UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Programme Specification 2025–2026

Global Environment and Sustainability

MSc
PGDip
PGCert
Individual modules

Important document – please read

Contents

Important information regarding the Programme Specification

About this document

Last revised: 10 February 2025

The Programme Specification gives a broad outline of the structure and content of the programme, the entry level qualifications, as well as the learning outcomes students will achieve as they progress. Some of the information referred to in this programme specification is included in more detail on the University of London website. Where this is the case, links to the relevant webpage are included.

Where links to external organisations are provided, the University of London is not responsible for their content and does not recommend nor necessarily agree with opinions expressed and services provided at those sites.

For queries about any of the programme information provided, whether here or on the website, registered students should use the '*Ask a question*' button in the Student Portal. Otherwise, the *Contact Us* link at the bottom of every webpage should be used.

Terminology

The following language is specific to the **Global Environment and Sustainability** programme:

Module: Individual units of the programme are called modules. Each module is a self-contained, formally structured learning experience with a coherent and explicit set of learning outcomes and assessment criteria.

Core module: A compulsory 30-credit module that must be taken.

Study session: There are two study sessions in a year, each lasting 20 weeks. Sessions begin in October and April. Each session is followed by an assessment submission point.

Key revisions made

Programme specifications are revised annually. The quality committee of Birkbeck, University of London, providing academic direction, as part of its annual review of standards, confirms the programme structure and the educational aims and learning outcomes, and advises on any development in student support. Where there are changes which may impact on continuing students, these are listed below. For all new students, the programme and general information provided in this document is correct and accurate and will be applicable for the current year.

Significant changes to the 2025-26 Programme Specification

Internet access and computer specification – updated to reflect minimum computer requirements.

Entrance requirements: Minor amendment to note that work experience or alternative qualifications will be considered on a case-by-case basis for entry onto the programmes (at any entry route- Direct entry, PBA or for individual stand-alone modules).

Programme title and qualifications

Postgraduate Degrees of the University of London may be classified. The award certificate will indicate the level of the academic performance achieved by classifying the award. The classification of the degree will be based on the ratified marks from the completed assessments.

The classification system for these awards is as follows: Distinction; Merit; Pass.

Specific rules for the classification of awards are given in the Programme Regulations, under Scheme of Award.

Programme title

Global Environment and Sustainability

Qualifications

Master of Science in Global Environment and Sustainability

Postgraduate Diploma in Global Environment and Sustainability

Postgraduate Certificate in Global Environment and Sustainability

Intermediate qualifications

Students may not request a lower intermediate qualification if studying on a higher qualification (except as an exit qualification) or accumulate these qualifications as they progress from lower to higher qualifications.

Exit qualifications

The exit qualifications for these programmes are:

Postgraduate Diploma in Global Environment and Sustainability

Postgraduate Certificate in Global Environment and Sustainability

An exit qualification is an intermediate qualification, as noted above, for which the student may not have registered at the outset, but which may be awarded on completion of specific modules/courses (or credit accumulated) in a longer programme of study, if the student leaves the programme.

Exit qualifications are awarded at the discretion of the Board of Examiners. Once a student has been awarded an exit qualification, they will not normally be permitted to recommence their study on the same programme with the University of London.

Individual modules available for study on a stand-alone basis

There is also provision for individual modules of the programme to be studied on a stand-alone basis, with the exception of the *Project* (GEM500) module. Students may take one module (30 credits) on a stand-alone basis without being registered for the PGCert, PGDip or MSc.

If you apply to progress to the PGCert, PGDip or MSc and this is approved, you may be credited with one individual module successfully completed (30 credits). Neither progression nor credit is automatic.

Award titles may be abbreviated as follows:

Master of Science – MSc

Postgraduate Diploma – PGDip

Postgraduate Certificate – PGCert

Level of the programmes

The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies (FHEQ) forms part of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA).

The awards are placed at the following Levels of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ):

MSc   Level 7

PGDip   Level 7

PGCert   Level 7

Individual modules are offered at Level 7.

Relevant QAA subject benchmarks group

See the QAA website for information about quality assurance.

Not applicable

Awarding body

University of London

Registering body

University of London

Academic direction

Birkbeck, University of London

Accreditation by professional or statutory body

Not applicable

Language of study and assessment

English

Mode of study

Web supported learning with an online Module Leader.

Programme structures

The programme has two registration points in the year: October and April. There are two study sessions in a year, also beginning in October and April, each lasting 20 weeks. Each session is followed by an assessment submission point.

Students have an online induction session available through the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) prior to the start of their study session. This includes orientation of their learning environment and guidance on the structure and learning expectations for the module.

