WELCOME TO ECOLOGICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

WELCOME

Welcome! We're excited to be welcoming you to our academic community in Ecology and Environmental Sciences at the University of Edinburgh. The next 4 years should be an exciting, rewarding and challenging time as you take opportunities to explore new ideas, feed your intellectual curiosity and pursue your academic interests. We're looking forward to supporting you along during your journey at University.

We'd also like to congratulate you. First, congratulations on the excellent performances in examinations that have enabled you to take up your place at Edinburgh. Second, well done for choosing Ecology and Environmental Sciences! We're biased but we think Ecology and Environmental Sciences is a fantastic academic discipline that is crucial for understanding and changing our world. During your time in Edinburgh you'll encounter ways of understanding the world that span the physical sciences, social sciences and humanities. You'll be challenged to question assumptions. You'll go on field trips where learning goes beyond the lecture theatre or library and you'll develop skills in doing research. You'll have the opportunities to build your degree around your academic interests and take courses with academics doing world-class research.

While we hope that you are all excited to be here and looking forward to your time in Edinburgh, we also understand that starting university is an unsettling time for many students. Beyond the challenges of getting to grips with new subjects and new styles of teaching and learning, it's a time of considerable change. You are meeting new people and making new friends. For many of you it'll be your first time living away from home, and all that can entail. It's also a time where you can pursue new interests and forge new identities. We want to reassure you that it's completely normal to feel a little anxious - even bewildered – at times. But we also want to encourage you to seek support if you feel you are struggling in any way.

The information in this book is designed to help you get by during the first weeks and months in Ecology and Environmental Sciences. It introduces some key faces and places, provides information about your degree programme and course choices and signposts the many sources of support and advice that are available in the University. More detailed information is available in the Ecology and Environmental Sciences Degree Programme Handbook.

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FACES

Degree Programme Convenor		The Degree Programme Convenor (DPC) coordinates the academic staff, leads our Ecology and Environmental Sciences Degree Programme meetings and represents Ecology and Environmental Sciences at the School of GeoSciences Teaching Committee meetings. Professor John Moncrieff is currently our DPC and he will contact you about important matters concerning your degree. Please do take note of what he says either in person at lectures or through email. J.Moncrieff@ed.ac.uk
Senior Personal Tutor		Dr Caroline Nichol is the Senior Personal Tutor for GeoSciences. Her role is to coordinate GeoSciences Personal Tutors, to liaise with our Student Support Coordinators to help students experiencing difficulties which are affecting their studies, deal with progression and to organise Group Personal Tutor meetings Caroline.Nichol@ed.ac.uk
Personal Tutor		Your Personal Tutor (PT) will be your main academic contact throughout their degree. Your PT will advise you on course choices, help you to develop and improve your academic skills, advise you on effective use of feedback. They'll also be the person who provides academic references when you are applying for jobs, internships or further study
Student Support Coordinator		Emma Latto provides pastoral support for all our Ecology and Environmental Science students. Emma works closely with the Senior PT and PTs, as well as wider University support services. She can also help with a wide range of administrative and practical issues. See the Support page for more details. Emma.Latto@ed.ac.uk

Teaching Office		Eilein Fraser is the degree programme secretary and course secretary for Ecological and Environmental Sciences. Eilein is based in the Teaching Office (TO) and she provides all of us with essential administrative support. You will get to know Eilein well. The TO is a friendly place – pop in, say 'Hi' and do ask questions if you are struggling to find any information about our courses. It's also important that you take notice of, and respond to, any emails or Learn announcements that she sends to you! Eilein.Fraser@ed.ac.uk

Student Reps; EcoSoc and Community BEES

All years have student representatives. Student reps collect feedback from students on each course and feed this back to academic staff through our Staff Student Liaison Committee. We strongly encourage to students to volunteer as Student Reps, know who their rep is and provide them with constructive feedback on courses. We also encourage students to join and play an active role in EcoSoc. EcoSoc is the hub of student activities and relies on students from all years to be involved. **Community BEES** links our current fourth year students with our new first years (and actually also our 2nd and 3rd year students too) to pass on their 'hints and tips' on how to survive your degree; it is a great way of getting to know the ecological and environmental science community that you now belong to – and they arrange lots of social activities!

Careers

We know you've just got here – but it's never too early to think about what you're going to do next! Dr Saran Sohi is our Careers Advisor and he will be sending you invitations to attend various talks and workshops that will help you develop your CV and give you insight into what our graduates go on to do. To get you started, have a look at the University's own career service – it has links to internships, part-time work, summer placements and lots of good advice.

