

The Royal Agricultural University

Programme Specification:

FdSc Wildlife Conservation and Countryside Management

2025-26

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION [ACADEMIC YEAR 2025/26]

This Programme Specification is designed for prospective students, current students, academic staff and potential employers. It provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and the intended learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if he/she takes full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided. More detailed information on the teaching, learning and assessment methods, learning outcomes and content of each module can be found in the Module descriptors.

Section 1 – Material Programme Information

Validating body	The Royal Agricultural University
Teaching Institution	The Royal Agricultural University
Subject Area	Agricultural Science and Practice (ASP)
Entry Award(s)	FdSc Wildlife Conservation and Countryside Management
Final Award and exit route(s)	FdSc Wildlife Conservation and Countryside Management Certificate of Higher Education Wildlife Conservation and Countryside Management
Programme title	FdSc Wildlife Conservation and Countryside Management
Location(s) of study	The Royal Agricultural University
Full time study	2 years
Part-time study	4 years
Language of study	English
Programme start month	September
Period of validation	September 2024 – August 2029
Name of Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body	Not Applicable
Type of Accreditation	Not Applicable
Accreditation due for renewal	Not Applicable
Entry requirements (this should be the standard University entry requirements unless otherwise approved by the Academic Board, and include UCAS entry profile for UG programmes and IELTS)	<p>GCSE minimum five GCSEs at Grade C/4 including English Language and Mathematics (or Maths Numeracy for Welsh applicants) plus satisfactory level 3 qualifications:</p> <p>A-Level: (example grades CD) – minimum of 56 UCAS tariff points (points to include at least one full A-Level or equivalent qualifications)</p> <p>C&G Advanced Technical/BTEC - Level 3 Extended Diploma (1080) at Merit-Pass-Pass</p> <p>International Baccalaureate: 24 points</p> <p>Access to Higher Education: 45 credits at level 3 of which minimum of 15 must be awarded at Merit or higher. (Pass in Functional Skills level 2 are accepted in lieu of GCSE English & Mathematics)</p> <p>Other level 3 qualifications will be considered.</p>
UCAS Code	D450
Quercus Code	FWC
HECos Code	100998 - Sustainable Agriculture and Landscape Development 100864 - Ecosystem Ecology and Land Use
QAA Subject Benchmark Statement(s) and other reference points	<p>Foundation Degree Characteristics Statement (2020)</p> <p>Earth Sciences, Environmental Sciences and Environmental Studies (2022)</p> <p>Agriculture, Rural Environmental Sciences, Animal Studies, Consumer Science, Forestry, Food, Horticulture and Human Nutrition (April 2024)</p>

Academic level on Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ)	Level 4 and 5
Approval at AQSC	20 May 2024
Version	<p>V4.0 July 2020</p> <p>V4.1 August 2021; removal of reference to Cirencester College.</p> <p>V.5.0 January 2022, update to assessment for module 2366 Conservation Science Study Tour</p> <p>V.6.0 ASPC July 2022: Change in programme title from FdSc British Wildlife Conservation</p> <p>V7.0 February 2024 (revalidation): New modules added: 1451 Species Identification and Ecosystems, 1445 People & Environmental Change, 1446 Ecosystem Services and Human Wellbeing, 2381 Biodiversity Recording and Citizen Science, 2382 Wildlife Conservation Study Tour, 2383 Connecting with Land;</p> <p>Removal of modules: 1421 Species and Ecosystems, 1434 Introduction to Environment, Wildlife and Heritage, 1422 Ecosystem Services and Sustainability, 2363 Biodiversity Conservation, 2365 Education, Recreation and Access, 2366 Conservation Science Study Tour</p> <p>Module 2349 moved to Semester 2, Module 2136 Landscape Conservation moved to Semester 1</p>

Section 2 - Programme Structure

The structure of all University awards complies with the University's [Academic Regulations for Taught Programmes](#) which includes information about the:

- Rules for progression between the stages of a programme;
- Consequences of failure for referrals, compensation and exist awards;
- Calculation and classification of awards.

FdSc Wildlife Conservation and Countryside Management (240 credits)

The accumulation of credits to include a minimum of 120 credits at Level 4 and a minimum of 120 credits at Level 5 through the assessment of taught modules as detailed below.

