

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION

This document describes the **Combined Honours Degree programme in Biology with Science Communication**. For Combined Honours Degree programmes, please also refer to the equivalent document(s) for the other subject(s). This specification is valid for new entrants from **September 2007**.

The aims of the Combined Honours Degree programme in Biology with Science Communication are to:

- provide a sound knowledge and understanding of the organismal and molecular principles of the subject through a core of courses, and develop an insight into the current frontiers of knowledge, primarily through a range of specialised level 3 courses;
- develop through a flexible and progressive structure, a range of subject-specific and transferable skills, including practical laboratory skills, fieldwork skills, self-management, information retrieval, communication and presentation skills, working with others, decision making and meeting deadlines, that equip students for future employment;
- help the apprentice scientist develop the skill, the analyses and the confidence to debate scientific content and construct interpretations of science in terms of the needs, interest, language and conceptual abilities of the audience;
- provide experience of independent research through a final year science communication project;
- produce graduates who can work safely and responsibly with biological materials, laboratory equipment and in the field.

The programme is delivered in three stages, each of which comprises one year of full-time study during which the student must follow courses to the value of four units (one unit is equivalent to 30 national credits). The curriculum is based around a core of mandatory units running through all three stages providing a broad base of biology in stage one, essential training in systematic and quantitative biology in stage two and a study of evolutionary processes and an individual project in the final stage. Alongside these are core units in Science Communication in each year.

Stage one comprises 3 core courses in biological sciences and 1 in Science Communication and seeks to provide a broadly based introduction to the subjects. Courses relating to the biological sciences consider major themes of biological diversity and ecological concepts, with a choice between genetics and microbiology or cell biology and physiology. Alongside these, is an introduction to science communication for biologists. In **Stage two**, students take 2 core biology courses and 2 core courses in Science Communication, and choose 4 out of the 10 biology options available. These take the students beyond the basic courses in the first year and the choice available enables students to specialise or maintain a broadly based programme, these also provide a basis for research-led specialist options in stage three. In **Stage three**, students take 1 core biology course, 1 core course in Science Communication, and choose 5 out of the 11 biology options available. Most of these courses closely reflect the research interests of members of staff who are all specialists in their fields. One of the core courses is an advanced media project, which provides training in the communication of science.

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This document provides a summary of the main features of the programme(s), and of the outcomes which a student might reasonably be expected to achieve if full advantage is taken of the learning opportunities provided. Further information is contained in the College prospectus, the College Regulations and in various handbooks issued to students upon arrival. Whilst Royal

Holloway keeps all its information for prospective applicants and students under review, programmes and the availability of individual courses are necessarily subject to change at any time, and prospective applicants are therefore advised to seek confirmation of any factors which might affect their decision to follow a specific programme. In turn, Royal Holloway will inform applicants and students as soon as is practicable of any substantial changes which might affect their studies.

Learning outcomes

Teaching and learning in the programme are closely informed by current developments (including practical aspects) in the subject and by the active research of staff, particularly in the areas of animal behaviour, biodiversity, conservation, ecology and the environment, evolution, , marine biology, physiology, plant and animal cell biology, and molecular biology, science communication. In general terms the programme provides a variety of opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate these learning outcomes:

Knowledge and understanding

- a critical understanding of the diversity and complexity of life and life processes;
- a familiarity with terminology, nomenclature and classification systems;
- a critical understanding of ecological systems and of the interrelationships between organisms and the environment they live in;
- a critical understanding of genetics and of the evolutionary processes that give rise to the diversity and complexity of life;
- knowledge and understanding of the various media available for science communication;
- a critical understanding of the differences between the various communication media and the ability to select the most appropriate to the given task;
- knowledge of the practical application of methods and the technical skills used to create finished presentations in all the various media;
- understanding cutting edge developments in a range of areas specific to the subjects;
- knowledge and engagement with philosophical and ethical issues arising from some of the current developments in the biosciences.

