

MA Outdoor Experiential and Sustainability Education

Institute of Science and Environment

Academic Level:	7	Credits:	180
UCAS Code:	Not applicable		
Awarding Body:	University of Cumbria		
Delivery Site:	Ambleside		
Programme Length:	One Year		
Mode of Delivery:	Full Time Face to Face		
Pattern of Delivery:	Block		
	Total weeks of study:	36	
	Delivery pattern:	3 x 12 week semesters	
	Standard semester dates:	Yes	
Placement:	N/A		
PSRB:	N/A		
	Date of accreditation:	Accreditation period:	
Programme Webpage:	https://www.cumbria.ac.uk/study/courses/postgraduate/outdoor-and-experiential-and-sustainability-education-ma/		

Entry Criteria

The University's standard criteria for admissions apply. Please refer to the [Applicant Information](#) pages of the University website for more information. For [RPL](#), please refer to the University website. Detailed criteria for admission to this programme can be found on the programme webpage:

PROGRAMME AIMS AND OUTCOMES

Programme Aims

By the end of this programme learners will be able to:

1. Critically engage with integrated approaches to outdoor experiential and sustainability education, drawing on diverse research traditions and scholarship to reimagine educational theory, practice and policy in response to pressing social and environmental challenges;
2. Develop sophisticated research capabilities to conduct thoughtful, critically informed inquiry into outdoor experiential and sustainability education, demonstrating methodological awareness and ethical reflexivity;
3. Demonstrate in-depth knowledge and critical understanding of outdoor experiential and sustainability education across diverse contexts, including its ecological, social, cultural, philosophical, and political dimensions;
4. Critically analyse and apply theoretical orientations underpinning outdoor experiential and sustainability education practice, exploring how these shape and are shaped by ontologies and extending them into innovative contexts;
5. Critically examine and envision transformative learning experiences that integrate experiential pedagogy with sustainability education, demonstrating responsiveness to place, equity, ecological literacy, and whole-person development;
6. Undertake substantial independent research through a dissertation that critically explores specialist knowledge in outdoor experiential and sustainability education, contributing original insights that challenge existing paradigms and/or academic turns and open new ways of thinking about practice.

Programme Outcomes – Knowledge and Understanding

The programme provides opportunities for you to develop and demonstrate the following:

After 60 credits of study (PGCert) you will be able to demonstrate:

K1. A critical understanding of experiential education and place-based pedagogies, their philosophical foundations and practical applications, and the ability to critically examine how learning emerges through embodied engagement with place across diverse educational contexts.

K2. An understanding of socially and environmentally reflexive perspectives on professional practice, critically analysing implicit bias and values, and evaluating practice from cultural, historical and contemporary perspectives.

K3. An understanding of methodological paradigms and academic turns, and the ability to conduct and critique diverse inquiry approaches, formulate research questions through critical literature engagement, and prepare coherent research proposals that demonstrate methodological awareness and scholarly reflexivity.

After 120 credits of study (PGDip) you will be able to demonstrate:

K4. Understand and critique a range of ecological perspectives and their philosophical foundations for understanding human-environment relationships, synthesising insights from Western traditions,

Indigenous knowledge systems, and more-than-human ontologies, and reflecting critically on your own ontological positioning in relation to ecological thinking and ways of knowing.

K5. A critical engagement with environmental and sustainability education, exploring diverse theoretical orientations, ecological literacies, and approaches to addressing social and environmental challenges through transformative educational practice.

K6. A critical evaluation of adventurous journeys as cultural phenomena and pedagogical practice within outdoor experiential and sustainability education, and the ability to envision innovative, place-responsive approaches for diverse contexts and communities.

After 180 credits of study (MA) you will be able to demonstrate:

K7. Independently conduct and critically evaluate research to inform subject knowledge and professional practice.

Programme Outcomes – Skills and other Attributes

The programme provides opportunities for you to develop and demonstrate the following:

After 60 credits of study (PGCert) you will be able to demonstrate:

S1. e Critical and curious engagement with experiential and place-based pedagogies in a globally minded way, developing innovative solutions to educational challenges.

S2. Reflexive and adaptable professional practice that responds thoughtfully to diverse cultural and contemporary contexts and challenges assumptions in support of inclusive practice

S3. The ability to engage critically and reflexively with diverse methodological traditions and academic turns, demonstrating digital fluency in accessing and evaluating scholarly resources while developing innovative approaches to inquiry that challenge established thinking.

After 120 credits of study (PGDip) you will be able to demonstrate:

S4. Critical and creative thinking across diverse ontological traditions, adapting understanding to shifting ecological contexts while developing collaborative relationships with diverse knowledge systems and communities of practice.

S5. Critically curious and creative approaches to environmental and sustainability education challenges, adapting practice to shifting ecological and social contexts while building collaborative networks with environmental educators and sustainability practitioners.

S6. Agility and adaptability in experiential practice, responding creatively to diverse places, communities, and changing environmental conditions while building collaborative networks with outdoor and adventure education practitioners.