Module code	Module title	Level	Credit value	Core/ Optional	Semester
Level 4					
1431	Wildlife Handling, Ethics and Conservation	4	15	Core	1
1445	People & Environmental Change	4	15	Core	1
1451	Species Identification and Ecosystems	4	15	Core	1

1436	Practical Conservation Skills & Work Placement	4	30	Core	1+2
1007	Soil and Environmental Science	4	15	Core	2
1430	Wildlife Ecology and Survey	4	15	Core	2
1446	Ecosystem Services and Human Wellbeing	4	15	Core	2
	Certificate of Higher Education Wildlife Conservation and Countryside Management		120		

Placement

Students undertake a mandatory 30-day placement (i.e. 7h x 30 days = 210 hours total) before the start of Year 2 (1436), with students being prepared during semester 1 of module 1436. The related assessment is being completed in module 2360. The placement typically occurs during the summer but timing is flexible.

Level 5

2381	Biodiversity Recording and Citizen Science	5	15	Core	1
2136	Landscape Conservation	5	15	Core	1
2349	The Resilience of Agro-Ecosystems	5	15	Core	1
2360	Supervisory Skills & Volunteer Management	5	15	Core	1+2
2378	Research and Evidence	5	15	Core	2
2361	Habitat Classification and Management	5	15	Core	2
2383	Connecting with Land	5	15	Core	2
2382	Wildlife Conservation Study Tour	5	15	Core	2
	FdSc Wildlife Conservation and Countryside Management		240		

Students studying the FdSc Wildlife Conservation and Countryside Management part time over 4 years will study the following modules in each year of study:

Module code	Module title	Level	Credit value	Core/ Elective	Semester
Year 1 – Level 4					
1445	People & Environmental Change	4	15	Core	1
1436	Practical Conservation Skills & Work Placement	4	30	Core	1+2
1430	Wildlife Ecology and Survey	4	15	Core	2
Year 2 – Level 4					
1431	Wildlife Handling, Ethics and Conservation	4	15	Core	1
1451	Species Identification and Ecosystems	4	15	Core	1
1007	Soil and Environmental Science	4	15	Core	2
1446	Ecosystem Services and Human Wellbeing	4	15	Core	2
	Certificate of Higher Education		120		

Module code	Module title	Level	Credit value	Core/ Elective	Semester
Year 3 - Level 5					
2361	Habitat Classification and Management	5	15	Core	1
2360	Supervisory Skills & Volunteer Management	5	15	Core	1+2
2382	Wildlife Conservation Study Tour	5	15	Core	2
2136	Landscape Conservation	5	15	Core	2
Year 4 – Level 5					
2349	The Resilience of Agro-Ecosystems	5	15	Core	1
2381	Biodiversity Recording and Citizen Science	5	15	Core	1
2383	Connecting with Land	5	15	Core	2
2378	Research and Evidence	5	15	Core	2
	FdSc Wildlife Conservation and Countryside Management		240		

Section 3 – Programme overview and Programme aims

The effective conservation of species, ecosystems and natural resources is vital for future sustainable development. The FdSc Wildlife and Countryside Management programme provides the academic knowledge, applied ecological theory and extensive hands-on field experience needed to manage habitats and conserve wildlife, equipping the graduating students with the skills and knowledge that employers are looking for. Academic support is an integral part of this programme, and this aspect is emphasized in the upfront 'introductory' module (People & Environmental Change), which is intended to ease the transition of new students, some with lower entry tariffs, into higher education.

The intended educational aims of this Foundation Degree are to:

- Provide education and training delivering the appropriate knowledge and skills required for future employees in wildlife conservation and ecological occupations.
- Promote the acquisition of transferable skills to meet the future needs of employment in wildlife, conservation, and ecology-related occupations. Make available a progression route for those completing level 3 education and for those already employed in relevant agencies as part of their continuing personal and professional development activities.
- Facilitate a progression route for students who successfully complete this Foundation Degree to proceed onto an appropriate BSc Honours conversion programme such as the BSc (Honours) in Wildlife and Countryside Management (top up) at the RAU.
- Stimulate a desire to pursue lifelong learning in both vocational and academic subjects.
- Enable existing workers in such jobs to pursue their lifelong learning further and to develop their skills through studying on this programme through part-time attendance.

- Assist both employed and volunteer workers who complete this programme to understand and respond to the changing and increasing pressures to conserve and enhance both the farmed and natural environments.

This programme focuses on conservation of wildlife and habitats particularly, but not exclusively, in the UK. Employer feedback strongly indicated that knowledge of environments and species is a significant employability advantage. However, since conservation is naturally a global issue, international conservation organisations, a wide variety of case studies and species also form an important part of the teaching.

'Wildlife Conservation' and 'Countryside Management' are broad study areas, including the interactions between both animals and plants, as well as with their environments, considering also linkages with humans and the effects we have.