Welcome, again!

Head of School

Professor Simon Kelley
Chair in Isotope GeoChemistry

Director of Teaching

Dr Linda Kirstein
Reader in Earth Dynamics

Welcome to Edinburgh University and to the School of Geosciences, we are delighted you have chosen to be part of our academic community! We are the largest grouping of geoscientists and geographers in the UK, ranking top of the national Research Excellence Framework 2014 power index. We're also the most diverse School in the University.

Our teaching mission '*Inspiring, educating, and exciting future generations of students about the powerful forces shaping the world in which we live'* lies at the core of our educational activities and highlights how we value students engaging with our staff throughout their Edinburgh experience.

Your opinions matter to us and help shape the curriculum, we work hard to improve your experience and feel rewarded by the teaching nominations and awards we receive annually.

PLACES

School of GeoSciences, Kings Buildings

The Crew Building and Grant Institute at Kings Buildings will be your academic home. Most of the Ecology lecturers and your personal tutors are based in the Crew Building. The GeoSciences Teaching Office staff are based in the Grant Institute. Most of your lectures in 1st and 2nd Year take place in other buildings around the university campuses.

The TO Office in the Grant Institute is open Monday to Friday (9.00-5.00). Feel free to pop in and ask a question. The Submission and Collection Area is also in the TO office and is where you will be directed to submit paper assignments and collect marked work.

The Crew Building contains a lecture theatre (302); computing labs are found throughout the KB and George Sq campuses and are generally open to all students when not being used for teaching.

Finally, there are several Coffee Shops dotted around KB where you can relax, meet fellow students and staff and buy drinks, cakes, biscuits and lunch.

Lecture Theatres and Other Teaching and Learning Spaces

Your compulsory **Origin and Diversity of Life** and **Biology, Ecology and Environment** lectures will take place in the main lecture theatre in the Swann Building at KB and practicals and tutorials will mainly be held in the Ashworth or Daniel Rutherford Buildings close by (check for details).

Other courses you take will be taught in the Central Area (close to George Square, about 2 miles north of KB); generally your science-based subjects (especially practicals) will be taught at King's Buildings. There is a free shuttle bus between sites (just show your university card when get on), or you could cycle or walk.

The Main Library can be found in George Square, although there are other libraries, such as the Noreen and Kenneth Murray Library at King's Buildings. The Main Library is more than just the place that contains books. It is home to a range of different study spaces, computing facilities and support services, including the Student Disability Service, Student Counselling Service and Information Services (computing support, lost campus cards).