After 180 credits of study (MA) you will be able to demonstrate:

S7. Sustain independent and adaptive scholarly inquiry, demonstrating creativity, resilience, and critical insight in addressing complex research questions.

PROGRAMME FEATURES

Programme Overview

Key features of the programme

We are living in precarious times. The stories we live by need scrutiny and revision if we are to find healthier narratives for socially and environmentally sustainable futures. The MA in Outdoor Experiential and Sustainability Education explores social and environmental themes through a contemporary, transdisciplinary and transcultural lens.

Designed for those passionate about transforming education and inspiring sustainability, this research-informed programme is based in the heart of the Lake District—one of the world's most celebrated natural and cultural landscapes. Students explore the intersections of education, ecology, adventure, and sustainability through experiential learning that challenges conventional thinking.

The programme engages with debates around environmental empathy, displacement, social equality, adventurous journeying, embodiment, nature-culture philosophies, colonialism, globalization, and alternative forms of education. Students examine diverse outdoor narratives and produce their own stories to develop new knowledge, interrogating material entanglements of social and environmental relations while challenging dominant assumptions and opening space for transformative thinking.

What Makes This Programme Unique?

- Transforming Mindsets – See the world differently. Through debate, creative reflection, and hands-on engagement with diverse cultural, ecological, and political perspectives, students will develop the critical and adaptive thinking required to influence global sustainability conversations.
- Research-Led & Critically Engaging – Students will engage with the latest research and critical debates in outdoor and sustainability education, developing the analytical skills needed to challenge existing paradigms and shape new educational practices.
- Innovative, Practical & Creative Assessments – Moving beyond conventional exams and coursework, this MA embraces open and creative assessment methods, including reflective practice, collaborative research, and immersive field-based projects.
- Career-Enhancing & Future-Focused – This programme equips graduates with specialist knowledge and applied expertise, preparing them for careers in outdoor and sustainability education, environmental communication, creativity and storytelling, and adventurous learning, as well as further research and academic pathways.
- A Classroom Without Walls – From your base in Ambleside, you will have direct access to more than 150 peaks, 16 lakes, and countless rivers—a natural learning environment that fosters deep personal and professional growth.

Brief overview of what will be studied through the year

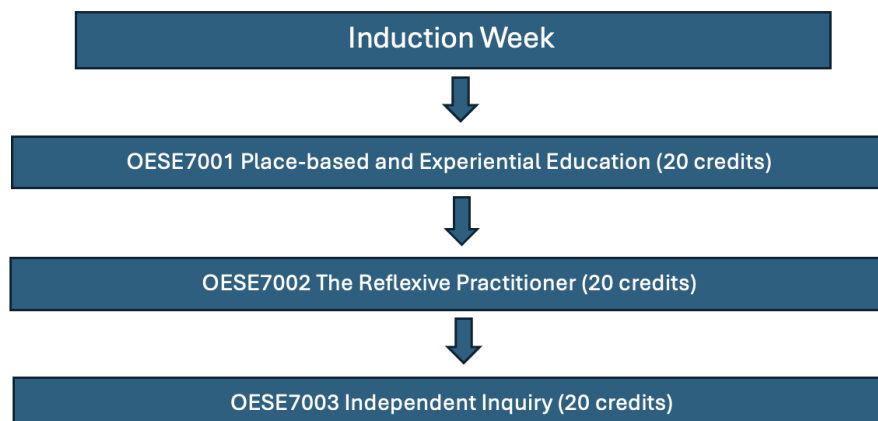
Throughout this MA, students will explore outdoor experiential and sustainability education through immersive, critically reflective study in the Lake District. The course is delivered face to face in Ambleside in a series of block weeks. There are usually around two to four weeks between the 5-

day block modules where you will undertake self-study to complete your assignments for the previous module, as well as participate with optional/voluntary activities, such as 'upskill' (professional development sessions for students to develop professional competency outside of the academic course content).

MA Outdoor Experiential and Sustainability Education

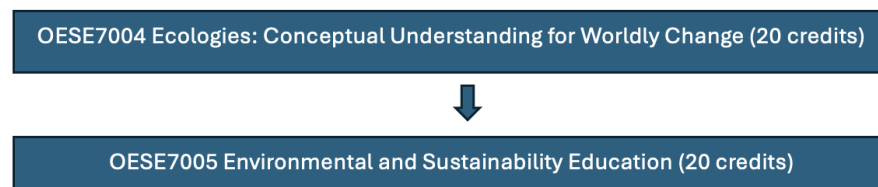
Each module is one-week long (5-days)

Semester One

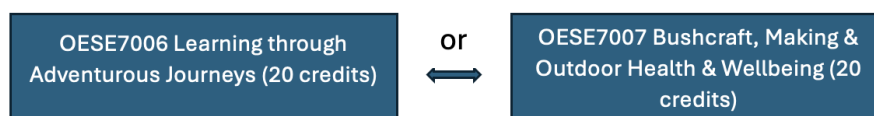


(Students exiting at this point with 60 credits would receive a PGCert)