The MSc Global Environment and Sustainability is a 180 UK credit degree programme consisting of:

- five core modules (30 credits each); and

- one core Project module (30 credits)

The PGDip Global Environment and Sustainability is a 120 UK credit degree programme consisting of:

- four modules (30 credits each)

The PGCert Global Environment and Sustainability is a 60 UK credit degree programme consisting of:

- two modules (30 credits each)

Maximum and minimum periods of registration

The minimum periods of registration from a student's effective date of registration, are:

	Minimum
MSc	Two years
PGDip	One and a half years
PGCert	Six months
Individual modules on a standalone basis	Six months

See the General Regulations for the maximum periods of registration for these qualifications.

Students will retain the period of registration initially given to them on registration if the maximum registration period for their qualification changes during their studies.

In making a decision as to how many modules to register for in a given session, it is important to take account of on-going work and/or personal commitments.

Study materials are made available after registration and on payment of the applicable fee.

Credit value of modules

Further information about the credit systems used by universities in the UK and Europe is provided by the Quality Assurance Agency and the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System.

Where credits are assigned to modules of a programme, credit indicates the amount of learning carried out in terms of the notional number of study hours needed, and the specified Framework for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-awarding Bodies (FHEQ) credit level indicates the depth, complexity and intellectual demand of learning involved. The details below indicate the UK credits and the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) values.

The MSc Global Environment and Sustainability comprises a total of 180 UK credits (90 ECTS credits) at FHEQ level 7.

The PGDip Global Environment and Sustainability comprises a total of 120 UK credits (60 ECTS credits) at FHEQ level 7.

The PGCert Global Environment and Sustainability comprises a total of 60 UK credits (30 ECTS credits) at FHEQ level 7.

Each module comprises 30 UK credits (15 ECTS credits) at FHEQ level 7.

One UK credit equates to a notional ten hours of study.

Each 30-credit module equates to 300 hours. Over the 20 teaching weeks of the study session, students will need to dedicate around 15 hours of study per module per week.

Recognition of prior learning

Recognition of prior learning is a generic term for the process by which we recognise and, where appropriate, award credit for learning that has taken place at an institution other than the University of London. Where the prior learning covered a similar syllabus at an appropriate level to a module/course on the University of London programme, credit will be awarded as if the student took the University of London module/course.

See the General Regulations (Section 3) and Programme Regulations for more rules relating to prior learning.

MSc and PGDip students may be granted recognition of prior learning mapped against modules to a total of 60 UK credits. Applications for recognition of prior learning for the *Project* (GEM500) module will not be accepted. PGCert students may not apply for recognition of prior learning.

Further information on recognition of prior learning is on the website.

Entrance requirements

Applicants must submit an application in line with the procedures and deadlines set out on the website.

All entrance requirements are set out in detail on the programme page under the Entry Requirements tab.

We consider qualifications from around the world. Details are available here.

Entry route 1 – Direct Entry

To qualify to register for Direct Entry to the MSc, PGDip or PGCert, applicants will need a bachelor's degree which is considered at least comparable to a UK second class honours degree or a postgraduate qualification from an institution acceptable to the University.

Entry route 2 – Performance based admissions route

If applicants do not meet the requirements for Direct Entry, they can apply for the MSc via the Performance Based Admissions (PBA) route. To qualify for entrance via the PBA route, applicants will need a bachelor's degree or aegrotat (certificate) from an institution acceptable to the University.

Students on the PBA route may transfer to the MSc on successful completion of one module (30 credits).

Full details of the PBA route can be found in Section 6 of the Programme Regulations.

Professional work experience or qualifications and/or alternative qualifications will be considered on a case-by-case basis for entry onto one of the programmes (via Direct Entry or PBA route or for stand-alone individual modules).

Entrance requirements for stand-alone individual modules

To qualify to register for a stand-alone individual module, applicants will need a bachelor's degree or aegrotat (certificate) from an institution acceptable to the University.

Professional work experience or qualifications and/or alternative qualifications will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

English language requirements

All applicants must satisfy the English language requirements for the programme. These are set out in detail on the programme page under Entry Requirements. All teaching is in English. Therefore, students will need to have the required level of written and spoken English to cope with their studies right from the start.

Where an applicant does not meet the prescribed English language proficiency requirements but believes that they can demonstrate the requisite proficiency for admission the University may, at its discretion, consider the application.

Internet access and computer specification

Students will require regular access to a portable computer with an internet connection to use the University of London's online resources and systems.

