, and communicate their conclusions clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences
- demonstrate self-direction and originality in tackling and solving problems, and act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks at a professional or equivalent level
- continue to advance their knowledge and understanding, and to develop new skills to a high level

And holders will have:

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

15. Learning Outcomes

A. Knowledge and Understanding of:

A.1 Legislation relating to zoos, environmental health, conservation and national/international trade in animals
A.2 An evidence based approach to animal management, husbandry and welfare
A.3 The role of zoos in educating their visitors and promoting the conservation ethic
A.4 The contributions that zoos make to global conservation
A.5 Emerging and future issues with a view to identifying mitigation measures and practical solutions
A.6 The principles of disciplined research and scientific method
A.7 Concepts, theories and methods of a range of quantitative and qualitative analytical methods
A.8 Experimental design and ethics

B. Cognitive (Intellectual or Thinking) Skills, able to:

B.1 Recognise and apply subject specific theories, paradigms, concepts or principles
B.2 Critically evaluate published research, data, literature and experimental methods to prepare written reports on research programmes, identify further research needs and to select suitable research methods to pursue
B.3 Synthesize, plan and execute a novel piece of research
B.4 Demonstrate capacity for independent judgement, critical reasoning and imaginative responses
B.5 Demonstrate the ability to conceive, design, implement and analyse findings within a field of study
B.6 Plan, design and execute industrially relevant management plans
B.7 Make decisions in complex and unpredictable contexts

C. Practical (Professional or Subject) Skills, able to:

C.1 Critically evaluate and implement a level 7 research proposal
C.2 Perform a variety of research methods and synthesize these to answer a research question
C.3 Exercise initiative and personal responsibility in professional practice.
C.4 Analyse financial and other management information and use it in decision-making.
C.5 Demonstrate environmental, social, cultural and economic awareness and responsibility for sustainable development

C.6 Operate in complex and unpredictable, possibly specialised contexts, with an overview of the issues governing good practice.

**D. Transferable (Graduate and Employability) Skills, able to:**

D.1 Manage time effectively
D.2 Reflect on personal skills and make improvements where needed
D.3 Solve complex problems with minimum supervision
D.4 Successfully communicate in both written and oral forms scientific information at a number of levels
D.5 Work effectively as a member of a team but nevertheless be distinctively individual
D.6 Take responsibility for personal and professional learning and development
D.7 Appreciate issues of sample selection, accuracy, precision and uncertainty during collection, recording and analysis of data in the field and laboratory and the difficulties of incomplete information
D.8 Develop an appreciation of the interdisciplinary nature of science and the validity of different points of view
D.9 Consider ethical issues which arise from experimental procedures

16. Learning and Teaching Strategies and Methods

This course is offered as a full time campus based course and as a part time distance learning course. As such there will be differences in the learning and teaching strategies between the two cohorts and will require careful advice and guidance to applicants as to which mode of delivery is appropriate to their circumstances and learning styles.

In general, for campus based students, formal lectures and practical sessions will provide the theoretical basis and skills for achieving the programme and unit learning outcomes (A1-A8) supplemented with seminars, discussion groups and a range of e-learning opportunities and materials via the University Centre Sparsholt VLE to facilitate guided study on pertinent contemporary issues and research.

For part time, distance learning students, full use will be made of e-learning opportunities via the VLE to facilitate teaching, learning and guided study on pertinent issues and research (A1-A8). Introductions to topic areas will be via posts, discussion forums and podcasts with additional support materials (written, video or interactive) provided on the VLE.

All students will be required to conduct appropriate fieldwork and visits to set a ‘real world’ context to their studies (A2-A4, B4, B6, C2, D1). Full use will be made of e-learning opportunities via the University Centre Sparsholt VLE to facilitate guided study on pertinent contemporary issues and research. Opportunities for formative feedback will be provided through the review of self-guided research in group discussion or on-line forums. Learning outcomes A8, B7 and D9 will underpin all of the above to ensure the appropriateness and relevance of all procedures and is incorporated into taught sessions on experimental design and through project tutorials.