Fundamental to our Programmes is how they align with the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These have been mapped against each of the modules and are presented in Section 4. In addition, the programmes have been designed and are delivered in ways that widen diversity opportunities, enabling us to access the best talent. As such, equality, diversity and inclusivity are integral both in the recruitment process, as well as in the teaching and learning. Staff undertake regular CPD to reinforce and support such approaches.

Section 4 – Programme Sustainability

The programme content and module detail has been carefully aligned to the 17 Sustainability Development Goals, each of which are addressed throughout. As might be expected there is particular emphasis on the SDG 14 'life on the land, SDG 13 'climate action', SDG 4 'quality education', but other SDGs also strongly feature across the programme content too (see also Section 5 for examples). Students are asked to develop thought processes that evaluate how the things they are taught and are learning about sit within the economic, environmental and social sustainability framework.

Section 5 – Programme intended learning outcomes

On successful completion of the named award, students will be able to demonstrate the following Learning Outcomes (LOs):

Knowledge and Understanding

LO no.	On successful completion of the named award, students will be able to:	Module Code/s
1.	Understand and apply concepts, principles and theories of wildlife conservation and management both in the field and within ex-situ collections in line with the principles of sustainable development and the ecosystem approach. (SDGs 11, 12, 13, 15, 17)	1445, 1451, 1007, 1446, 1436, 2136, 2349, 2383, 2382
2.	Understand the roles of regulatory and advisory bodies and apply in practice the policies, legislation and designations involved in the protection of wildlife and habitats in both rural and urban contexts. (SDGs 17, 15, 16)	1445, 1430, 1431, 1007, 1436, 2360, 2136

3.	Demonstrate an understanding of the ecology and conservation status of a range of species and ecosystems both in terms of theoretical understanding and live case studies from conservation practitioners. (SDGs 14, 15, 13)	1430, 1451, 1436, 2361, 2362, 2382
4.	Discuss the importance of wildlife conservation and sustainable use of environmental resources alongside the expectations of industry, agriculture, and society and the challenges associated with this at local, regional and global scales. (SDGs 11, 12, 15, 17)	1445, 1007, 1446, 2136, 2349, 2383
Intellectual, Professional, Key skills		
LO no.	On successful completion of the named award, students will be able to:	Module Code/s
1.	Understand and demonstrate a critical knowledge of subject specific theories, concepts and principles. (SDGs 3, 4, 9, 13, 14, 15)	1430, 1451, 1007, 1446, 2136, 2383, 2382
2.	Apply the skills necessary for academic study and enquiry. (SDGs 3, 4, 6, 7, 13, 14, 15)	1445, 1430, 2136, 2383,
3.	Demonstrate the skills necessary to plan, conduct and report on a variety of wildlife, habitat, and environmental conservation management projects. (SDGs 2, 3, 4, 5, 10, 11, 13, 15, 17)	1451, 2360, 2361, 2349
4.	Apply professional judgement to balance risks, costs, benefits, safety, reliability, aesthetics and environmental impact. (SDGs 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 15, 17)	1431, 1446, 1436, 2360
Programme specific skills		
LO no.	On successful completion of the named award, students will be able to:	Module Code/s
1.	Plan and undertake a variety of species and environmental surveys, and analyse and report the results. (SDGs 3, 4, 13, 14, 15)	1430, 1451, 1007, 2136, 2361, 2383
2.	Appreciate the role of academic research in ecology and conservation management and be able to design and carry out research projects consistent with level of study. (SDGs 13, 14, 15)	1430, 1451, 2136
3.	Undertake a range of professional practical skills including taxonomic identification, wildlife handling and survey, conservation and land management techniques. (SDGs 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 11, 13, 15, 17)	1431, 1436, 2360, 2361
4.	Make positive contributions to wildlife conservation by combining real world practical conservation activities with academic theory. (SDGs 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 17)	1430, 1431, 1451, 1007, 1436, 2360, 2136, 2361, 2383, 2382

Section 6 – Approach to Learning and Teaching delivery

This is a two-year Foundation Degree (FdSc) programme which can be a standalone qualification or be a part of a progression route onto a BSc (Hons) 'top-up', such as the RAUs' BSc Wildlife & Countryside Management. As well as the 2-year full-time option, the programme can also be studied part-time over a 4-year period. The academic year is between September and June and is split into two semesters.