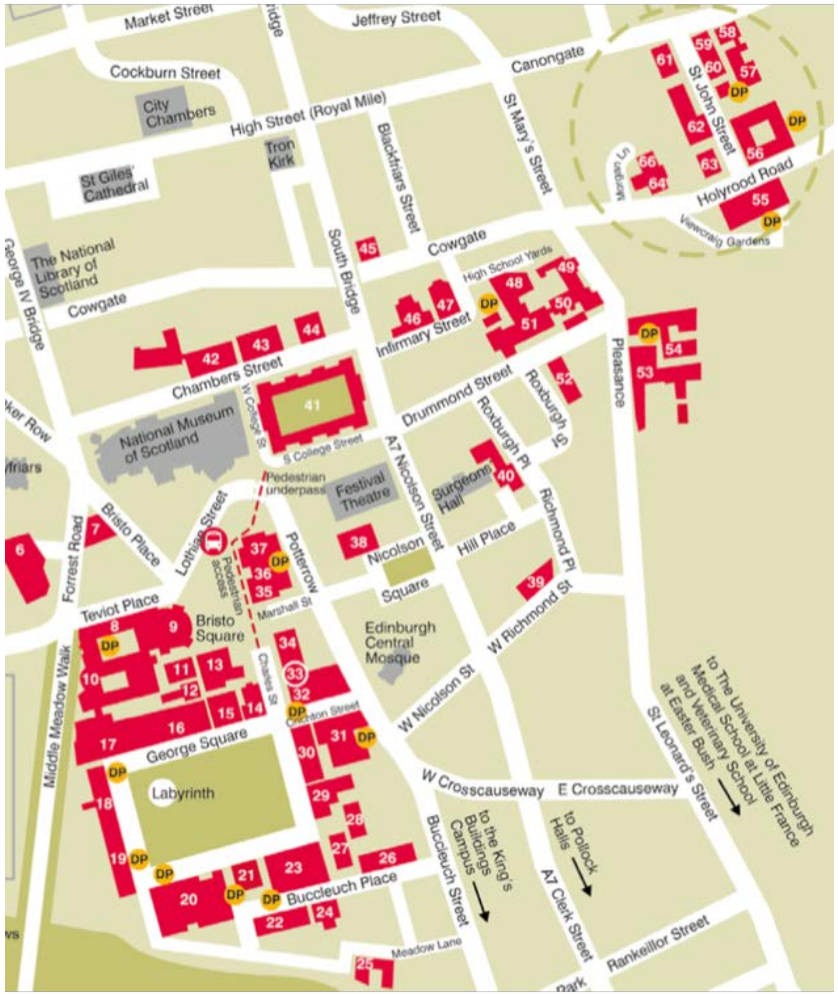
DIGITAL PLACES

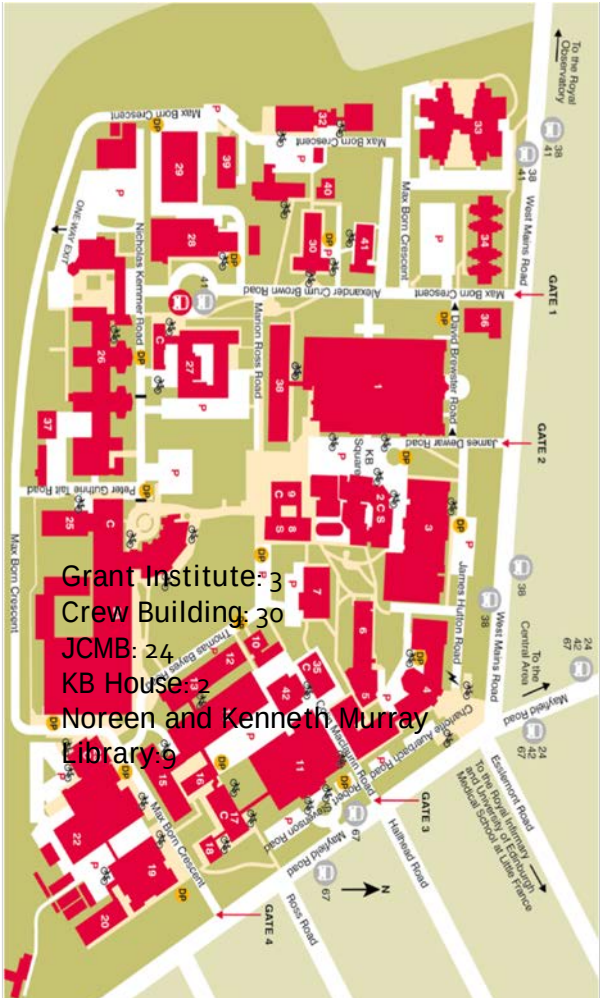
MyEd is the gateway to web-based services that provides personalised content and access to all kinds of information, resources and services.

One of these is Learn, the University's Virtual Learning Environment, where you can interact with your courses. Via Learn you can access handbooks; receive course-specific announcements; sign up for tutorials and practicals; download lecture, tutorial and practical materials; upload assignments; view feedback; and take part in discussions and quizzes.

You also access your University email account (Office365) via MyEd. You **must** check your University email account regularly. Please respond promptly to emails where necessary and always send emails to staff from your University email account and NOT your personal one.

CAMPUS MAPS





Central Area Map (left)
Geography (Drummond St): 51
Library (George Square): 20
David Hume Lecture Theatres: 28
50 George Square: 29
IAD (Holyrood Road): 66

King's Buildings (above)

Grant Institute: 3
Crew Building: 30
JCMB: 24
KB House: 2
Noreen and Kenneth Murray Library: 9

IMPORTANT DATES

The University teaching year is divided into 2 semesters. Each semester includes 11 or 12 weeks of teaching, and is followed by a period for revision and examinations. Students are expected to be present at University for all of each semester, including the exam diets. Please also note that you may also need to take part in compulsory fieldtrips at weekends and during vacation times. These are not optional and are a requirement of your degree. You will be given information about these fieldtrips in plenty of time and take priority over other commitments. This is particularly important for your 3rd year fieldtrips, which normally run prior to Welcome Week.

Part of becoming an independent learner is taking responsibility for managing your time. We expect students to schedule and meet their University commitments, and avoid clashes with other activities.