Cognitive skills are further developed through a combination of seminars, practical fieldwork, case study workshops, tutorials and group work (A2, B1-B7, D4) either in person or via VLE forums. They are further developed by directed study and by exchanges between students and their assignment tutors when assessed work is in preparation (B1-B3, B5, B6). For part time, distance learning students there will be more emphasis on tutor-guided independent study and on-line tutorial support to develop cognitive skills (B1-B7, D1-D4).

Subject-specific practical skills are developed through a combination of laboratory practical work, practical fieldwork, guided independent work, research project, online tasks, tutorials and group work (B1, B6, C3, C5 & C6). Part time, distance learning students will conduct appropriate site visits, fieldwork and data collection exercises to set a ‘real world’ context to their studies (C3, C5 and C6) with appropriate on-line tutorial support and regular forum interaction and participation in
online learning tasks. The Research Methods and Research Project units, in particular, will allow demonstration of learning outcomes C1 to C6.

All students will be encouraged to reflect on their individual skills and progress during personal tutorials facilitated by a structured personal development plan scheme (A8, B4, D1-D8). The Research Project unit, in particular, will allow demonstration of learning outcome D9. Careers guidance will also be provided as part of the tutorial role and as a fulfilment of the PDP programme in order to expose students to industry relevant careers (C3, C5, C6, D2, D4 & D6).

17. Assessment Strategy

Assessment will be both formative and summative throughout the programme. Formative assessment will allow for skills development and the potential for learners to develop both research and study skills as well as the technical and subject specific knowledge. These will include participation in online tasks. University Centre Sparsholt considers formative assessment to be a critical and required element of all higher education courses.

The assessment approaches for the course have been selected to be appropriate to postgraduate study and enable the learners to practice and develop higher cognitive skills, independent learning, critical analysis and evaluation of information researched from multiple sources. Where practical assessment artefacts for full time and part time distance learning are the same or similar but there is also recognition that different learners select full time and distance routes for a number of reasons and assessment strategies for different modes of learning need to suit both the learner and the mode of study and need to allow the learner to demonstrate mastery of unit learning outcomes.

Assessments will be presented in a variety of formats including extended essays and reports (A1, A3 & A5, B6), seminar presentations (A1-A5), posters (A3, B3 &B6), project work (including site audit and sign creation, and Dissertation (A1-A8, D9) and open and closed, written and oral examination (A1, A4, A5, A7, B1, B2, B4 & B7). The variety of assessments incorporated within the units has been specifically designed to develop a broad range of defined skills (learning outcomes A1 to A8). The project proposal and project will be used to assess the student’s attainment of all learning outcomes with emphasis on learning outcomes A7, B1-7, C1, C2 and D9.

Professional or subject skills will be assessed by project work and field visits (C2, C5 & C6). The research project will enhance their ability to apply critical analysis and interpretation will be assessed by the viva element of the project (A8, C1-C6, D4, D9). The research project will also have a formative element whereby students will submit plans and drafts of the work.

Graduate and transferable skills will be assessed through a range of assessment artefacts, such as oral presentations (in person or via Skype) and the production of scientific reports, which will highlight strengths and weaknesses that can be reflected upon (D2, D3, D6 & D8). The ability to reflect on personal skills will be assessed via a PDP exercise (A6, B4, D2) and some assessments will require group-work (D5) for data collection. Summative and formative assessments will involve a range of artefacts, including poster and oral presentations and question and answer sessions, which will facilitate the development of communication skills (C3, D1 to D9).