Students must be able to download and install software to their Windows or MacOS device to include secure examination browsers for online assessment purposes (if offered on their programme of study). Depending on the security settings for each assessment, students may be required to have full administrator rights on their computer to install and run the software needed to take part in the assessment. Full administration rights are likely to apply to a computer that they own but not to one provided by their employer, for example.

The portable computer must have at least the following minimum specification:

- Windows 10 and 11 on 64-bit platforms

- MacOS Big Sur (version 11) and higher

- CPUs newer than 2011 (Intel Sandy Bridge (Core i3, i5 and i7 or newer))

- OpenGL 2.0 graphics driver

- Local storage for the recording of proctored examinations (75MB per hour) if applicable

- Web camera & microphone (internal or external)

- A broadband internet connection capable of streaming video

Minimum device requirements are subject to change and older operating systems may become obsolete over time.

It should also have the following applications installed:

- a word processor that accepts Microsoft Word formats (.doc and .docx)
- a PDF reader (e.g. Adobe)

Where applicable, you will be provided with any additional requirements for your assessment platform in advance of your assessment.

Certain services **will** require a mobile device for Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA). This is a key security feature that adds an extra layer of protection for your account and data, requiring two or more steps to verify your identity when logging in. This may include accepting a sign-in notification on your smartphone or entering a unique code sent via SMS or phone call to your mobile device. It is your responsibility to ensure that your mobile device meets the specified requirements for MFA.

Please note: Full mobile access is not available for all programmes. Proctored assessments will not work on any smartphone, tablet, Chromebook, Linux Operating Systems or other mobile device of any kind.

Students with specific access requirements

The University of London welcomes applications from disabled students and/or those who have access requirements. The University will make every effort to provide reasonable adjustments to enable those with a disability, learning difficulty or access requirements to have the same opportunity as all other students to successfully complete their studies.

The University is committed to managing the application procedure and the programme itself to ensure that services are accessible for all students and that an inclusive environment is created. Students with a disability, or others who may need access arrangements to assist in taking assessments, should complete the relevant section of the application form, or contact the Inclusive Practice Manager. A separate room or other arrangements may be considered.

Requests are considered by a University panel, whose purpose is to ensure that students with disabilities and/or specific access requirements are neither advantaged nor disadvantaged by such arrangements when compared with other students. These considerations remain separate from the academic selection processes.

For further information, see Inclusive Practice Policy.

Sources of funding and scholarships

Information about potential sources of funding and scholarships is updated annually and where available is included in the prospectus web pages.

For further information see the website.

Educational aims and learning outcomes of the programmes

Programme aims

The MSc Global Environment and Sustainability degree offers students modules covering pressing global contemporary environmental problems: Climate Change and Environmental Hazards, Global Food Systems and Health, Water and Energy Resources, Waste and Pollution, and Biodiversity, Biosecurity and Conservation. In studying these topics, students will engage with real-world practical examples to examine drivers, concepts, and contested ideas related to environmental problems in diverse global, national and local contexts.

Providing students with a holistic and interdisciplinary understanding of the causes and consequences of these urgent environmental issues, the degree will examine processes and implications of environmental sustainability policy and management. Through a substantial independent research project, students will develop in-depth knowledge in a particular specialist area of interest.

The programme provides career development opportunities for as wide a range of individuals as possible, including those with practical experience in environmental management and sustainability who are seeking to further develop their theoretical understandings in these topics, as well as those with a more limited knowledge of the subject who wish to develop their understanding and pursue a career in environmental sustainability.

The programme equips students with a comprehensive understanding of key global environmental topics and provides opportunities to participate in critical thinking and problem-solving tasks, training a cohort of future global sustainability practitioners and researchers.

Overall, students taking this MSc will gain:

- Critical and creative thinking skills and the ability to apply theory to practice

- Problem-solving and decision-making strategies and skills

- An in-depth theoretical background to global environmental problems and their management

- Up-to-date knowledge, based both on academic theory and practical applications

- A worldwide recognised qualification to succeed and advance in the field of environmental sustainability

Students will benefit from support through a virtual learning environment and from the flexibility to study at any time and from anywhere around the globe.

Learning outcomes (MSc Global Environment and Sustainability)

A student is expected to:

A   Knowledge and understanding:

- Critically evaluate the complex drivers and consequences of global environmental problems for different societal groups, applying academic concepts and theories.

- Articulate the diverse, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary framings of environmental problems and their governance, including indigenous and non-Western knowledges.

- Assess the effectiveness, equity and trade-offs of different sustainability goals and policies at global, regional and local levels and over time.

- Develop in-depth knowledge in particular specialist areas of environment and sustainability through designing and executing a substantial independent research project.