Welcome Week	11 – 17 September 2017
Semester 1 Teaching:	18 September – 1st December
Semester 1: Revision	4- 7 December
Semester 1: Exams	8 – 21 December
Christmas and New Year Vacation	22 December – 12 January 2018
Semester 2: Teaching	15 January – 16 February
Semester 2: Flexible Learning Week	19 – 23 February
Semester 2: Teaching	26 February – 6 April
Spring Vacation	9 – 20 April
Semester 2: Revision	23 – 27 April
Semester 2: Exams:	30 April – 25 May
Resit Examinations	6 – 18th August

YOUR DEGREE

Degree Structure

It important that you know which degree you are doing! The courses you can take depend on whether you are doing a BSc in Ecological and Environmental Sciences or the same but *,with Management'* option. Your Personal Tutor will help you determine which courses are compulsory for either degree.

Course Credits

You must take 120 credits of courses each year. Most courses are 20 credits, but shorter courses can be 10 credits and year-long courses can be 40 credits. By the end of your degree you should have completed 480 credits (360 credits for direct entry to 2nd year). Each credit equates to 10 hours of work by you, so for a 20 credit course we assume that you are working for 200 hours (includes lectures, tutorials, practicals, reading, writing essays and revision).

Pre-Honours and Honours

Your degree is split into Pre-Honours (Years 1 and 2) and Honours (Years 3 and 4). Only courses in Honours contribute to your final degree classification. However, Pre-Honours needs to be taken seriously. During Years 1 and 2 you will acquire knowledge and develops skills that are the foundation of your degree. You will also learn how to be a university student. It's important to develop good habits managing your time and engaging with your studies, to cultivate skills in learning independently and thinking critically, and to hone your skills in communicating your understanding by using feedback. Students who work hard and perform well in Pre-Honours tend to do better in Honours and leave with the very best degrees.

At the end of Year 2 you will need to have passed 240 credits worth of courses, including all compulsory courses for your degree programme. As you move into Honours years you have opportunities to focus your studies through a range of field courses, option courses, and your own research.

There is a summary of the structure of our Honours degrees on page 10. More detailed information on the structure and requirements of your degree is available in the Degree Programme Tables (DPTs) that can be found here: http://www.drps.ed.ac.uk/17-18/dpt/utbscecole1f.htm and http://www.drps.ed.ac.uk/17-18/dpt/utbscecolm1f.htm. Details of all Ecological and Environmental Sciences courses are available here: http://www.ed.ac.uk/geosciences/undergraduate/ecological-environmental-sciences

Year abroad

You can opt to take part in an international exchange and study at another university in your 3rd year, before returning to complete your degree in Year 4. You would normally apply for this in Year 2. Details about this can be found here: http://www.ed.ac.uk/global/exchanges/exchanges-at-edinburgh/exchange-programmes. These are competitive and rely on consistently good grades in Years 1 and 2.

Transferring or Changing Degree

It is possible to apply transfer to a different degree programme. You should discuss this with your Personal Tutor and/or Student Support Coordinators, as well as the School you want to transfer to and follow their application process. Transfers are not automatic and more details are available here: http://www.ed.ac.uk/geosciences/teaching-organisation/ug-students/dpt.

	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4
Ecological and Environmental Sciences	Origin and Diversity of Life (20 credits) AND Biology, Ecology and Environment (20 credits) 80 credits of other courses	Principles of Ecology (20 credits) AND Soil, Water and Atmospheric Processes (20 credits) AND Field Ecology (20 credits) AND Ecological and Environmental Analysis (20 credits) 40 credits of other courses	Population and Community Ecology (20 credits) AND Ecological Measurement (20 credits) AND AT LEAST ONE OF Environmental Pollution AND/OR Resource management Other optional courses to make up total of 120 credits	Dissertation in Ecological and Environmental Sciences (40 credits) AND Professional Skills in Ecological and Environmental Analysis (10 credits) AND Ecological Field Course (20 credits) AND Critical Thinking (10 credits) Other optional courses to make up total of 120 credits
Ecological and Environmental Sciences with Management	Origin and Diversity of Life (20 credits) AND Biology, Ecology and Environment (20 credits) AND Industrial Management (20 credits) AND Techniques of Management (20 credits) 40 credits of other courses	Principles of Ecology (20 credits) AND Soil, Water and Atmospheric Processes (20 credits) AND Field Ecology (20 credits) AND Ecological and Environmental Analysis (20 credits) PLUS 40 Credits from two courses at LEAST ONE OF WHICH MUST be from Business Studies or Economics to make up total of 120 credits	Population and Community Ecology (20 credits) AND Ecological Measurement (20 credits) AND between 20 and 40 credits from courses such as Natural Resource Management (20 credits) or from Business Studies Level 9/10 or Economics Level 9/10. Other optional courses to make up total of 120 credits	Dissertation in Ecological and Environmental Sciences with Management (40 credits) AND Professional Skills in Ecological and Environmental Analysis (10 credits) AND Ecological Field Course (20 credits) AND Critical Thinking (10 credits) Other optional courses to make up total of 120 credits from Ecology, Business or Economics.