Students will be provided with scope to develop their personal interests within the field of applied zoo biology across all the units as well as developing the ability to design experiments, analyse data and critically evaluate work. In induction week, personal development plans and formative assessment will engage students with these elements and enable them to become familiar with the assessment layout and criteria for all units. There will then be opportunity for students to reflect on the comments made within the formative work. Students will be encouraged to present their own experiences and wider reading skills during discussions that will be held both during campus based sessions and on the VLE ((LEDGE). The VLE will be utilised to present opportunity for students to explore pertinent elements of current research and legislation and to share their views, for example: pertinent research papers and legislation will be posted in preparation for campus based elements; forums will be used to discuss the strengths and limitations of current zoo animal biology focused literature and legislation between campus based elements; interactive resources will be utilised in preparation for lectures and or video or podcast sessions.
18. Course Structure, Progression and Award Requirements

See Unit Web Search\(^1\) for full details on the course structure and units

The MSc Applied Zoo Biology is a Level 7 qualification, with four core units comprising 120 credits, and a 60 credit project unit. Full-time, campus based students will complete all core units and a dissertation within a calendar year, part-time distance learning students will complete 90 credits in year 1 and 90 credits in year 2 (to include the 60 credit dissertation unit).

Each application will be considered on an individual basis. Prior learning will be assessed and accredited in accordance with the University of Portsmouth Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) although the responsibility for admissions decisions at normal access points remains the responsibility of University Centre Sparsholt.

Initial assessment during induction includes appropriate on-entry skills assessment the results of which are used to produce a profile of each student for the personal tutor, and a group profile for the course team. Where appropriate, students are referred to the Learning Support Centre for diagnostic testing and support. Study skills, employability skills and career management skills are developed and incorporated into the curriculum of specialist units and the project. The college recognises formative assessment as an integral and required element of the learning process.

There are three exit awards:

- MSc Applied Zoo Biology requiring 180 credits
- Postgraduate Diploma in Applied Zoo Biology requiring 120 credits
- Postgraduate Certificate in Applied Zoo Biology requiring 60 credits

Standard University rules apply. The regulations must be consulted for a full description of exit awards.

19. Employability Statement

The European Community (EC) Zoos Directive (1999) aimed to strengthen the conservation role of zoos and was enshrined in the UK Zoo Licensing Act of 1981. The Act implemented many of the measures in the Directive such as the provision of proper accommodation and care for zoo animals, keeping up-to-date records and taking appropriate measures to prevent escapes, but the Act also required that zoos participate in conservation and education activities as a statutory requirement. The Government’s view (Defra 2014) is that well-managed zoos can play an important role both in educating the public about wild animals and their habitats, and through participating in activities which help conserve and protect threatened wildlife. In 2011 the Zoos Expert Committee (ZEC) was tasked with providing UK Ministers with independent, technical advice on zoo matters. In 2012 the ZEC published a handbook containing chapters on conservation, education and research and on animal welfare and its assessment in zoos. Specific units of the MSc Applied Zoo Biology course, for example ‘Evidence Based Husbandry’ and ‘Visitor Studies and Interpretation’, have been designed to address the skills requirements identified by the Directives and ZEC at level 7 where graduates are expected to deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, make sound judgements in the absence of complete data, and communicate their conclusions clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences.

The MSc Applied Zoo Biology course aims to build on the successful level 6 Animal Management provision at University Centre Sparsholt as well as the expected strong external recruitment to equip MSc graduates with the skills to meet the welfare, education and conservation objectives of the UK, EU and International communities. The course is designed to enhance employability by developing the ability to become an independent zoo biologist and practitioner. Emphasis will be placed on a variety of key skills including time management, communication skills, independent critical thinking and creative problem solving. All units have been developed with the aim of delivering in-depth knowledge and up-to-date understanding of contemporary issues relating to the zoo industry. After successful completion of this MSc, the subsequent career progression could be PhD study entry or

\(^1\) www.port.ac.uk/unitwebsearch
employment in the zoo or conservation sector. The research projects may also develop relationships with key organisations which will provide invaluable experience of the industry. Students may also access Purple Door Careers and Recruitment advice through www.port.ac.uk/careersandrecruitment\textsuperscript{2} and independent careers advice at University Centre Sparsholt. Industry experts will provide guest lectures throughout the programme and study visits will be undertaken developing the students’ network of industry contacts. Students will also be encouraged to investigate any further industry specific qualifications deemed appropriate to them through their Personal Development Planner.

