PDA in Ecological Surveying Information

Introduction

Thank you for your interest in the PDA in Ecological Surveying. Assuming sufficient interest from a number of students, the PDA will begin on September 7th, 2024.

There were three major background factors influencing the development of this award:

1. The market shortage of competent ecological surveyors.
2. The lack of a specific ecological surveying award covering the required competencies.
3. The lack of ecological training/learning opportunities in Scotland.

The course will run over an academic year, studied by distance-learning and designed for people already working, but thinking of a change in their career. The level is at SCQF level 7/8 (similar to HNC/D level) and is suitable as a foundation into the ecological surveying industry, as a building block for future entry into Higher Education or as continued professional development for people working in related areas, perhaps with qualifications that are less vocational in nature.

Support will be provided via online lectures, tutorials, and study weekends with fieldwork. Applicants should be self-starters, with a passion for the outdoors and able to access sites in their local area that are of interest to ecological surveyors (e.g. local conservation sites).

Requirements

This PDA will require a good level of written and analytical skills. Candidates with prior report writing skills or those who can develop these skills would be better able to bridge the particular demands of this programme. Candidates would benefit from a background in, or some prior knowledge of ecological surveying (e.g. already have some knowledge of species classification). Students will also need a computer capable of running QGIS (the GIS software used within this course), and a mobile smart phone (either android or apple), however online provision/alternatives can be made if this is not possible.

Course Content

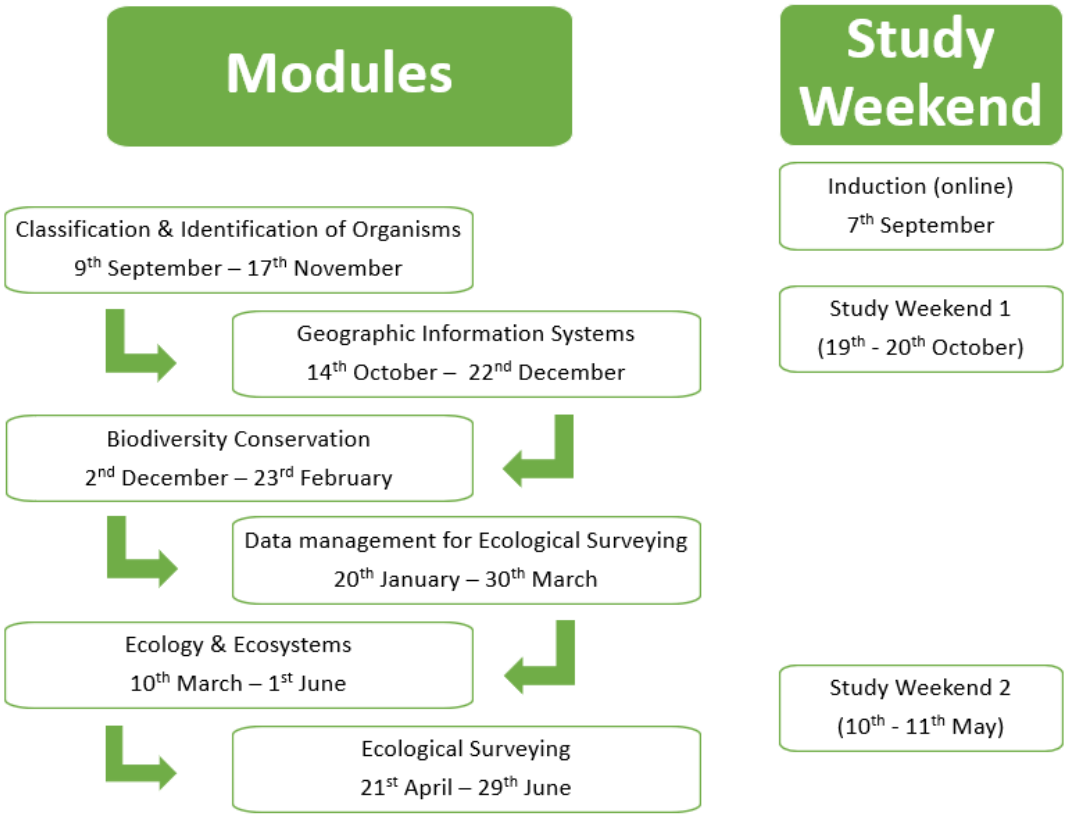
There are six taught modules, ranging from the basics of ecological theory, through to using technology to spatially map habitats and species, and eventually ending up with the skills required to perform a number of ecological survey techniques. Each module is notionally 40 hours of work and for the majority of the course, two modules will run concurrently (with one module winding down as the next one is starting up). This means that around 7 hours a week of your time would be required for studying (this will however vary depending on your own background and speed of study). There are also two Campus based study weekends planned, enabling students to have a more hands-on experience with species classification and the various ecological survey techniques, as students will be guided through some of the more challenging aspects of the course. These are highly recommended for some units on the course, although they are not compulsory.

