# PDA in Ecological Surveying Information

## Introduction

Thanks for your interest in the PDA in Ecological Surveying. Assuming sufficient interest, the PDA will begin on September 3rd 2022.

There were three major background factors influencing the development of this award:

1. The market shortage of competent ecological surveyors.
2. The lack of a specific ecological surveying award covering the required competencies.
3. The lack of ecological training/learning opportunities in Scotland.

The course will run over a year, studied by distance-learning and designed for people already working. The level is at SCQF level 7/8 (similar to HNC/D level) and is suitable both as a building block for future entry into Higher Education or CPD for people with qualifications in less vocational areas.

This PDA will require a good level of written and analytical skills. Candidates with prior report writing skills or those who can develop these skills would be better able to bridge the particular demands of this programme. Candidates would benefit from a background in or some prior knowledge of ecological surveying. Students will also need a computer capable of running QGIS, and a mobile smart phone (either android or apple), however online provision/alternatives can be made if this is not possible.

Support will be provided via online lectures, tutorials, and study weekends with fieldwork. Applicants should be self-starters, with a passion for the outdoors and able to access sites in their local area of interest to ecological surveyors.

## Course Content

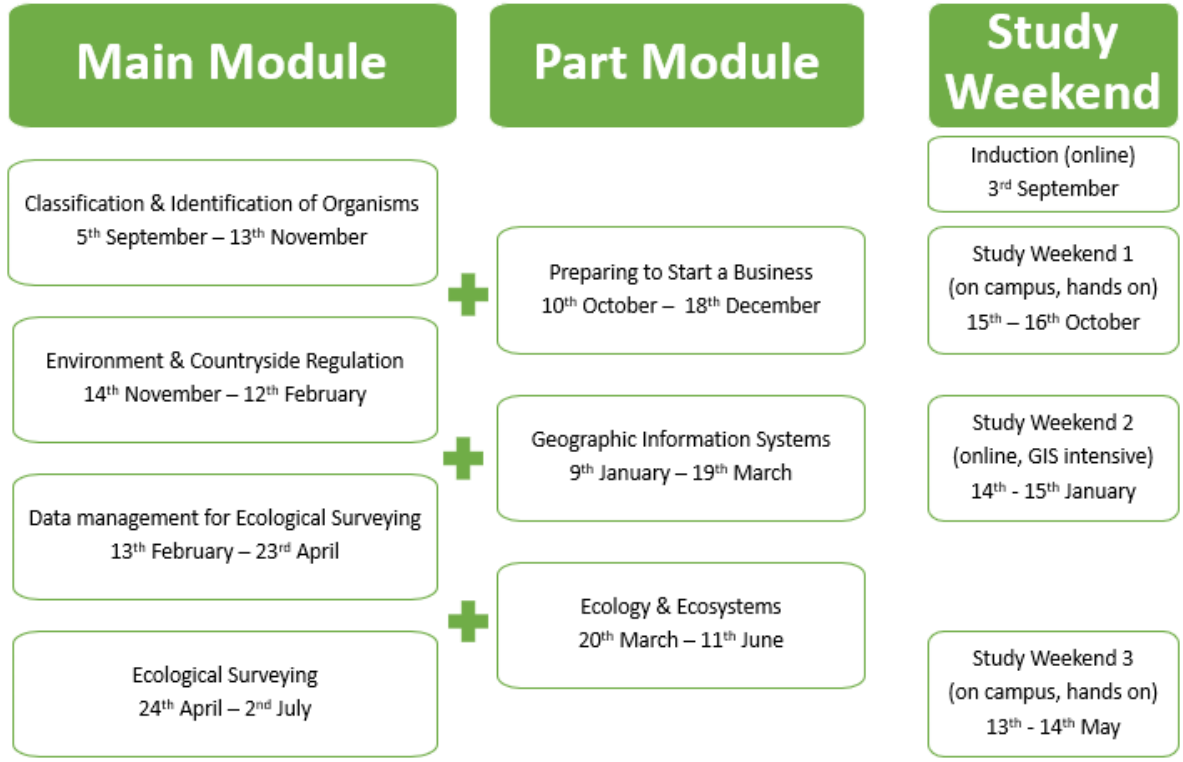
There are seven taught modules, ranging from the basics of ecological theory, through to using technology, eventually ending up in the skills required to set the trainee up in business. Each module is notionally 40 hours of work and as there will be 1.5 to 2 modules per block, around 7 hours a week of your time would be required (this will vary depending on your own background and speed of study). Campus study days where students are guided through some of the more challenging aspects are provided. These are highly recommended for some units on the course, although not compulsory.