CHOOSING COURSES

One of the most exciting things about a Scottish undergraduate degree is the fact that you have the opportunity to take a significant number of courses outside your degree programme in Years 1 and 2. From Anthropology to Architectural History, Philosophy to Physics, Geophysics to German, there's a huge selection of courses to choose from. You can take outside courses that are closely related to your degree, that focus on something you think you might be interested in doing in the future, or you can try something completely different and new that captures your curiosity. Most courses you take in Pre-Honours will be Level 8 courses, but you are allowed to take up to 40 credits of Level 7 language courses by the end of Year 2 (although language courses are popular and fill up quickly). When thinking about outside courses you should also take care to check that you meet any prerequisites for courses, for example many Economics, Physics, Maths or Engineering course require that you have studied Maths to an advanced level at school.

While the opportunity to build your degree around your interests and passions is exciting, making the decision which course to take can also be daunting. You will discuss your choice of outside courses with your personal tutor in Welcome Week. In preparation for this meeting here are some places where you can find out more about courses:

ONLINE:

DPRS: http://www.drps.ed.ac.uk/17-18/dpt/cx_subindex.htm

PATH: https://path.is.ed.ac.uk/

IN WELCOME WEEK:

Academic Fair: http://www.ed.ac.uk/students/new-students/events/academic/undergraduates/academic-fair/academic-fair

The best way to find out about outside courses is to go along to the Academic Fair on Tuesday of Welcome Week. At the Academic Fair you can talk to staff and students to find out what courses are really like!

Meeting with your Personal Tutor:

During Welcome Week you will meet with your Personal Tutor and he/she will help you choose your courses. Your Personal Tutor will have years of experience and will guide you through the process; you also need to be fully prepared for this meeting however so make sure you read this guide thoroughly and also consult the DRPS and Path apps (see the web links above).

To get you started we have produced a guide to common outside courses and these are organised around particular interests:

GUIDE TO COMMON OUTSIDE COURSES

Interests	Suggested subject areas for first year students' course choices*
The Natural Environment (provide excellent background knowledge for physical geographers)	Within the School of GeoSciences, Geology courses include Earth Dynamics, Evolution of the Living Earth and Introduction to Geophysics. There are also two courses on Meteorology. In the School of Biology, your compulsory 1st year courses are: Origin and Diversity of Life 1; Biology, Ecology & the Environment.
Mathematics, Physics and Engineering (numerical skills are hugely beneficial to ecologists and environmental scientists)	Within the School of GeoSciences, Earth Modelling and Prediction aims to improve your mathematical skills, as does Quantification in the Life Sciences taught in the School of Biology. Courses are available in the School of Mathematics, and you could take Physics 1a or 1b, as well as Civil Engineering.
Chemistry	If you have the entrance requirements you could take Chemistry 1A; if not, you could think about Introductory Chemistry for Biologists.
People, Cultures, Society and Development (particularly valuable to the social science side of ecological sciences).	SSPS courses are popular with GeoSciences students with a number of courses covering the subject areas of Social Anthropology, Ethnography, Society and International Development and Politics.
Sustainability (at the interface of Human and Physical Geography and relevant to ecology)	Sustainability courses can be found in both GeoSciences (Sustainability, Society and Environment and Sustainability and Social Responsibility) and in SPSS (Sustainable Development 1A).
History, Archaeology, Art and Architecture (provide useful background context to many issues facing the world)	History is considered across multiple schools and the SHCA where a wide range of British, Scottish, Classical and European course area available. Also, the School of Divinity includes courses on religious history, ECA on the history of Art and Architecture, SPSS on Social History and Empires, SLLC on Scandinavian, Celtic, Islamic and Middle Eastern History.
Economics and Business (relevant to the 'with Management' option in particular)	There are two full year (40 credit) and two single semester (20 credit) Economics courses you can take and the Business School has Introduction to Business.
Languages (Provides an opportunity to develop language skills, possible year abroad opportunities and dissertation topics.)	A wide range of languages are available, but are popular and you should register on these as soon as possible. The SLLC includes Gaelic, French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, German, Danish, Swedish, Norwegian, Arabic, Chinese and Japanese.