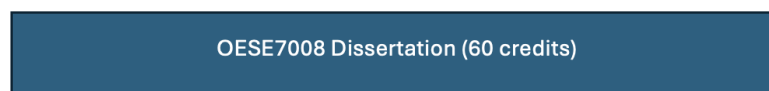
Semester Two



Semester Three



(Students exiting at this point with 120 credits would receive a PGDip)



(Students exiting at this point with 180 credits would receive an MA)

Semester 1 begins with Place-Based and Experiential Education (20 credits), where students critically examine experiential education and place-based pedagogies, their philosophical foundations and practical applications, exploring how learning emerges through embodied engagement with place across diverse educational contexts. The Reflexive Practitioner (20 credits)

develops socially and environmentally reflexive perspectives on professional practice, encouraging students to critically analyse their own implicit biases and values while evaluating professional practice from cultural, historical, and contemporary perspectives. Independent Inquiry (20 credits) introduces methodological paradigms and academic turns, enabling students to conduct and critique diverse inquiry approaches, engage critically with literature, and prepare coherent research proposals that demonstrate methodological awareness and scholarly reflexivity.

Semester 2 deepens critical engagement through Ecologies: Conceptual Understanding for Worldly Change (20 credits), exploring diverse philosophical and ontological frameworks for understanding ecology beyond traditional Western scientific approaches—including shallow, deep, dark, and flat ecologies, Indigenous knowledge systems, and more-than-human ontologies—while examining how ecological worldviews intersect with politics and justice. Environmental and Sustainability Education (20 credits) critically examines pedagogical relationships between education, sustainability, environmental and social justice in rapidly changing times, exploring diverse educational currents from established environmental education traditions to emerging frameworks responding to climate change, technological transformation, and political polarization. Learning from Adventurous Journeys (20 credits) evaluates adventurous journeys as cultural phenomena and pedagogical practice, reflecting on their place within outdoor learning and envisioning innovative, place-responsive approaches for diverse contexts and communities. Learning From Adventurous Journeys is an optional module with the other option being Bushcraft, Making and Outdoor Wellbeing. This second optional module offers an experiential exploration of craft, material culture, and ecological relationship as foundations for outdoor wellbeing and sustainability education. Through practical engagement in bushcraft and making, students investigate how embodied skill, sensory awareness, and creative material practice can foster connection to place, resilience, and ecological responsibility. Please note that the running of optional modules is subject to cohort size. Throughout the year, students undertake the Dissertation (60 credits), conducting sustained independent scholarly inquiry into a specialist topic within outdoor experiential and sustainability education, demonstrating originality and the capacity to challenge established paradigms.

Specialist equipment available to students

Students on this MA programme have access to the Ambleside campus outdoor stores, which house extensive equipment to support experiential learning in the Lake District environment. Once validated, students can loan a wide range of outdoor equipment including:

- Climbing and mountaineering equipment
- Kayaking and canoeing equipment
- Hiking and camping gear

The campus also features an on-site bouldering wall fitted with crash mats, providing opportunities for indoor climbing practice and skill development. Students are welcome to book the bouldering wall for leisure use and skill refinement.

These facilities enable students to undertake adventurous journeys, develop outdoor competencies, and engage practically with the programme's experiential and place-based pedagogical approach. The equipment stores support both taught modules and independent

fieldwork, allowing students to immerse themselves fully in the Lake District's diverse outdoor environments throughout their studies.

The stores also run a programme of 'Upskill' professional development sessions for students to develop professional competency outside of the academic course content.

Links to academic discipline and professional practice

This MA programme is grounded in the interdisciplinary field of outdoor experiential and sustainability education, drawing on established and emerging scholarship from outdoor education, environmental education, sustainability education, adventure education, and educational philosophy. The programme engages critically with contemporary debates in these fields, including place-based pedagogy, experiential learning theory, ecological literacy, environmental justice, Indigenous pedagogies, posthumanist education, and critical sustainability studies.

Students engage with foundational and cutting-edge research throughout the programme, exploring diverse theoretical orientations from deep ecology and social ecology to new materialisms, more-than-human ontologies, and decolonising pedagogies. The curriculum reflects current scholarship in academic journals such as *Environmental Education Research*, *Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning*, *Australian Journal of Environmental Education*, and *Journal of Environmental Education*, ensuring students develop sophisticated understanding of the field's intellectual terrain.

The programme maintains strong links to professional practice through its design and delivery. All teaching staff combine academic expertise with substantial practical experience in outdoor, adventure, and environmental education contexts. Employers consistently emphasise the value of autonomous professionals capable of building rapport, demonstrating commitment to the outdoors through extended experience, applying critical thinking creatively to context, maintaining societal and global focus, understanding contemporary challenges including climate change and social equity, and working adaptively with safety and sustainability.