Skills and other attributes

- the ability to employ and evaluate suitable experimental methods (both laboratory and fieldwork based) for the investigation of relevant areas of biology;
- the ability to plan, execute and present an independent piece of work in the final year through a science communication project;
- well-developed strategies for updating, maintaining and enhancing their knowledge of the Biosciences and Science Communication.
- a range of laboratory and fieldwork techniques of key importance in biology;
- working safely in a scientific laboratory and in the field, with awareness of standard safety protocols;
- the ability to apply relevant numerical skills, including statistics to biological data;
- the ability to access information from a wide range of sources in order to maintain and enhance knowledge of the Biosciences and Science Communication and to communicate that information clearly in oral and written forms;
- assessing the merits of contrasting subject-specific theories, paradigms, concepts and principles;
- applying subject-specific knowledge and understanding to address familiar and unfamiliar problems;
- the ability to plan, design and execute an independent piece of research through a media project;
- skills in using audio/visual equipment for communication;
- taking personal responsibility for learning, and developing habits of reflection on that learning;*
- identifying, retrieving (including the use of online computer searches), sorting and exchanging information;*
- abstracting and synthesising information, and developing a reasoned argument;*
- critically interpreting and evaluating experimental data and relevant literature, analysing and solving problems, and decision-making;*
- written communication and verbal presentation;*
- information technology (including spreadsheets, databases, word processing, email and WWW;)*
- interpersonal skills, including working in groups/teams, recognising and respecting the viewpoints of others;*
- CV and career preparation.*

* transferable skills

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Teaching, learning and assessment

The overall strategy is to provide a progressive approach to biological concepts and systems of increasing complexity through teaching methods that aid learning and stimulate interest. Teaching is by means of lectures, laboratory and fieldwork classes, seminars, tutorials, study/revision sessions, with knowledge and understanding further developed by guided independent study. Learning and analytical ability are developed and reinforced through problem solving, essay writing, practical classes (both laboratory and fieldwork), critical evaluation and by giving students the opportunity to design, execute and evaluate their own experiments. Students are encouraged to acquire further knowledge beyond taught material, e.g. by reading topical reviews, original research literature and attending research seminars, especially in the final stage.

The practical assignments associated with stage one and two courses provide training in a range of subject specific laboratory techniques, including safety assessment. The culmination of these skills is demonstrated in the final year research project, and for literature skills the preparation of a literature report. Students have to prepare their own risk assessment prior to commencing their final stage project work.

Training in intellectual and key transferable skills is embodied throughout the programme and forms a strong element of the tutorial and study session programmes. All students are required to meet basic standards in information technology, for which training is provided by the College Computer Centre, through the General Information Technology Skills course.

Assessment of knowledge and understanding is by formal examinations at the end of each year, practical assignments (both laboratory and fieldwork based) and other coursework, oral presentations and an independent research project and the independent literature report. Full details of the assessments for individual courses can be obtained from the [School](#).

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Details of the programme structure(s)

Please note that not all courses run each year. A full list of courses including optional courses for the current academic year can be obtained from the [School](#).

Stage one:

Students must take:

BS1040 The Diversity of Life (1 unit)

BS1050 Ecology: Animal Behaviour to Environmental Conservation (1 unit)

SC1001 Media Communication (½ unit)

SC1002 The Genres of Science Communication (½ unit)

and one option from the following:

BS1060 Living Systems: Cell Biology and Physiology (1 unit)

BS1070 Genetics and Microbiology (1 unit)

Stage two:

Students must take:

BS2010 Invertebrate Biology: Structure, Behaviour and Evolution (½ unit)

BS2120 Biological Data Analysis and Interpretation (½ unit)

SC2001 Media Project (½ unit)

SC2002 Media Case Study (½ unit)

and four options from the following:

BS2020 Plant life: from Genes to Environment (½ unit)

BS2030 Plant Geography (½ unit)

BS2040 Cell Biology (½ unit)

BS2050 Essential Human Physiology in Health and Disease (½ unit)

BS2060 Developmental Biology (½ unit)

BS2110 Practical Field Ecology (½ unit)
BS2140 Animal Behaviour (½ unit)
BS2150 Applications of Molecular Genetics in Biology (½ unit)
BS2530 Molecular Biology (½ unit)
BS2001 Marine Biology (½ unit)

Stage three:

Students must take:

BS3140 Evolution (½ unit)
SC3001 Advanced Media Project (1 unit)

and five options from the following:

