



# dissertation/major project

## Introduction

This module provides students with the opportunity to undertake a major, sustained, critical and evaluative piece of research, and to present the results in the form of either a written dissertation, or a project with written reflective and critical commentary. Students will explore and respond to the theoretical and practical understanding they have acquired, applying it to a particular research question.

Students choose a topic of special interest within the purview of Engaged Ecology and conduct research into this area of interest, via reading, private study and/or field work. They do this under the auspices of their chosen supervisor (a member of the Faculty team). Students then produce a systematic piece of written work, organized in chapters/sections in the manner of professional and published work, or an artistic project with a reflective and critical commentary.

**Module leader:** Dr Andy Letcher [andy.letcher@schumachercollege.org.uk](mailto:andy.letcher@schumachercollege.org.uk)  
Office in High Cross House, Rear Servant Bedroom Right

**Unless otherwise stated:** supervision occurs online. Face to face supervision can be arranged with sufficient notice.

## Module aims:

- To introduce students to a range of research methodologies relevant to the field of Engaged Ecology
- To enable students to research a topic of their own interest within Engaged Ecology
- To extend students' powers of critical evaluation and original thought
- To develop in students the skills and confidence necessary to carry out research in other areas after graduation

## Key dates:

**By the end of term 2 (September 10th) you should:**

- have approached and selected your supervisor. This will probably be Dr Andy Letcher or Dr Sarah Kelly, but could be any Faculty member of Dartington Learning. There is currently no provision to pay for external supervision.
- have a broad idea of the subject area of your dissertation and have okayed this in writing with your supervisor

**By Monday October 4th you should:**

- have written and submitted to your supervisor a dissertation proposal of no more than 1000 words. Your proposal must include a title, your name, a research question, a rationale for that question (ie a mini literature review that justifies the question and explains from whence it came), a proposed methodology and a bibliography. So long as your proposal includes these elements, you need not stick rigidly to the format as a template – feel free to introduce them creatively. **Your proposal will be assessed but will not be marked.**
- have written and submitted an ethical approval form. This is only necessary if you are **researching other people** in any way. You do not need to complete this form if there are no ethical implications, such as if your dissertation consists of an extended literature review.
- you may also be required to complete a risk assessment.

**By Monday December 6th you should:**

- have shared some chapter drafts with your supervisor for feedback
- **December 6th** is the deadline for sharing drafts. Thereafter you can speak with your supervisor, but they can no longer comment on your writing.

**Dissertation hand in date: noon on January 13th 2022**

**Module assessment**

The module assessment is 100% coursework and consists in two components.

- 1 dissertation/project proposal of no more than 1000 words (as above). The proposal must include a title, your name, a research question, a rationale for that question (ie a mini literature review that justifies the question and explains from whence it came), a proposed methodology and a bibliography. So long as the proposal includes these elements, you need not stick rigidly to the format as a template – feel free to introduce them creatively. This component is formative and therefore does not contribute directly to the final mark. Component weighting 0%.
- Either 1 dissertation of no more than 15,000 words, or 1 completed project with a 2000 word commentary/rationale, due **12.00 January 13<sup>th</sup> 2022**. Component weighting 100%.

Assessments should be **uploaded** via the Turnitin link on the Schumacher VLE. Marks and feedback will be available within 20 working days of submission.

This assessment will be double marked. Markers will agree on a final mark, but if they are unable to do so, the dissertation may be given to a third marker.

**Assessed module learning outcomes:**

1. Identify, research and investigate critically a defined research topic within the purview of Engaged Ecology
2. Make use of scholarly reviews and primary resources appropriate to the discipline and research question
3. Analyse the research problem using an appropriate methodology
4. Demonstrate the ability to assess any ethical dimensions of the research
5. Prepare a clear, well-structured, -presented and -written report or project that communicates the ideas, problems, solutions and results in an accessible manner.

**A dissertation traditionally consists in the following elements:**

- Title
- Your name
- A short abstract of no more than 250 words
- An introduction (including your research question)
- A rationale for the research question, i.e. a literature review

- A methodology including a discussion of any ethical considerations of your research
- A presentation of your findings
- A discussion of your findings
- Conclusion
- Bibliography

It should, of course, be properly referenced **using the Harvard system**.

This is a guide only, not a rigid template. You can, of course, stick to this as a structure, or you can choose to be more creative provided all these elements appear somewhere.

**Teaching and learning strategy:**

<b>SUMMARY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING [Use HESA KIS definitions]</b>		
<b>Scheduled Activities</b>	<b>Hours</b>	<b>Comments/Additional Information (briefly explain activities, including formative assessment opportunities)</b>
Lecture	17	Activating research methods
Seminar	3	
Tutorial	12	
Peer to peer learning	18	
Independent study	550	
<b>Total</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>(NB: 1 credit = 10 hours of learning; 10 credits = 100 hours, etc.)</b>

Students are expected to take full responsibility for their learning, **attend all** scheduled sessions, read appropriate indicated readings, and work on set exercises (formative and summative assessment).

Based on previous experience; students who failed to attend sessions are likely to be unsuccessful or show poor performance. Please ensure that you are engaging with the content and learning activities relating to this module.

**Late work/extenuating circumstances:**

If your participation in an examination or assessment has been affected by an extenuating circumstance, then you can ask the University to take this into consideration. You can submit a claim for extenuating circumstances to cover late submission of work, non-submission of work or non-attendance at a time specific assessment, such as an examination, test presentation or performance, or field class.

Information regarding the Extenuating Circumstances policy and how and where to submit Extenuating Circumstance Claims are available here: <https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/student-life/your-studies/essential-information/exams/exam-rules-and-regulations/extenuating-circumstances>

Where there are no valid extenuating circumstances, the following regulations will automatically apply:

- Work submitted after the deadline date/time but within 24 hours of it, will be capped at the pass mark 50%
- Work submitted 24 hours after the deadline will receive a mark of zero.

Please notify Dr Andy Letcher of any extenuating circumstances as soon as possible.

**Referencing protocols and academic offences:**

When writing a report or an essay you are expected to fully reference the materials you have used. The report or essay should be your own work, in your own words. For details on referencing please read the University of Plymouth referencing library guide:

<https://plymouth.libguides.com/referencing>

Please use the **Harvard** system of references.

**Plagiarism** is an offence under the University regulations on examination and assessment offences. It is important that you familiarise yourself with what constitutes plagiarism, and academic offences. Further information can be found:

<https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/student-life/your-studies/essential-information/regulations/plagiarism>

And <https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/student-life/your-studies/essential-information/exams/exam-rules-and-regulations/examination-offences>

#### **Module feedback**

At the end of the module we ask that you complete and submit a module feedback form, available on the VLE. This enables us to monitor quality, listen to your feedback and to make improvements.

## reading list

There is no set reading list for this module but students are recommended to consult recognised textbooks on research methodology, for example:

Kim Etherington. 2004. *Becoming a Reflexive Researcher - Using Our Selves in Research*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Nigel Gilbert and Paul Stoneman (eds). 2015. *Researching Social Life (4<sup>th</sup> edition)*. London: Sage.