Professional relevance is embedded through authentic assessment tasks that mirror real-world practice—designing educational interventions, creating curriculum resources, developing community workshops, and producing environmental communication materials. Students undertake adventurous journeys, engage in fieldwork, and conduct independent research on topics directly relevant to professional contexts. The Lake District setting provides opportunities for practical engagement with diverse outdoor environments, while the block-week delivery model accommodates working professionals seeking to enhance their practice.

Alignment with the LTA Plan, including Authentic Assessment, Digital Augmentation, Learning Optimisation, Universal Design for Learning and Graduate Attributes

This MA programme exemplifies the University's Learning, Teaching and Assessment strategy through its design, delivery, and pedagogical approach.

Place-based Engaged Learning forms the programme's signature pedagogy. Situated in the UNESCO World Heritage-designated Lake District, the programme transforms this celebrated landscape into a living classroom. Students engage directly with diverse places—peaks, lakes, forests, and communities—connecting theory with embodied practice through fieldwork, immersive experiential learning, and place-responsive inquiry that grounds abstract concepts in tangible

contexts. The Lake District becomes both subject and teacher, offering direct access to more than 150 peaks, 16 lakes, and countless rivers as sites for philosophical reflection and pedagogical exploration.

The programme cultivates all five graduate attributes. Students become agile and adaptive through navigating uncertainty in research and responding to complex environmental and social challenges. They develop as collaborative and networked professionals by building relationships with peers, practitioners, and diverse communities across local and global contexts. Critical curiosity permeates every module, encouraging students to question dominant narratives and challenge established thinking through diverse philosophical and ontological perspectives. Digital fluency emerges through engaging with digital platforms for research, communication, and creative assessment formats including podcasts, videos, and interactive resources. The programme fosters innovation and creativity through open assessment methods that move beyond traditional essays, encouraging students to produce original educational resources, creative media projects, and transformative learning interventions.

The four enhancement themes are woven throughout the programme. Authentic assessment takes centre stage with creative, practice-oriented tasks that mirror real-world professional contexts and allow for individualisation in mode of assessment; e.g. designing workshops, creating educational media, and developing curriculum materials that students can immediately apply in their professional lives. Digital augmentation enhances learning through multimedia resources, online platforms, and creative digital submissions. Learning optimisation occurs through block-week intensive delivery that enables deep immersion in each module's content, supported by formative feedback, peer learning, and reflective practice. Universal Design for Learning ensures inclusivity by offering flexible assessment formats, multiple means of engagement, and diverse pathways for demonstrating learning—welcoming students from varied educational and professional backgrounds.

Finally, the programme embodies belonging through partnership by creating a collaborative learning community where students co-construct knowledge, engage in peer feedback, work alongside tutors as fellow inquirers, and contribute to ongoing conversations about outdoor experiential and sustainability education internationally. The diverse cohort—from educators and environmental advocates to career changers and outdoor leaders—enriches learning through multiple perspectives, while the intimate Lake District setting fosters meaningful relationships and a strong sense of community. Inclusion is a priority, and the team will work hard to accommodate learners with a range of needs and disabilities. Please contact the team to see what adjustments can be made to accommodate your needs, bearing in mind that on the course we visit different places off campus.

Through this integration of place-based learning, graduate attributes development, innovative assessment, and partnership approaches, the MA in Outdoor Experiential and Sustainability Education embodies the University's strategic vision for transformative higher education.

Learning and Teaching

Teaching

At Level 7 you generally have one block week of contact per module, typically consisting of:

- 8 hours of lectures
- 8 hours of seminars
- 8 hours of fieldwork

This provides 24 hours of scheduled contact time during the block week.

Each module comprises 200 total hours of study. With 24 hours of scheduled teaching, you will be expected to undertake approximately 176 hours of independent learning throughout the module.

This independent study time is essential for your success and should be used for:

- Pre-course reading and preparation for scheduled sessions
- Independent reading of core and supplementary texts
- Research and engagement with academic literature
- Assessment preparation and writing
- Reflection on fieldwork and seminar discussions

Effective time management of your independent study is crucial at Level 7 and will help you develop the autonomous learning skills required for postgraduate study and professional practice.

Teaching and Learning

Students on this programme are part of an inclusive learning community that recognises diversity. Students have opportunities to learn by interacting with others in a collegiate, facilitative and dynamic learning environment. Teaching, learning, assessment and student support allow equal and equitable opportunities for students to optimise their potential and develop autonomy.

The programme creates a stimulating and innovative community of learning, whether encountered on campus, at a distance, or in the landscape itself. Facilitated by expert practitioner staff with extensive academic and professional expertise, students experience a learning environment that is philosophically rich, experientially grounded, and intellectually challenging.

A key belief underpinning the programme is that all students are individual learners with individual needs and diverse backgrounds. The teaching and learning approach across this programme demonstrates a willingness of staff to work in partnership with each student to help develop their autonomy and independence as critical, reflexive thinkers. Students co-construct knowledge through dialogue, collaborative inquiry, and shared exploration of complex philosophical and practical terrain.