SLLC (School of Literature, Languages and Culture)
SSPS (School of Social and Political Science)
SHCA (School of History, Classics and Archaeology)
ECA (Edinburgh School of Art)

*Not all courses are listed here, you must consult DRPS and/or PATH to find out which courses are available and if there are any prerequisites.

LEARNING AND TEACHING EXPECTATIONS

Most you will have moved straight from school or sixth-form college. From discussions with past students we know that you expect your learning environment to be different from school and we hope that this induction programme helps you to make that transition.

In order to make the most of your time at university you need to engage and participate in new ways of learning. A lot more emphasis is placed on independent work and you will have less direct contact with academic staff than you had with teachers at school. You will need to be well motivated and organised to keep up with work and you will have to push yourself to show your true potential.

Types of Teaching and Learning

Lectures: One of the main ways we teach is through lectures and these are main form of contact you have with academic staff. Most lectures last 50 minutes and take place in large lecture halls. In Years 1 and 2 it is not unusual for lectures to have more than 200 students. Different lecturers can have very different style. Lectures are only ever an introduction to ideas, theories, and examples. To make the most of lectures you need to prepare. You should read lecture summaries and complete any recommended reading before the lecture. During the lecture you need to tune in and focus. Avoid distractions and develop a method of making notes that works for you. Attending lectures shouldn't be a passive learning experience – knowledge won't sink in just by you being there! After the lecture you should review your notes and do additional reading to deepen your understanding. Writing up of notes after lectures, and combining or layering notes with information from your wider reading should become part of your routine.

We'll talk more about making notes in lectures in a PT group meeting in week 2. You should also check out these resources from the LAD:

Tutorials: Many courses you will take will include tutorials. Tutorials are a form of small group teaching that are facilitated by a tutor (often a postgraduate student or member of staff). Tutorials are an important opportunity for you to discuss specific topics in more depth; to develop skills in critical thinking, communicating your understanding, and working as part of a team; to receive feedback; and to ask questions if there's anything that you are struggling with. In tutorials students should be doing most of the talking, so it is your responsibility to prepare and arrive ready to contribute to discussions.

Practicals: Practicals allow you to apply knowledge acquired in lectures and tutorials and develop a range of practical skills. It's important to recognise that the skills you acquire in practicals are transferable beyond the immediate course. They can be applied in other courses, in dissertations and even beyond your degree. It is important not to compartmentalise your learning.

Fieldtrips: Fieldtrips are a major component of your Ecology and Environmental Sciences degree. Fieldtrips should be fun and amongst your most memorable moments of your time in Edinburgh. They are excellent ways of learning, enabling you to apply the knowledge and skills you have developed in lecture theatres and classrooms to real world contexts. Fieldtrips also offer good opportunities for getting to know staff and other students better. You have the opportunity to go on fieldtrips within the UK and abroad. Some of these occur at weekends or before, or after, semesters. Please make sure you are aware of when the fieldtrips are, so as to avoid clashes.

TEN BIG IDEAS FOR MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR ECOLOGY DEGREE

READ THE COURSE DOCUMENTATION All the course information you need will be in handbooks and on Learn. Read this course documentation! It'll provide details of teaching times and locations; deadlines; recommending reading; essay writing guidelines; and submission instructions. If you still have a query, ask.	CRITICAL THINKING Being critical is a mindset. It's about questioning the information that is presented to you. Think carefully about what you read and what people say to you. Where have their ideas come from? What biases do they have? What evidence is there? Is this evidence up-to-date? What is being taken-for-granted?
TIME MANAGEMENT You need to take responsibility for managing your time at university, and balancing studying with other commitments. Take this responsibility seriously. Work consistently, avoid cramming and timetable time for relaxing and doing things beyond your studies. A day without lectures is not time off!	ENGAGEMENT Turn up to your lectures, tutorials and practicals and participate. Be prepared and ask questions. Make notes. Engage with email, Learn, wider reading, GeoPals and Community BEES. Go to talks and seminars. Join societies.
READ, AND READ WIDELY Reading is the most important thing that you'll do at university. Prepare for lectures and tutorials by doing the recommended reading. But don't limit yourself to required reading. Read widely. Course handbooks and lecture slides will have lots of suggestions for further reading. We don't expect you to read everything, you should be adding to your lecture notes with information gleaned from independent reading. You should be spending lots of time in the library (or wherever you enjoy reading)!	ACADEMIC COMMUNITY Be an active member of your academic community. Go to GeoPals sessions and join EcoSoc; become a Year Rep; respond to course evaluations. Approach staff and ask questions, collaborate with your fellow students and staff. Engaging in these ways allows you to shape your degree and improve your academic community for everyone.
LEARNING IS NOT EASY You will not understand everything all the time. Don't despair, this is normal. Learning requires effort but reading, talking to your peers and asking questions will help.	MONITOR YOUR LEARNING Be reflective and think about your strengths and weakness; use feedback, act on feedback and experiment with ways of studying. Get help and ask questions.
BE INDEPENDENT Becoming a university student involves having much more autonomy over your education. You have the freedom to mould your studies around your interests and to study in ways that best suit you. But this autonomy also comes with responsibilities. You need to learn ways of working independently.	DON'T JUST STUDY Being at university isn't only about studying. You'll make lifelong friends, deepen and develop interests beyond academic work. So make the most of being in Edinburgh and Scotland. Join clubs and societies; volunteer; get out and explore; take up some of the many opportunities available to you.