BS3020 Special Study: Dissertation (½ unit)
BS3030 Biology of Parasitic Diseases (½ unit)
BS3060 Conservation Biology (½ unit)
BS3120 Population and Community Ecology (½ unit)
BS3130 Insect Physiology (½ unit)
BS3160 Behavioural Ecology (½ unit)
BS3180 Marine Ecology and Biodiversity (½ unit)
BS3190 Climate Change: Plants and the Environment (½ unit)
BS3530 Advanced Molecular Biology (½ unit)
BS3540 Cell and Molecular Biology of Cancer (½ unit)
BS3001X Marine Microbiology (½ unit)

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Progression and award requirements

The progression and award requirements are essentially the same across all Honours Degree programmes at Royal Holloway. Students must pass units to the value of at least three units on each stage of the programme. On some programmes there may be a requirement to pass specific courses in order to progress to the next stage, or to qualify for a particular degree title (see programme structure above). Students are considered for the award and classified on the basis of a weighted average. This is calculated from marks gained in courses taken in stages two and three, and gives twice the weighting to marks gained in stage three. In order to qualify for the award, students must gain a weighted average of at least 35%. In order to qualify for the award of Biology with Science Communication degree students must complete the core units specified above. SC courses must constitute at least 25%, but not more than 33% of the courses passed.

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Student support and guidance

- Personal Advisers: All students are allocated a Personal Adviser who meets with them regularly through the programme. The Personal Adviser's role is to advise on academic, pastoral and welfare issues, but with referral of students for professional help, e.g. counselling, if required. Students' work closely with their Personal Advisers in tutorial groups around 7, primarily throughout the teaching terms.
- The Director of Teaching and Programme Directors provide a back-up system of academic, pastoral and welfare advice.
- Provision of study skills sessions both during the induction week and at appropriate times throughout the academic year for introduction to a range of specific study skills.
- All staff are available and accessible through an open-door policy or by operating a defined office hours system.
- Staff-undergraduate ratio of 1:15 (2009-10).
- Representation on the Staff-Student Committee
- Detailed student handbook and course resources.
- A collection of articles and books supporting teaching and learning housed in the School Office.
- Extensive supporting materials and learning resources in College libraries, Computer Centre, School website and Moodle.

- Dedicated School teaching laboratories are housed in the School of Biological Sciences (Bourne) Building.
- The School of Biological Sciences has 2 Educational Support Office network members.
- College Careers Service and School Careers Liaison Officer, supplemented by a dedicated careers area.
- Access to all College and University support services, including Student Counselling Service, Health Centre and the Education Support Unit for students with special needs.

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Admission requirements

The Department's standard conditional offer is available on the [Course Catalogue](#) web page. However, the Department also has considerable flexibility in its admissions and offers policy and strongly encourages applications from non-standard applicants. Students whose first language is not English may also be asked for a qualification in English Language at an appropriate level. It may also be helpful to contact the [Admissions Office](#) for specific guidance on the entrance requirements for particular programmes.

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Further learning and career opportunities

Graduates from Biological Sciences degree programmes have successfully progressed into a wide range of professions, while some have continued onto Postgraduate studies. For further details please refer to the [Careers Service](#).

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Indicators of quality and standards

Royal Holloway's position as one of the UK's leading research-intensive institutions was confirmed by the results of the most recent Research Assessment Exercise (RAE 2008) conducted by the Higher Education Funding Council (HEFCE). The new scoring system for the RAE 2008 measures research quality in four categories, with the top score of 4* indicating quality that is world-leading and of the highest standards in terms of originality, significance and rigour. 60% of the College's research profile is rated as world-leading or internationally excellent outperforming the national average of 50%. The College is ranked 16th in the UK for research of 4* standard and 18th for 3* and 4* research. The School of Biological Sciences was ranked joint 3rd in the top 10 universities in the country in terms of proportion of 3* and 4* research, with 70% of its research profile being of 3* and 4* standard.

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List of programmes

All the programmes are taught entirely by staff at Royal Holloway, University of London, and lead to awards of the University of London. Programmes in Biological Sciences are not subject to accreditation by a professional body. The QAA subject benchmark statement in Biosciences describes the general features which one might expect from Honours Degree programmes in the subject, and can therefore be used as a point of reference when reading this document (see www.qaa.ac.uk). UCAS codes are given in parentheses (see www.ucas.ac.uk).

Combined Honours Degree programmes with Biological Sciences as a major component

BSc Biology with Science Communication (C9P3)†

† Note: Indicates programmes to be withdrawn with effect from September 2009

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