Programme Specification[1] (Date 2026 – 27)

Master of Philosophy in Conservation Leadership

Programme title	*Conservation Leadership*
Name of final award	*Master of Philosophy*
Awarding Body	*University of Cambridge*
Teaching institution	*University of Cambridge Department of Geography*
PSRB/Accreditation details and date the course was last accredited	
UCAS code	*None*
HECoS code(s)	*101318 (biodiversity conservation) 100088 (leadership)*
ATAS code	
Relevant QAA benchmark statement(s)	*None*
Qualification framework level	*Level 7 (Masters)*
Date specification approved	*February 2026*
Linked course	

Brief overview of the course *(Please explain the purpose of the programme in a brief paragraph of no more than 5-6 sentences.)*
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.

[1] 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 academic year.

Educational Aims

What are the educational aims of the programme?

The programme aims:

- to develop the ability of its students to think creatively about conservation problems and solutions across disciplinary, organisational and political boundaries and economic sectors.
- to 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.

Learning Outcomes - *What is a student expected to learn from the programme? These should have been included on the new course proposal when the course was first approved.*

(Please refer to the guidance on Learning Aims and Outcomes and the Office for Students sector-recognised standards for sector expectations of the graduates of higher education qualifications)

By the end of the programme, students will have:

Knowledge and Understanding

1. Familiarity with various theories of leadership relevant to conservation, and the ability to critically analyse their strengths and weaknesses.
2. 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.
3. 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.

Skills and other attributes

4. Applied leadership and management skills, including strategic planning, finance and accounting, leading and inspiring people, entrepreneurship and the management of change.
5. Communication skills required by conservation leaders, including oral presentation skills, face to face networking and broadcast media interview skills.
6. The ability to apply theoretical insights to create practical solutions to specific conservation problems in a real-world context.
7. The ability to distinguish between different scientific perspectives that inform policy debates, and to exercise judgement in interpretation of conflicting evidence.
8. 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.
9. The ability to manage time and work to deadlines, both individually and in a team.
10. The ability to plan, execute and manage a project, both individually and in a team.

Programme structure

Please give a brief outline of the course structure and how it supports progress. Please note details of individual papers/modules are not needed. What elements does the programme contain? If you have a part-time route show how this is aligned with the full-time course.

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.

Teaching and Learning

Please indicate which methods are used, i.e., lectures, seminars, practical sessions etc. Include any activity that does not lead to summative assessment. How is the programme taught? How do students learn?

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

Assessment

Please list below summative assessments for the course and how they meet the learning outcomes listed above. Ensure these are aligned with your course regulations (Statutes and Ordinances).

Assessment	Learning Outcome
The scheme of examination for the 11-month Conservation Leadership course for the degree of Master of Philosophy consists of: • 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; • 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; • The placement is assessed through three elements. An individual presentation (coursework), an	At the end of the 11 months, students taking the MPhil in Conservation Leadership will be expected to have: Knowledge and Understanding 1. Familiarity with various theories of leadership relevant to conservation, and the ability to critically analyse their strengths and weaknesses 2. 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 3. 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

output for the host organisation (coursework, max 6,000 words) and an academic report (placement report, max 4,000 words); • 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 assessment scheme has been designed to examine the learning outcomes and skills for the course. • Essays supports the development of skills i, ii, iii, iv and v and learning outcomes 1, 2, and 4. • Coursework supports the development of skills i, ii, iv, v and vi and learning outcomes 1, 2, and 3. • Placement report supports the development of skills i, ii, iii, iv, v, vi, vii and iii and learning outcomes 1, 2, and 3. • Oral examination supports the development of skills i, and ii and learning outcomes 1, 2, and 3.	Skills and other attributes i. Applied leadership and management skills, including strategic planning, finance and accounting, leading and inspiring people, entrepreneurship and the management of change ii. Communication skills required by conservation leaders, including oral presentation skills, face to face networking and broadcast media interview skills iii. The ability to apply theoretical insights to create practical solutions to specific conservation problems in a real world context iv. The ability to distinguish between different scientific perspectives that inform policy debates, and to exercise judgement in interpretation of conflicting evidence v. 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 vi. The ability to manage time and work to deadlines, both individually and in a team vii. The ability to plan, execute and manage a project, both individually and in a team

Progression and Career Destinations

Please describe the opportunities for the students' personal and professional development (including transferable and employability skills). Please include information relating to successful graduates' prospects for employment.

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.

Preparation for employment is provided in the opportunities for acquisition of relevant and transferable skills outlined above. Where programmes with a significant vocational or professional element are accredited by professional or statutory bodies details are given in the programme specification.