FEEDBACK AND ASSESSMENT

You have come to university to learn and this should be your priority. However, we also need to assess your academic work, so that you and your lecturers can establish how much progress you are making, and so that we can award you an appropriate class of degree at the end of your 4th Year. Assessment can take many forms, including essays, exams, presentations, blogs, field notebooks, field and practical reports, dissertations, tutorials and reading summaries.

FEEDBACK

Feedback helps you assess where you are right now and to see how to move forwards. Feedback takes many different forms and can be from your peers, as well as lecturers and tutors. Feedback includes instructions on assessments, conversations in office hours or in classes, emails, as well as the marks and comments you get on your assessments. It is important that you engage and respond to feedback. This is how you monitor your learning and is the most effective way of improving.

ASSESSMENT

We use many different methods of assessment, including essays, exams, presentations, group work, posters, practical exercises, blogs, quizzes and podcasts. Whatever the method of assessment you will experience two different types of assessment in all courses:

- Formative: these assessments do not count towards your final mark for a course, but are a key part of the learning process. Formative assessments are designed to give you the opportunity to receive feedback, and use this feedback when completing summative assessments.
- Summative – these assessments contribute to your final mark. Your final course mark could be composed of a single piece of assessment (e.g. dissertation) or multiple components (e.g. an essay and exam, or multiple essays). Feedback on summative assessments is still helpful in improving your performance in other courses and future years.

HOW DO WE ASSESS YOUR WORK?

The assessments used in courses are designed to assess whether you have met the course learning outcomes. While the methods of assessment might vary you should have a clear understanding of what is expected of you in each assessment and how you are being assessed. **The Ecological and Environmental Sciences grade-related marking criteria** clearly explain the criteria by which your work is assessed. We strongly recommend that you look at these criteria and think about them when working on your assessments.

Work can be marked by tutors and by lecturers, but all work that forms part of your final course mark is moderated. **Moderation** is an important process for maintaining quality and standards, and ensures that marking is fair and consistent. Through moderation a selection of assessments from each marker is read to check that feedback is of the required quality; that marks are not too harsh or lenient; and to ensure that the grade-related marking criteria have been followed. Adjustment to marks may occur to correct for any inconsistencies. Moderation occurs before marks are released to students.

All degree programmes have an exam board system which checks that appropriate procedures have been followed and external examiners who ensure that we are not only consistent internally, but also that we are comparable with other universities in the UK.

MARKS

You will all be used to performing very well in assessments at school, but it is important to understand that the marking scales are somewhat different at University.

PERCENTAGE	GRADE	DESCRIPTION
70-100%	First	Excellent: to get a high First (90%+) assessments would be of a publishable standard; a mid-first (80%+) would demonstrate an authoritative understanding of complex ideas; a low First (by far the most common) would demonstrate an excellent understanding of ideas and well-written focused assessments. You should all be aiming for a First.
60-69%	2:1	Very Good: the majority of our students graduate with a 2:1 degree. To be achieving marks in the 2:1 classification students are demonstrating a broad engagement and understanding of relevant literature, clear and critical thinking, and good writing skills.
50-59%	2:2	Satisfactory: to get a 2:2 assessments will be competent and broadly relevant but will lack focus, organisation, breadth of reference or depth of discussion. If you are achieving marks in the 2:2 category you should seek further support and guidance to develop your assessment skills.
40-49%	Third	Pass: assessments at this level show some knowledge of core material but this information may be used ineffectively, inaccurately or in an unreflective way. Third class assessment may be a result of not answering the questions, but may also expose underlying issues (e.g. failing to engage sufficiently with your studies or a need to work on writing skills).
0-40%	Fail	Fail: poor performance in assessments results from inadequate knowledge of relevant material, limited understanding demonstrated through superficial comments, or missing the point of a question. Failing assessments means you do not meet the requirements to progress to the next year of study and in Pre-Honours requires that you re-sit assessments.