## Module delivery

How each module is delivered will vary but, recorded lectures, virtual classrooms and workbooks will all be provided. Virtual classrooms are normally 2-6 sessions per module and take place during evenings (typical they are an hour long and start after 7pm). Practical skills are partially developed through your own study, whilst being guided by the lecturer in technique, with the study weekends for hands-on training.

## Module Timetable (*Provisional)

The entire course is taught over four ten weeks long blocks as indicated below. Within each block there is a main module plus part of a second and/or third module will be active, and there are seven modules in total over the year.




## Study weekends

There will be three study weekends interspersed throughout the year, which will enable students to meet up together with the staff to allow practical demonstration of some of the skills, as well as just to get to know each other. These weekends are not compulsory but will add to your studies.

There will be an initial online induction day that will involve enrolment/induction activities, an introduction to the first module being taught as well as various talks and discussions.

The First study weekend will be an opportunity for students to meet up with SRUC staff (and each other) and to practise identifying organisms and logging them, so it will also introduce some elements of GIS data capture and data management (this will be held at our Oatridge Campus).

The second study weekend is specifically online as it will be an intensive GIS weekend, designed to get students up to speed quickly with this technology.

The final study weekend will also be hosted at our Oatridge Campus, enabling students to further interact with SRUC staff and have practical hands-on experience of a variety of survey techniques, as well as use of technology such as in field GIS, high precision global navigation satellite systems and the application and use of drones for ecological surveying (if the weather is kind!).

## Fees & grants

Fees are £642.50 for Scottish students and £1260 for the rest of the UK. Please apply via the website: https://www.sruc.ac.uk/courses-training/course-catalogue/ecological-surveying/pda-ecological-surveying-2021/ . Some students may also be eligible for part time study grant funding from SAAS, so enquire using the information and forms found here: https://www.saas.gov.uk/forms/part-time . Once you have filled in the form, scan it and send it to SRUC using the email RegistryFunding@sruc.ac.uk.

## Module information

### Ecology & Ecosystems

This Unit is designed to enable learners to understand key aspects of ecology and ecosystems, encompassing the abiotic and biotic factors affecting ecosystems and the structure and conservation of biological communities.

Campus study days are recommended.

### Classification and Identification of Organisms

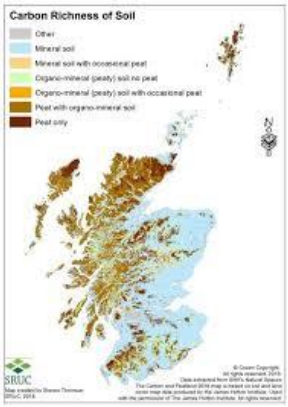
The Unit introduces the candidate to the principles and systems used for the classification and identification of organisms. It centres on developing a level of competence in the skills required to identify a range of organisms, representing different habitats and situations by using a variety of techniques.

### Data Management for Ecological Surveying

The Unit is designed to give candidates the skills to set up and utilise systems for the management of ecological survey data. On completion of the Unit, the candidate should be able to:

- Design a system for managing ecological survey data.
- Collect data digitally direct into a Geographic Information System (GIS) using in-field technologies.
- Interrogate data and provide reports suitable for ecological assessment.

Campus study days are recommended.




## Geographic Information Systems

The Unit is designed to give candidates an introduction to the utilisation of computer information systems which are based on locations from digital maps and plans. On completion of the Unit, the candidate should be able to:

- Survey and process digital map data for inclusion in a Geographic Information System (GIS).
- Geocode data tables to digital map data.
- Use GIS software to display data.

## Ecological Surveying

This Unit develops understanding and knowledge of techniques available for surveying and monitoring plant and animal populations and habitats. The Unit discusses how ecological principles are applied to practical procedures and gives the candidate an opportunity to develop practical skills by carrying out and reporting on an ecological survey. Techniques include botanical, protected species and invertebrate surveys.

Campus study days are recommended.

## Environmental and Countryside Regulation

This Unit provides candidates with an introduction into how environmental and countryside regulation is formulated and implemented in the EU and UK. Candidates also gain knowledge of aspects relating to key policies and principles involved in shaping regulation in the countryside and environment.

## Preparing to Start a Business

This Unit is aimed at learners who may wish to start their own business by working through the main processes involved in the initial stages of starting a new business. It provides the learner with the knowledge and skills needed to start planning a business venture and construct a suitable initial business plan.

## Course contact

Please contact the programme leader for further information if required.

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