UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION 2025-26

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY IN CONSERVATION LEADERSHIP

Awarding body	University of Cambridge
Teaching institution	Department of Geography
Accreditation details	None
Name of final award	Master of Philosophy
Programme title	Conservation Leadership
HECoS code(s)	101318 (biodiversity conservation), 100088 (leadership)
Relevant QAA benchmark statement(s)	None
Qualifications framework level	7 (Masters)
Date specification was produced	October 2022

This programme delivers a unique and world-class education in Conservation Leadership, based in the Department of Geography, working in collaboration with cognate Departments in the University, and non-University collaborators in the Cambridge Conservation Initiative (CCI). CCI was created in 2007 by eight internationally renowned conservation organisations and the University of Cambridge. All are members of the larger network of organisations in the Cambridge Conservation Forum.

Cambridge has one of the leading departments of Geography in the United Kingdom, with a longstanding, worldwide reputation for excellence. Conservation research in the department addresses issues of conservation and society across a broad front through projects on the institutional politics of natural resource management, environmental governance, the role of science in environmental policy and the social impacts of biodiversity conservation planning and management.

Aims of the Programme

The programme aims to:

1. develop the ability of its students to think creatively about conservation problems and solutions across disciplinary, organisational and political boundaries and economic sectors;
2. foster and to develop the leadership potential of its students by promoting their capacity to understand the links among the drivers of biodiversity loss and, by developing their confidence and maturity of judgement, to lead the implementation of conservation more effectively than hitherto.

The goal is not only to develop conservationists with enhanced awareness of the complex drivers of biodiversity loss, but to develop the ability to act effectively. In particular, the programme will:

- Address the challenges of conservation in an integrated and interdisciplinary manner, focused on an understanding of the root causes of ecosystem change and biodiversity loss.
- Equip conservation leaders with the strategic skills that they need for effective action by their organisations.

- Offer professional management and leadership skills including strategic planning, finance and HR management/planning, innovation, entrepreneurship and the management of change.
- Develop skills in communication as an integral part of the learning programme.
- Provide participants with first-hand exposure to conservation leadership challenges in the real world by working in placements alongside conservation professionals, including in developing countries.
- Provide participants with experiential learning through interaction with leaders in conservation organisations, businesses and governments across a wide range of sectors from around the world.

Learning Outcomes of the Programme

At the end of the 11 months, students taking the MPhil in Conservation Leadership will be expected to have:

- Applied leadership and management skills, including strategic planning, finance and accounting, leading and inspiring people, entrepreneurship and the management of change
- Communication skills required by conservation leaders, including oral presentation skills, face to face networking and broadcast media interview skills
- Familiarity with various theories of leadership relevant to conservation, and the ability to critically analyse their strengths and weaknesses
- Familiarity with debates across the social and natural sciences concerning the root causes of ecosystem change and biodiversity decline and alternative proposals for addressing these causes
- Familiarity with the structure and function of contemporary conservation and alternative conservation tools and approaches, and the ability to critically analyse their strengths and weaknesses
- The ability to apply theoretical insights to create practical solutions to specific conservation problems in a real world context
- The ability to distinguish between different scientific perspectives that inform policy debates, and to exercise judgement in interpretation of conflicting evidence
- The ability to synthesise information from across a range of academic disciplines, and to summarise this in a manner that is accessible to different audiences
- The ability to manage time and work to deadlines, both individually and in a team
- The ability to plan, execute and manage a project, both individually and in a team

Teaching and Learning Methods

Lectures, seminars, workshops, case studies, fieldwork, placements, personal mentoring and supervision

Programme Structure

The MPhil in Conservation Leadership is a taught postgraduate course that runs for 11 months. Teaching delivery is concentrated in the Michaelmas and Lent Terms, with students being taught across five substantive modules (including Conservation Leadership Problems and Practice, Leading Self, Leading People and Organizations, Leading Systems, and Innovation for Conservation Leadership), spread over these two Terms. They also spend time during these first two Terms conducting a group consultancy project and developing their professional placement plans in collaboration with their supervisors. Students undertake

their professional placements over the Easter Term and summer (July/August), submitting a placement report at the end of this period.