Module delivery

How each module is delivered will vary, but recorded lectures, live virtual classrooms and workbooks will all be provided. Virtual classrooms are normally 2-6 sessions per module and take place during evenings (typically they are an hour long and start after 7 pm). Practical skills are partially developed through your own study whilst being guided by the lecturers in technique, with the study weekends enabling hands-on training within a field setting and in person interaction with the lecturers.

Module Timetable

The entire course is taught over a period of 38 weeks (with breaks for Christmas and Easter), with two modules being active at the same time (a new one will start up as an older one winds down). There are six modules in total over the year, with an online induction day plus two in person campus-based study weekends.



Induction and study weekends

There will be an initial online induction day that will involve enrolment/induction activities, introductions to the first modules being taught as well as various talks and discussions on related topics of interest.

This will be followed by two campus-based study weekends interspersed throughout the year, which will enable students to meet up together with the staff to allow practical demonstration of some of the skills, as well as just to get to know each other. These weekends are not compulsory but will add to your understanding of the course and what is required to be an ecological surveyor.

The First study weekend will be an opportunity for students to meet up with SRUC staff (and each other), to practise identifying organisms and logging them. The weekend will be split into a field day and an in-class day, as it will also involve an introduction to the GIS software we will be using and will introduce some elements of in field GIS data capture (designed to get students up to speed quickly with this technology).

The final study weekend is designed to give students practical hands-on experience of a variety of ecological survey techniques, from vegetation (Phase 1 and NVC) through to badgers and newts. Other useful survey technology such drones and various types of detectors (e.g. camera traps, bat detectors, thermal and night imagers) will also be explored if the weather is kind!

Fees & grants

Fees are £642.50 for Scottish students, £2,750 for the rest of the UK and £4,250 for international students. Please apply via the website:

- https://www.sruc.ac.uk/study-with-us/find-apply-for-your-course/course-catalogue/ecological-surveying/pda-ecological-surveying/

Some students may also be eligible for part time study grant funding from SAAS, so enquire using the information and forms found in the link below and Once you have filled in the form, scan it and send it to SRUC using the email RegistryFunding@sruc.ac.uk.

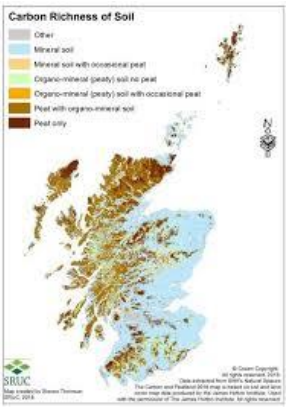
- https://www.saas.gov.uk/part-time/undergraduate-funding

Module information

Classification and Identification of Organisms

The Unit introduces the candidate to the principles and systems used for the classification and identification of organisms. It centres on developing a level of competence in the skills required to identify a range of organisms, representing different habitats and situations by using a variety of techniques.

Campus study days are recommended!



Geographic Information Systems

This Unit is designed to give candidates an introduction to the utilisation of computerised spatial information systems, and on completion of the Unit, the candidate should be able to:

- Survey and process digital map data for inclusion in a Geographic Information System (GIS).
- Geocode data tables to digital map data.
- Use GIS software to display spatial data as maps.

Biodiversity Conservation

This unit is designed to provide learners with an introduction to biodiversity conservation in the United Kingdom. It looks at why biodiversity is important and how it has been affected and supported by a variety of factors, covering areas such as key policy initiatives, conservation legislation and site designations, voluntary and statutory conservation organisations, as well as conservation grant schemes.

Data Management for Ecological Surveying

This Unit is designed to give candidates the skills to set up and utilise systems for the management of ecological survey data. On completion of the Unit, the candidate should be able to:

- Design a system for managing ecological survey data.
- Collect data digitally direct into a Geographic Information System (GIS) using in-field technologies.
- Interrogate data and provide reports suitable for ecological assessment.

Ecology & Ecosystems

This Unit is designed to enable learners to understand key aspects of ecology and ecosystems, encompassing the abiotic and biotic factors affecting ecosystems and the structure and conservation of biological communities.

Campus study days are recommended!

Ecological Surveying

This Unit develops understanding and knowledge of techniques available for surveying and monitoring plant and animal populations and habitats. The Unit discusses how ecological principles are applied to practical procedures and gives the candidate an opportunity to develop practical skills by carrying out and reporting on an ecological survey. Techniques include botanical, protected species and invertebrate surveys.

Campus study days are recommended!

Course contact

Please contact the programme leader for further information if required.

Dr Simon Gibson-Poole
Programme Leader – PDA Ecological Surveying
E: Simon.gibson-poole@sruc.ac.uk
T: 0131 535 4109