Pedagogical Approach

The programme embodies place-based engaged learning—the University's signature pedagogy. The Lake District serves as both classroom and teacher, with the landscape providing direct experiential engagement with the social, ecological, and cultural dimensions central to outdoor experiential and sustainability education. Teaching moves fluidly between campus spaces, outdoor environments, and reflective practice, ensuring students engage deeply with both theory and lived experience.

Delivery occurs through intensive block-week modules, where each week-long block constitutes one 20-credit module. This immersive approach enables deep engagement with philosophical content, sustained dialogue, and concentrated fieldwork, while accommodating working

professionals. The compressed timeframe fosters community building and allows for residential experiences and extended field trips to diverse locations around the Lake District.

Teaching and Learning Methods

A variety of teaching and learning methods are employed throughout the programme to ensure students acquire and develop appropriate concepts, knowledge, and professional and personal skills. These include:

- **Lectures and seminars:** Introducing key concepts, theoretical orientations, and contemporary debates
- **Walking seminars and mobile classrooms:** Philosophical dialogue while moving through landscape
- **Fieldwork and residentials:** Overnight residential experiences and extended field trips to diverse Lake District locations
- **Experiential and adventurous learning:** Immersive outdoor experiences including adventurous journeys
- **Creative and contemplative practices:** Reflective writing, creative expression, and meditative engagement with place
- **Collaborative inquiry:** Group discussions, peer learning, and co-construction of knowledge
- **Problem-based learning:** Applying theoretical understanding to contemporary educational and environmental challenges
- **Workshop design and facilitation:** Practical engagement with pedagogical practice
- **Individual and group tutorials:** Personalised support for research development and critical inquiry
- **Independent study:** Sustained engagement with literature, place, and personal inquiry

Throughout the MA, students are expected and encouraged to be active, reflexive learners who engage critically with diverse philosophical traditions and apply contemporary thinking to practice. Formative assessment is integral to the programme, with opportunities for peer feedback, tutor dialogue, and iterative development of ideas throughout each module.

Research-Informed Teaching

Teaching draws on contemporary research from outdoor, experiential, environmental, and sustainability education, as well as diverse philosophical traditions including feminist new materialisms, posthumanism, Indigenous knowledge systems, political ecology, and other-than-human ontologies. Staff bring active research engagement to their teaching, ensuring students encounter cutting-edge scholarship and contribute to ongoing conversations in the field.

The interdisciplinary nature of outdoor experiential and sustainability education means the programme draws from diverse sources—speculative fiction to explore environmental futures, contemporary landscape art to exemplify reflexive practice, social justice and environmental activism literature, Indigenous pedagogies, and ecological sciences. This breadth reflects the transdisciplinary, transcultural character of the field and prepares graduates to think creatively across traditional disciplinary boundaries.

Digital Augmentation and Learning Technology

While the programme emphasises embodied, place-based learning, digital technologies augment the learning experience where they add genuine value. Students access learning resources through Blackboard, engage in online discussions, and utilise digital platforms for creative assessment submissions including podcasts, videos, and interactive resources. Dissertation tutorials may be conducted via video conferencing when appropriate, and social media platforms support ongoing dialogue and community building beyond formal teaching sessions.

The programme creates a stimulating, innovative community of learners that extends beyond the block-week intensive periods, fostering ongoing engagement, mutual support, and sustained inquiry throughout the academic year.

Teaching Staff

The programme is delivered by staff with extensive academic and practical expertise across outdoor experiential and sustainability education. Staff hold doctorates in areas including environmental humanities, ethnobiology, and philosophy of education, bringing deep scholarly engagement with the programme's core themes.

Academic expertise spans environmental and sustainability education philosophy, outdoor and experiential learning pedagogies, traditional ecological knowledge systems, human-nature relationships, political ontology, and contemporary animism. Staff research interests encompass new materialisms, posthumanism, Indigenous knowledge, bushcraft as pedagogy, psychogeography, therapeutic landscapes, and immanent ethics in education. This philosophical depth enables critical engagement with diverse ontological perspectives and contemporary educational challenges.

Staff bring substantial practical experience from outdoor, adventure, and environmental education across the UK and internationally, including educational expeditions to remote environments globally. Professional backgrounds include performance art, wilderness survival instruction, bushcraft practice, and work with diverse educational organisations in both private and charitable sectors. This combination of scholarly rigour and hands-on practice ensures the programme maintains strong connections between theory and lived experience.

Teaching staff actively contribute to international environmental education research, publishing in leading journals and contributing to UNESCO reports. They employ creative and post-qualitative research methods, autoethnography, and participatory inquiry approaches that model the innovative methodologies students encounter throughout the programme. Staff are committed to place-based engaged learning, regularly utilizing the Lake District landscape as a "radical mobile classroom" where walking, talking, and embodied inquiry generate meaningful dialogue about social and environmental equity.