GOOD ACADEMIC PRACTICE

In the coming weeks you will learn how to reference ideas and information in your academic work. Referencing is an important component of academic writing and involves the accurate attribution of any material you are using in your work. Failure to reference accurately and adequately can lead to accusations of plagiarism, a form of academic misconduct that can have serious consequences. Plagiarism is the presentation of another's work as you own, without proper acknowledgement, with or without the creator's permission, intentionally or unintentionally (http://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/students/conduct/academic-misconduct/plagiarism). It's important to develop good habits of referencing. A good place to start is IAD resources on good academic practice: http://www.ed.ac.uk/institute-academic-development/undergraduate/good-practice/referencing

SUPPORT IN ECOLOGY

We provide you with pastoral and academic support through our Student Support Coordinator and Personal Tutors.

STUDENT SUPPORT COORDINATOR

Our Student Support Coordinator (SSC) is Emma Latto and she can be contacted by email (emma.latto@ed.ac.uk), by phone or just pop into her office in the Grant Institute (KB). Emma is highly experienced with helping students with a wide range of personal issues and she is the person you should talk to about the following:

- Special Circumstances (where personal circumstances are impacting on your studies and we need to take this into account)
- Extensions (Emma can liaise with academic staff to arrange extension of up to 7 days for legitimate reasons)
- Interruption to Studies (SSCs will help to arrange an interruption to your degree where appropriate)
- Transfers (SSCs can advise you about the process of transferring to a different degree)
- References for flats and confirmation that you are enrolled at the university (SSCs will provide non-academic references)

PERSONAL TUTORS

You will also be assigned a Personal Tutor (PT) who will be your academic mentor throughout your degree. Personal tutors provide you with academic support and guidance, and a route to pastoral support. Working with your personal tutor will help you to choose courses, reflect on your academic performance, think about your future, and to make the most of your studies. After your initial meeting during Welcome Week, further individual and group meetings (at least 1 of each) will take place in Semesters 1 and 2. Your PT may also arrange additional meetings. Your personal tutor should be your first point of contact if you have any questions or concerns, although detailed questions about specific courses should be directed to course organisers. You can contact them by email or go along to their office hours.

During your time in Edinburgh your personal tutor will be your most consistent academic contact. It's important to develop a close professional relationship with your personal tutor and meetings with them will be important to your development as a confident and independent learner. When you finish your degree personal tutors are often asked to write references for you and they will be asked to reflect on all of your time in Edinburgh. Often we are asked to comment on punctuality, motivation, reliability and participation so it's important to turn up, prepare and engage with these meetings.

If you would like to change your PT, please contact our Student Support Coordinators.

UNIVERSITY SOURCES OF SUPPORT

EUSA ADVICE PLACE

https://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/support_and_advice/the_advice_place/

The Advice Place is home to a professional advice team that offer free, impartial and confidential information on a range of issues that include accommodation, money and finance, harassment and complaints, safety and crime, and health and wellbeing. The Advice Place has offices in Potterrow and King's Buildings House.

INSTITUTE OF ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT:

http://www.ed.ac.uk/institute-academic-development

The IAD provides support for learning across the University. They offer undergraduate study development workshops, self-study learning resources (LearnBetter), and people you can talk to about how to succeed in your studies. The IAD is based in 1 Morgan Lane, off Holyrood Road.

STUDENT COUNSELLING SERVICE:
http://www.ed.ac.uk/student-counselling

The Student Counselling Service provides free and confidential professional counselling service to all University students. The service offers self-help resources, drop-in presentation workshops, and short-term counselling and consultation. The Student Counselling Service are based on the 3rd Floor of the Main Library in George Square.

STUDENT DISABILITY SERVICE:

http://www.ed.ac.uk/student-disability-service

The Student Disability Service support students with dyslexia, mental health issues and students on the autistic spectrum, as well as students who have physical and sensory impairments. They are based on the 3rd Floor of the Main Library in George Square.

TIPS FOR SURVIVING YOUR DEGREE

Read instructions

Engage

Ask questions

Turn up

Prepare

Support each other

Ask for help if you're struggling

Be proactive