Professional placements: Professional placements comprise four-month attachments to a conservation (or conservation-linked research) organisation. These include University Departments associated with the course, as well as non-University members of the Cambridge Conservation Initiative. Students work on a single project, which could be a professional engagement (developing or managing some aspect of conservation activity) or a research programme (including conventional academic 'dissertation' projects if desired). In either case, the student submits a 10,000-word report for assessment at the end of the placement.

Projects are formally approved by the Degree Committee and are based in institutions that are approved by the Degree Committee. They are supervised either by a University Teaching Officer, or by staff in host institutions, working with a University Teaching Officer. Placement projects are developed over the course of the Michaelmas and Lent Terms, and are executed during the Easter Term and Summer Vacation. Students make an assessed presentation on their proposed work to a forum during the Easter Term.

Assessment Methods

Assessment Methods include submitted essays, exercises, coursework, individual and group presentations, project work and placement reports. *Additional formative feedback is provided to students upon submission of the Personal Career Plan required to complete the Leading Self module.*

The assessment of all Cambridge MPhils is under the formal control of a Degree Committee, which in this case is the Degree Committee of the Faculty of Earth Sciences and Geography.

The scheme of examination for the 11-month Conservation Leadership course for the degree of Master of Philosophy consists of:

a) one essay, not exceeding 4,000 words, on a subject chosen by the candidate from a list of subjects approved by the Degree Committee for the Faculty of Earth Sciences and Geography, which shall be concerned with topics in conservation leadership;

a) Four pieces of coursework approved by the Degree Committee, which may include written work, or presentation, or other exercises, or by a combination of these;

b) a placement report of not more than 10,000 words in length, on a topic approved by the Degree Committee, and based on work carried out by the candidate in one or more institutions approved by the Degree Committee. A proportion of the marks for this element of the assessment are by compulsory oral examination;

   At the discretion of the Examiners, the examination may include an oral examination on any or all of the assessed components of the MPhil.

The University overall result in the MPhil is Pass, Fail, or Distinction. The pass mark is 60 and the mark for a distinction is 75.

Management of teaching quality and standards

The University ensures high standards of teaching and learning in the following ways:

- The completion of Annual Quality Updates by each Faculty and Department, to enable central overview of provision and assist in dissemination of good practice

- Scrutiny of the reports of External Examiners for all teaching programmes
- Encouraging student engagement at both the local level, through involvement in Faculty and Departmental Committees, and at a central level by participation in nationally-benchmarked surveys.
- Holding reflective, centrally-coordinated, Learning and Teaching Reviews for all teaching institutions every six years to explore provision and suggest constructive courses of action
- Mentoring, appraisal, and peer review of staff, and encouraging staff participation in personal development programmes

Graduate Employability and Career Destinations

Graduates of this course play major roles in conservation organisations (both governmental and non-governmental) and have taken up leadership positions in a variety of other capacities such as business, law and education in countries around the world. The alumni of the course are a body of highly trained and resourceful individuals who understand the drivers of ecosystem change and biodiversity loss, and have the ability and skills to influence conservation outcomes. All graduates of the course join the University of Cambridge Conservation Leadership Alumni Network (UCCLAN) which supports and coordinates alumni projects and activities to increase conservation impact.

The Careers Service maintains links with relevant employers and takes into account employer needs and opinions in the services which it provides for students. The Careers Service also allocates a Careers Adviser to each College, Faculty and Department to act as a point of contact.

Student Support

All students are members of a College as well as the Department and have access to learning support from both College and University. Each student will have an overall supervisor who gives advice on planning the year's work. Individual specialists may also help with preparation for essays and progress is monitored through the submission of essays. The College Tutor for Graduates will also play a role in induction, support and guidance.

An MPhil Handbook is available for all MPhil students as well as a Handbook specific to the MPhil in Conservation Leadership. The Department's learning resources include computer facilities with a full range of software for graduate students and one of the country's largest Geography libraries. Additionally, all students in Cambridge enjoy access to the exceptional bibliographic resources of University and other Departmental libraries.

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information in this programme specification. At the time of publication, the programme specification has been approved by the relevant Faculty Board (or equivalent). Programme specifications are reviewed annually, however, during the course of the academical year, any approved changes to the programme will be communicated to enrolled students through email notification or publication in the *Reporter*. The relevant faculty or department will endeavour to update the programme specification accordingly, and prior to the start of the next academical year.

Further information about specifications and an archive of programme specifications for all awards of the University is available online at: https://www.camdata.admin.cam.ac.uk/