The programme will be delivered using the RAU blended learning approach that is designed as an efficient and effective method of teaching, by allowing students to work individually at their own pace, as well as in group settings. For each week, every module has a teaching allocation of 3 hours which is split between 1 hour online and 2 hours of face-to-face teaching. Students will be expected to engage with the upfront, online material posted on the virtual learning environment (VLE, known as the module Gateway pages). This can include online pre-recorded lectures, reference papers for consideration, example case studies to evaluate in advance, Q&A exercises etc. This upfront material aims to:

- Stimulate interest in the subject matter
- Give information
- Offer different perspectives on a subject
- Explain difficult concepts and theories
- Show how to deepen knowledge
- Provide an opportunity to listen to specialist guest lecturers

The 2-hour face to face seminar, also in the same week, then follows up with the online material, engaging students in various ways to reinforce teaching and learning experience. These seminars:

- Allow students to express their views
- Enable academic interaction
- Facilitate discussions
- Provide opportunities to practice presentations
- Encourage structured research
- Enable sharing and diversification of information and experience
- Introduce group work and develop team works skills

Practical Activities & Enquiry-based Learning

A significant part of the programme is practical fieldwork (1436 and 2360 modules), typically, 0.5 to 1 day a week throughout the academic year. This includes hands-on management and restoration of habitats and species (e.g. grassland/ woodland restoration for butterfly conservation), biodiversity surveys (e.g. UKHab Surveys, National Vegetation Classification (NVC), farmland bird monitoring), and habitat management experiment plots. Many of these approaches make use of online technology and software to support teaching and learning. There is also ample opportunity to meet and work alongside and to network with a range of organisations and people in the sectors, via the 1436/2360 practical activities.

Field activities are also combined with an enquiry-based approach to learning which encourages a diversity of approaches and encourages innovative ideas addressing environmental management issues. Management questions are explored with students and are refined into actual field experiments where data is generated and analysed, giving evidence-based recommendations for better management approaches. This combines the academic and practical elements of the course giving solid 'real-world' outcomes.

In addition, second year students will partake in a Wildlife Conservation Study Tour visiting several notable conservation project sites over a number of days, including overnight stays. Students will evaluate a range of conservation approaches, assessing their efficacy. As this is a core module, students will not need to pay extra, other than additional sundries e.g. some meals.

Student support, wellbeing and counselling

Students have access to the Academic Support Tutor (AST) programme which provides high quality academic support for students. ASTs provide timetabled group tutorials, and individual support for students most at risk. Group tutorials focus on providing high quality academic support at the appropriate academic level; advice and guidance in relation to the course; and advice about making study choices on the course (commensurate with the supporting AST Handbook). Individual support focus on student continuation (commensurate with The Team around the RAU Student spheres of integration student retention model) and may be in person or online.

Section 7 – Approach to Assessment

The programme is based on eight modules per academic year, each of which has a 15-credit allocation, except for the 1436 Practical Conservation module which is 30 credits and is taught across both semesters. The 15-credit modules are split between semesters with 12 weeks teaching periods and 2 weeks of assessment for each. A credit system is used to ensure a balanced workload across the programme, with each credit point requiring approximately 10 hours of student work. Thus a 15-credit module will require a notional input of 150 hours of work, and a complete academic year of 120 credits will require 1200 hours of work, or approximately 40 hours per week for full time, and half of this for part-time.

There is now minimal use of exams in the traditional sense, with only a few in-class tests, with more emphasis on a range of coursework type and some practical assessments (e.g. animal handling). The emphasis on other forms of assessment stems from the need for students to have the skills and outcomes to make a difference. A wide range of assessment techniques will be applied throughout the programme to confirm learning outcomes. These will include:

- Academic research reports
- Professional reports
- Employers reporting on work-based experience
- Case studies
- Essays
- Conservation management plans
- Digital in-class tests
- Oral presentations
- Portfolios/appraisals
- Practical skills
- Production of publicity and information materials

Formative feedback is given within modules guiding students at strategic points of the Programme prior to summative assessment submissions. Assessments are normally set at the start of each module with a date for submission before the end of each module. Students are responsible for ensuring that assessments are submitted on time. Any non-

submission or non-attendance will be recorded as zero and a note placed against the individual assessment and against the module.

Overall, the programme is assessed through:

	Learning and Teaching			Assessment		
	Directed	Independent	Placement	Exam	Practical	Coursework
Year 1	36.50%	63.50%	0.00%	8.75%	10.00%	81.25%
Year 2	33.42%	66.58%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%

Section 8 – Course work grading and feedback

Assessment is an integral part of the learning experience of students. All University programmes are assessed by a range of assessment activities, each developed to provide the most appropriate means of demonstrating the student's achievement of a specified learning outcome. An assessment may assess more than one learning outcome.