Student Feedback and Module Evaluation

Student feedback will be sought via the University of Cumbria's centralised module evaluation systems. This protocol has been implemented across the university's programme since 2024-25 and enables lecturers to aggregate student feedback, including access to extensive quantitative metrics on student engagement, gathered using an automated and consistent system. Closing the feedback loop through reflexive appraisal of student module evaluations, addressed by the Module Leader identifying actions and reporting these back to the student body in a timely manner, ensures

that students are aware that their input is valued and acted upon. This system helps to continuously raise the standard of teaching in modules and assure that they are aligned with student learning.

Assessment

Overview of the methods of assessment used on the programme Summative and Formative Assessment

Our assessment strategy aligns with the University's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy and the Curriculum Design Framework. The overarching consideration is to provide assessments, which develop your skills and knowledge while equipping you for postgraduate employment and will often take 'open' forms, where students can develop forms of submission that they are most interested in creating. Assessment takes place during and at the end of modules. In most modules, there is a blend of formative and summative assessment tasks that students complete which reflect the breadth of skills and competences required by graduates. Students are expected to show critical analysis, evaluation, creativity and autonomy in assessment.

Types/Methods of Assessment include:

- Portfolios
- Reflective logs
- Case Studies
- Open and Creative submissions
- Essays
- Projects
- Presentations/Oral Assessments
- Written reports
- Inquiry proposal
- Dissertation

A range of informal and formal formative assessment tasks are used throughout the programme including:

- Presentations
- Blogs/wiki
- Focus groups
- Learning sets
- Reflective logs

Feedback

A variety of informal and formal feedback mechanisms are included within the learning design to support your progression and professional development. Informal feedback may be delivered on an individual or group basis, through synchronous or recorded asynchronous mechanisms, and may include, for example, knowledge checks, verbal, audio, written comments or summaries, peer-review and worked examples. In line with UoC policy, formal feedback on summative assessments will be provided within 20 working days of submission. It will be based on grading criteria linked to

the module learning outcomes and aligned to the UoC grade descriptors. Taking a consistent approach across the programme, the feedback will demonstrate how the grade was derived in relation to performance against the grading criteria and identify ways for you to improve in future.

Graduate Prospects

Overview of current and future career and academic prospects for successful graduates of this programme

Career and Academic Prospects

Graduates of this MA emerge as adaptive, critically curious, and innovative leaders equipped for diverse professional pathways. Career opportunities include teaching sustainability and outdoor education in schools, colleges, and community settings; environmental communication roles with NGOs, national parks, and government bodies; outdoor leadership positions that integrate adventure with sustainability education; and policy and management roles leading educational charities and environmental trusts to create innovative outdoor and environmental education initiatives and public engagement.

Many students undertake the MA while already employed, seeking to extend expertise, enhance employment prospects, or facilitate career transitions. Graduates have successfully gained employment as educators, outdoor practitioners, environmental consultants, development trainers, mental health practitioners, and armed services personnel. Others use this academic experience to transform existing roles by enriching their philosophical and ontological underpinnings or reconceptualising established practices—for example, shifting from traditional curriculum approaches towards outdoor experiential and sustainability pedagogies informed by diverse ecological and cultural perspectives, or moving from conventional educational models towards approaches that integrate place-based learning, social justice, and more-than-human considerations.

Employers seek autonomous professionals capable of working safely and sustainably while forming supportive relationships to effect change. Key employability attributes emphasised include: the ability to build rapport; demonstrable commitment to the outdoors through self-initiated experience; critical thinking and creativity applied to context; societal and global rather than individualistic perspectives; understanding of contemporary challenges including climate change, biodiversity loss, mental health, and social equity; and adaptive, contextually responsive approaches to safety and practice.

The programme embodies these needs through its philosophical depth, critical engagement with diverse ontological perspectives, experiential and place-based pedagogy, reflexive practice, and sustained inquiry into pressing social and environmental challenges. Graduates are equipped to question dominant narratives, navigate complexity, and inspire worldview transformation—significantly enhancing employment prospects across educational, environmental, and outdoor sectors. Graduates are also well-positioned to pursue doctoral research and academic careers in outdoor experiential and sustainability education.

Conclusion: A Future-Focused, Impact-Driven Degree

The MA in Outdoor Experiential and Sustainability Education embodies the UoC Learning and Teaching Model, equipping graduates to respond to shifting landscapes with adaptability, forge meaningful professional networks, and innovate in the fields of outdoor and sustainability education. Through place-based, engaged learning in the Lake District, students will develop the critical skills and interdisciplinary expertise needed to lead and inspire in a rapidly evolving world. By combining experiential learning, cutting-edge research, and networked collaboration, this programme positions graduates as leaders capable of driving meaningful change in education, environmental sustainability, and outdoor learning across diverse local, national, and global contexts.