This course was reviewed before validation by an expert industry review panel.

Course Management

20. Support for Student Learning

- The Course is managed by a Course Tutor
- Collaborative programmes are managed on a day-to-day basis by the Partner Contact who may or may not be the Course Tutor
- Extensive induction programme introduces the student to the University of Portsmouth, University Centre Sparsholt at Sparsholt College and their course
- Each student has a personal tutor, responsible for pastoral support and guidance
- College support services include careers, financial advice, housing, counselling etc
- Learning Support and Disability Advisors provide DSA assessments and required learning support.
- Excellent library facilities are provided by both University of Portsmouth and Sparsholt College
- A well-equipped teaching block, the Sainsbury Building, with a lecture theatre, laboratories and other teaching facilities is available. There are 5 dedicated HE seminar rooms.
- A Higher Education Study Centre with an additional lounge and a seminar room designated for part time BSc and MSc students.
- Specialist practical resources comprising the Animal Management Centre and National Aquatic Training Centre.
- Student, course and unit handbooks provide information about the course structure and University/College regulations etc.
- Feedback is provided for all assessments, both summative and formative
- Personal Development Planning (PDP) is included for all awards
- Dedicated VLE (LEDGE) for distance students to support content delivery

21. Admissions Criteria

A. Academic Admissions Criteria

We consider each application on an individual basis.

Entry requirements are:

- Academic judgement that the student will benefit from the programme and successfully complete the course

This will be evidenced by:

- Bachelor of Science Degree in Animal Management, Animal Behaviour, Veterinary Nursing, Ecology/Conservation, Zoo Biology or a related subject. Applicants must be in possession of an Honours degree with at least a 2:2 classification

\textsuperscript{2} www.port.ac.uk/careersandrecruitment
Pre-enrolment experience in an appropriate work area or as a volunteer is strongly recommended. While University Centre Sparsholt is responsible for the admission of students at recognised entry points, University Centre Sparsholt follows the standard UoP guidance for RPL.

Recognition of Prior Learning Policy

As this course is at level 7 of the Framework of Qualifications for Higher Education an RPL portfolio needs to demonstrate tangibly how the applicant’s experience has prepared him/her for the professional and academic rigour of level 7 study.

For an RPL portfolio the following are good sources of information:

- Your CV
- Performance reviews from your employer that specify your ability to assess situations, analyse problems, and demonstrate problem solving skills
- Evidence of experience in project management that demonstrates a range of different skills, such as research using different sources of information, information and data presentation, organisational skills, presentational skills and attention to detail, critical evaluation and synthesis of theory, data analysis or applied knowledge.
- If you do not have recent academic qualifications you may be asked to submit a written referenced essay or report or other appropriate work to demonstrate mastery of level 6 academic skills.

A keen interest in zoo animal welfare, behavior and conservation must be demonstrated and you should also have completed professional development (CPD) at levels 4-6 or have relevant experience through, for example, your employment. The Course Tutor can provide further details and an RPL application form.

International students will normally be expected to demonstrate an IELTS score of 6.0 in proficiency in English language.

B. Disability

University Centre Sparsholt makes no distinction in its admissions policy with regard to disability and will endeavour to make all reasonable adjustments in order to make it possible for students to study at University Centre Sparsholt on a course of their choice.