Candidates for the award of a Foundation Degree who have achieved the required credits as specified above and whose average score in the final assessment is 40% or greater will be awarded a Foundation Degree. The final assessment will normally comprise the results of level 4 weighted at 30% plus the results of level 5 weighted at 70%. The normal basis for awards will be the overall average score in the final assessment, graded as follows:

Distinction	70% or above
Merit	60% - 69%
Pass	40% - 59%
Fail Below	40%

In addition to assigning a percentage mark to the work, tutors provide written feedback for all assessments which normally includes the strengths and weaknesses of the piece as well as advice about improving the work. Individual feedback is provided within 20-working days of the deadline for submission. All assessment decisions are subject to internal moderation and external scrutiny by the programme's External Examiners. Students must ensure they retain all coursework in case the External Examiner(s) wishes to see it.

Section 9 – RAU Graduate Framework

At the RAU we have chosen five values to underpin our learning community. These are the values which we will all work by and for which we want the RAU to be known for. We aim for our graduates to be:

Collaborative

We believe in the power of working together. We are stronger as a community of practice - inspiring each other, identifying shared goals, and providing reciprocal support leads to greater success.

Open-minded

We are receptive to new ideas and we value the diversity of experiences and skills. We are committed to listening to everyone across the RAU community.

Resourceful

We adopt creative approaches to achieve our goals while setting higher standards, promoting professionalism and sustainability.

Responsible

Individually and collectively we take accountability for our actions working with integrity to achieve the highest ethical standards.

Inclusive

We acknowledge the fundamental value and dignity of all individuals and are committed to maintaining an environment that seeks to eliminate all forms of discrimination and respects diverse traditions, heritages, and experiences.



Section 10 - Progression

The majority of our FdSc Wildlife Conservation & Countryside Management graduates choose to progress onto the one-year BSc (Hons) Wildlife and Countryside Management (top up) degree. Whilst achieving a BSc degree helps secure graduate employability, we have good examples of FdSc graduates who have been accepted into roles with the National Trust, RSPB, ecological consultancies etc.

FdSc graduates who have chosen to continue onto the BSc Top-up award, have gone on to pursue careers with nationally recognised organisations, such as those listed below, and in roles such as:

- Countryside Ranger
- Wildlife Reserve Manager
- Ecological Surveyor/ Consultant
- Conservation / Biodiversity Officer
- Farming and Wildlife Advisor

- Environmental Education Officer

The programme has developed strong linkages with a wide number and range of conservation and environmental organisations including the Wildlife Trusts, National Trust, Wildfowl and Wetland Trust, Cotswold Conservation Board (AONB), Butterfly Conservation, various Ecological Consultancies, Local Authorities, amongst many others.

Students have multiple opportunities to meet with and often work alongside organisations and people from the conservation sector via our practical field activities and teaching sessions.

Following the FdSc and BSc Top-up pathway, will also open up post-graduate education and research opportunities, such as MSc or PhD routes, within students' chosen field of expertise.

Section 11 – Student support, wellbeing and counselling

The [University](#) is offering a wide range of support to all RAU students including practical advice & guidance as well as emotional support.

Disability & neurodiversity support

We support students with a range of disabilities, learning difficulties, and other health and mental health conditions, helping them to access funding via the [Disabled Students Allowance](#).

When you tell us about a disability, you will be offered support based on your specific needs which can include:

- **Alternative exam arrangements** such as extra time, rest breaks, or a smaller room.
- **Access to support workers** such as study skills tutors, specialist mentors, readers and scribes.

Mental health Support

We are also here to support students with the ups and downs of university life, offering drop-in sessions, providing expert advice and support for students in crisis or with more complex needs, and together the team runs events and campaigns throughout the year to encourage positive wellbeing.

We also can help students to access external counselling sessions and these are generally delivered in collaboration with our long-term partners at Cotswold Counselling.

Academic Support Tutor Programme

Students have access to the Academic Support Tutor (AST) programme which provides high quality academic support for students. ASTs provide timetabled group tutorials, and individual support for students most at risk. Group tutorials focus on providing high quality academic support at the appropriate academic level; advice and guidance in relation to the course; and advice about making study choices on the course (commensurate with the supporting AST Handbook). Individual support focus on student continuation (commensurate with The Team around the RAU Student spheres of integration student retention model) and may be in person or online.

Section 12 – Enhancing the Quality of Learning and Teaching

The programme is subject to the University's rigorous quality assurance procedures which involve subject specialist and internal peer review of the course at periodic intervals, normally of 6 years. This process ensures that the programme engages with the applicable national Subject Benchmarks and references the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications.

All programmes are monitored on an annual basis where consideration is given to:

- External Examiner Reports
- Key statistics including data on retention and achievement
- Results of the Student Satisfaction Surveys
- Feedback from Student Delegates from programme committees
- Feedback from Student-Staff Liaison committees
- Annual Programme Monitoring