MODULES

Year 1			
Code	Title	Credits	Status
OESE7001	Place-based and Experiential Education	20	Compulsory
OESE7002	The Reflexive Practitioner	20	Compulsory
OESE7003	Independent Inquiry	20	Compulsory
Students exiting at this point with 60 credits would receive a Postgraduate Certificate in Outdoor Experiential and Sustainability Education			
OESE7004	Ecologies: Conceptual Understanding for Worldly Change	20	Compulsory
OESE7005	Environmental and Sustainability Education	20	Compulsory
OESE7006	Learning through Adventurous Journeys	20	Optional
OESE7007	Bushcraft, Making & Outdoor Health & Wellbeing	20	Optional
Students exiting at this point with 120 credits would receive a Postgraduate Diploma in Outdoor Experiential and Sustainability Education			
OESE7008	Dissertation	60	Core

Key to Module Statuses

Compulsory modules	Must be taken although it may possible to compensate as a marginal fail (within the limits set out in the Academic Regulations and provided that all core or pass/fail elements of module assessment have been passed).
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Timetables

Timetables are normally available in the first week of September. Please note that while we make every effort to ensure timetables are as student-friendly as possible, scheduled learning can take place on any day of the week.

Our Timetabling team work hard to ensure that timetables are available to students as far in advance as possible, however there may be occasional exceptions such as in the case of teaching which falls outside of the usual academic calendar. The UoC academic calendar runs from July to July, so timetabling information for programmes which include teaching sessions in August may not be published until closer to the August delivery.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Student Support

The [Student Enquiry Point](#) is a simple way to contact Student Services. Using the Student Enquiry Point tile on the Student Hub you can submit an enquiry to any of the Student Services teams, which includes:

- [Careers and Employability](#)
- [Chaplaincy](#) for faith and spiritual wellbeing
- [Mental Health and Wellbeing](#)
- [Digital Skills](#)
- [Disability and Specific Learning Difficulty \(SpLD\)](#)
- [International Student Support](#)
- [Library](#)
- [Money Advice Service](#)
- [Safeguarding](#)
- [Skills@Cumbria](#)
- [Sports and Fitness Facilities](#)
- [University Student Accommodation](#)

As a student at the University of Cumbria you automatically become a member of the Students' Union. The Students' Union represents the views and interests of students within the University.

The Students' Union is led by a group of Student Representatives who are elected by students in annual elections. They also support approximately 400 Student Academic Reps within each cohort across the entire University. The Students' Union represent the views of their cohort and work with academic staff to continuously develop and improve the experience for all University of Cumbria students. You can find out more about who represents you at www.ucsu.me.

You can email at any time on studentvoice@cumbria.ac.uk.

Course Costs

Tuition Fees

Course fees can be found here: <https://www.cumbria.ac.uk/study/student-finance/postgraduate/>

The following course-related costs are included in the fees:

- Access to desktop computers on campus and laptops available in the IT Suite for you to sign out and use free of charge.
- You can install key software and apps free of charge for use on your own devices for the duration of the programme.
- The costs of most UK based field trips and visits are included in the fees.

Additional Costs

The following course-related costs are not included in the fees:

Stationery and IT

Stationery for your own personal use (pens, papers and folders, etc.). Whilst you choose how much you need, expect to pay around £10-£20 per year for these.

Field notebook (£0.50-£10).

Clothing and Equipment

Essential:

- Waterproof jacket and trousers (£50 - 200+).
- Walking boots (£50 - 150+).
- Warm hat and gloves (£30).
- Rucksack (ideally with waterproof cover) or dry bag for day use (£30 - 50).
- Other outdoor clothing e.g. thermals, fleeces, socks, etc. (prices vary).
- Recommended:
- Thermos, water bottle and lunchbox for field trips (prices vary).

Residentials

- Several modules have a residential aspect to the teaching week. Where these occur, they will typically involve overnight camping and/or accommodation. Students will typically contribute for their food costs, and may contribute a small fee towards accommodation.

Books

The University library holds copies of all core texts (including many eBooks, accessible online). But you may wish to purchase your own copies of textbooks or field guides for use on field trips and in your own time. The cost of these varies greatly depending on edition and condition.

Upskill

The upskill programme is free to attend and you will have access to any equipment and clothing necessary to participate in the activities. However, there may be (reduced) costs if you choose to complete any outdoor qualifications as part of the upskill programme, such as the Mountain Leader qualification, or any rock climbing or kayaking qualifications, for example.

Exceptions to the Academic Regulations

This programme operates in accordance with the University's Academic Regulations and Academic Procedures and Processes.