22. Evaluation and Enhancement of Standards and Quality in Learning and Teaching

A. Mechanisms for Review and Evaluation

- Course Tutor’s Annual Standards and Quality Evaluative Review (ASQER)
- University Academic Contact’s Annual Standards and Quality Report
- Annual Standards and Quality Evaluative Review for Collaborative Programmes including consideration of Subject and Award External Examiner Reports
- Unit and Course Level student feedback considered at Unit Assessment Boards, Boards of Study and Exam Boards
- Unit Assessment Board (UAB) consideration of student performance for each unit
- Periodic Collaborative Programme Review
- Periodic Collaborative Partner Review
- Student Representatives/ Learner Voice/ HE Student Council
- Staff Appraisals and Performance and Development Review
- Peer Review including Teaching and Learning observations
- Ethics and Research Standards Group’s Annual Report

3 www.port.ac.uk/accesstoinformation/policies/accreditationofpriorlearning/filetodownload,190742.en.pdf
B. Responsibilities for Monitoring and Evaluation

- Unit tutors for unit content and delivery
- Course Tutor for day-to-day running of course
- Partner Institution Academic Contact
- University Contact
- Board of Studies
- Head of Faculty
- Associate Dean (Academic)
- Associate Dean (Students)
- Unit Assessment Boards, Award and Progression Board of Examiners
- Ethics and Research Standards Group for ethical review and project approval

C. Mechanisms for Gaining Student Feedback

- Student representation on the Governing Board
- Boards of Study
- HE Student Council and Cross-college Learner Voice meetings
- Unit and Course and College level student feedback questionnaires
- Sparsholt Learner Surveys

D. Staff Development Priorities

- Academic staff undertake activities related to research, scholarship, teaching and learning and student support and guidance
- Annual Teaching observations inform CPD requirements
- Annual staff appraisal reviews match development to needs
- Managers undertake a variety of management development programmes
- New academic staff required to undertake PTTLS, or equivalent, initially (Staff teaching in both FE and HE are required to undertake PGCE-PCET equivalent)
- All academic staff are required to seek Higher Education Academy Fellowship / Senior Fellowship and/or participate in the University of Portsmouth APEX programme
- Academic staff new to teaching required to undertake New Teaching Staff Induction
- Support Staff are encouraged to attend short courses in areas such as specific IT packages

23. Assessment Regulations

The current University of Portsmouth academic regulations for Collaborative Partners will apply to this programme (see Regulations and Handbooks4).

24. Role of Externals

Subject External Examiners who will:
- Oversee unit assessment and usually attend Unit Assessment Boards
- Review unit assessment strategy
- Sample assessment artefacts
- Present report to Unit Assessment Boards

Award External Examiners (usually also a Subject External Examiner) who will:

4 www.port.ac.uk/departments/services/academicregistry/qualitymanagementdivision/CollaborativePartnerships/documentation/RegulationsandHandbooks/filetodownload,188676,en.pdf
• Oversee and attend Award/Progression Boards
• Scrutinise and endorse the outcomes of assessment
• Ensure that the standard of the award is maintained at a level comparable with that of similar awards elsewhere in the United Kingdom

25. Indicators of Standards and Quality

A. Professional Accreditation/Recognition
N/A

B. Periodic Programme Review (or equivalent)
This course specification will be reviewed and re-issued annually.

As an Associate College of the University of Portsmouth University Centre Sparsholt is on a six year cycle for programme and partnership review. The latest review was in January 2014 and it confirmed the fitness of purpose of the curriculum; it also found the annual monitoring and review processes effective.

C. Quality Assurance Agency
University Centre Sparsholt underwent QAA Higher Education Review in March 2014.

The report confirms that:
• The maintenance of the threshold academic standards of the awards offered on behalf of the degree-awarding bodies meets UK expectations
• The quality of student learning opportunities meets UK expectations
• The quality of the provider’s information about learning opportunities meets UK expectations
• The enhancement of student learning opportunities meets UK expectations

The full report is available at QAA report – Sparsholt College5

D. Others
None.

26. Further Information
Other sources of information may be found in:
• Course Approval Document
• Student and Course Handbooks
• University of Portsmouth Curriculum Framework Document
• Sparsholt College Higher Education Prospectus
• Collaborative Examination and Assessment Regulations for Sparsholt College
• University of Portsmouth6 and Sparsholt College7 websites.

5 www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/provider?UKPRN=10006050#.VR1SfKNwaUk
6 www.port.ac.uk/
7 www.sparsholt.ac.uk/