External and Internal Benchmarks

QAA and Sector Reference Points

The Qualifications Framework's level descriptor for the master's degree includes generic information that all holders of the master's qualification can do. Master's degrees are awarded to students who have demonstrated:

- a systematic understanding of knowledge, and a critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, much of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of their academic discipline, field of study or area of professional practice
- a comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to their own research or advanced scholarship
- originality in the application of knowledge, together with a practical understanding of how established techniques of research and enquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in the discipline
- conceptual understanding that enables the student to evaluate critically current research and advanced scholarship in the discipline, and to evaluate methodologies and develop critiques of them and, where appropriate, to propose new hypotheses

Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:

- deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, make sound judgements in the absence of complete data, and communicate their conclusions clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences
- demonstrate self-direction and originality in tackling and solving problems and act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks at a professional or equivalent level
- continue to advance their knowledge and understanding, and to develop new skills to a high level

And holders will have:

- the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility, decision-making in complex and unpredictable situations, and the independent learning ability required for continuing professional development

Programme Alignment with Sector Standards

This MA qualifies as a 'specialised/advanced study' master's degree under QAA's Characteristics Statement for Master's Degrees. Such programmes are usually predominantly composed of structured learning opportunities ('taught'), with at least a third of the course devoted to a research project leading to a dissertation. The programme includes research methods training provided through dedicated modules and integrated throughout the curriculum.

The MA also aligns with characteristics of a 'professional' master's degree, where learning is structured and may include practical elements such as fieldwork, placements, and work-based learning, alongside a project undertaken through independent study.

Subject Benchmark Statements

While there is no specific Subject Benchmark Statement for Outdoor Experiential and Sustainability Education, this MA programme draws upon and aligns with several relevant QAA Subject Benchmark Statements, particularly:

Education Studies (2025): This MA programme shares the Education Studies commitment to understanding how people develop and learn throughout their lives, the nature of knowledge, and critical engagement with ways of knowing. Like Education Studies, this programme offers intellectually rigorous analysis of educational processes, systems and approaches, and their

cultural, societal, technological, political, philosophical, environmental, historical and economic contexts. The programme embraces Education Studies' vision that education can be a force for good, leading to improved outcomes for individuals, societies and environments, exploring possibilities for change and empowering students to be agents of change.

The programme embeds the cross-cutting themes emphasised in Education Studies benchmarks, including:

- Equity, diversity and inclusion as fundamental tenets
- Accessibility and the needs of diverse students
- Education for sustainable development as central to the curriculum
- Employability, entrepreneurship and enterprise education
- Critical engagement with artificial intelligence and digital technologies

Earth Sciences, Environmental Sciences and Environmental Studies (ES3) (2022): The programme aligns with ES3's focus on understanding physical, chemical and biological Earth systems, appreciation of societal contribution and context, emphasis on practical investigation, multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches, the ability to work across spatial and temporal scales, development of skills in observation and analysis to support decision-making under uncertainty, recognition of complex relationships through systems thinking, development of professional skills enhancing employability, and understanding of contributions toward a sustainable future.

The ES3 Statement emphasises that communities have a duty to confront and dismantle barriers to engagement, valuing different cultural perspectives, ways of knowing, and lived experience. ES3 subjects are positioned as routes to justice through delivery of UN Sustainable Development Goals, with diverse perspectives essential to confronting global challenges—principles fully embraced by this MA programme.

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

This programme directly supports the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly:

SDG 4 (Quality Education): The programme embodies the commitment to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all." Specifically, the programme addresses SDG Target 4.7: "By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development."

The programme also contributes to other SDGs including:

- SDG 13 (Climate Action) through critical engagement with climate change education and environmental sustainability
- SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) through focus on social justice and equity in outdoor and experiential education
- SDG 15 (Life on Land) through ecological literacy and engagement with place-based education and environmental protection

- SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) through emphasis on social justice, critical pedagogy, and inclusive practice

UK Policy Alignment

The programme aligns with national policy priorities including:

- DEFRA's 25-Year Environment Plan and Environmental Improvement Plan 2023, which emphasise engaging people with nature for health, wellbeing, and ecological stewardship
- DEFRA's Children and Nature Programme, reinforcing the necessity of inclusive, nature-based education
- Learning for Sustainability policy in Scotland
- UK Government's 2023 Sustainability and Climate Change: A Strategy for the Education and Children's Services Systems

Master's Level Expectations

At master's level, students are expected to build upon competencies typically achieved at undergraduate level, focusing in greater depth on specific aspects of outdoor experiential and sustainability education. Students achieve knowledge and skills that enhance their employability, demonstrating systematic understanding of the field informed by research at the forefront of the discipline, critical awareness of current problems and new insights, and originality in applying knowledge to complex real-world educational and environmental challenges.

Disclaimer

This programme has been approved (validated) by the University of Cumbria as suitable for a range of delivery modes, delivery patterns, and delivery sites. This level of potential flexibility does not reflect a commitment on behalf of the University to offer the programme by all modes/patterns and at all locations in every academic cycle. The details of the programme offered for a particular intake year will be as detailed on the programme webpage: [MA Outdoor Experiential and Sustainability Education - University of Cumbria](#)

Date of Programme Specification Production	December 2025
Date Programme Specification was last updated	March 2026