B   Cognitive skills

- Evaluate existing debates and concepts in sustainability theory and practice.

- Develop and apply relevant qualitative and quantitative data analysis skills to support conclusions and consider implications for policy and practice.

- Apply critical thinking to evaluate research relating to science and social science aspects of global environmental challenges and their management.

- Use creative thinking skills to evaluate and assess a range of options together with the capacity to apply ideas and knowledge to a range of situations.

C   Practical and professional skills

- Initiate, plan, and self-manage assessments through inquiry and research.

- Communicate appropriately with relevant audiences through a range of formats and styles.

- Utilise and develop oral and writing skills, using a range of media such as the preparation and presentation of reports and essays.

- Utilise information technology for practical application.

- Develop effective independent learning skills in terms of time, planning, motivation, and creativity.

- Develop and apply interpersonal skills of effective listening, debating and discussing.

- Practice self-reflection and self-awareness, openness and sensitivity to diversity in terms of people, cultures, and global sustainability issues.

- Promote a learning culture and developing a continuing appetite for learning, reflection, adaptation and collaboration.

Learning outcomes (PGDip Global Environment and Sustainability)

Students who are granted the PGDip will be expected to have passed four 30-credit modules from a choice of five (120 credits total). As such, students obtaining this qualification should have gained sound understanding of the learning outcomes listed above for the MSc as relevant for the modules chosen.

Learning outcomes (PGCert Global Environment and Sustainability)

Students who are granted the PGCert will be expected to have passed two 30-credit modules (60 credits total) from a choice of five. As such, students obtaining this qualification should have gained sound understanding of the learning outcomes listed above for the MSc as relevant for the modules chosen.

This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if they take full advantage of the learning opportunities provided. More detailed information on the specific learning outcomes, content and the learning, teaching and assessment methods of each module can be found in the module syllabuses.

Learning, teaching and assessment strategies

The core principles of the Standard Academic Model which incorporates the learning, teaching and assessment strategy for this programme are outlined below.

Principle 1: Access and opportunity

Our programmes are designed to maximise access and opportunity for learners. An online induction will ensure that students are prepared for study and are familiar with the learning environment and sources of support during their student journey.

Principle 2: Student learning

Our programmes are designed to provide students a rich, vibrant, rigorous and engaging learning experience.

Principle 3: Student support

Our programmes are designed to provide students with the support they need to succeed and fulfil their potential.

Principle 4: Programme and module structure

Our programmes follow a consistent structure, designed to drive progression and retention, and offer flexibility within an efficient module release schedule.

Principle 5: Design for learning

Our programmes are a co-creation between various teams who each contribute their professional expertise, and educational design for successful learning is at the heart of the programme development process.

Principle 6: Unbundling, portability

Wherever possible, our modules are designed as discrete sequences of learning for maximum use and portability.

Principle 7: Assessment

Our assessment is rigorous, robust, secure, transparent and aligned to the learning outcomes.

Principle 8: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Inclusion is at the heart of our practice in teaching, learning and assessment.

Assessment methods

Each module is run over a 20-week block, followed by an assessment submission point.

The following module is assessed by two assessments- one online multiple-choice question test (MCQs) (25%) and an end of term coursework assessment (75%):

- Climate Change and Environmental Hazards (GEM020)

University of London   **11**

The following modules are assessed by an end of term coursework assessment (100%):

- Biodiversity, Biosecurity and Conservation (GEM010)

- Global Food Systems and Health (GEM030)

- Waste and Pollution (GEM040)

- Water and Energy Resources (GEM050)

The *Project* (GEM500) module is assessed by one end of term independent research project (100%).

The pass mark for each module is 50%.

Where a module has more than one element of assessment, the grade awarded for each module will be based on both elements of assessment. Students will be required to pass the module with a weighted average of 50%.

Students may repeat or resit a failed module once the Board of Examiners has confirmed the module results.

Coursework is submitted in the VLE by prescribed deadlines.

All assessments are submitted online via a University of London platform. Students must ensure that their device is kept up to date and complies with University Computer Requirements.

Individual modules/courses

Students registered on a stand-alone individual module will be assessed in the same way as students studying for a qualification.

Student support and guidance

Key features of the support for students include:

- Student Portal: for accessing student induction, study skills support, careers and employability resources, student wellbeing advice.

- University of London Careers Service – offers tailored careers and employability support to students whatever their course, wherever they are studying, and whether they are starting, developing, or changing their career. Support includes webinars led by careers consultants, employer and alumni panel events and a range of online careers resources.

- Student induction resources.

- The Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) containing self-assessment and student planner tools; comprehensive learning materials; e-resources/e-library; student forums and progress monitoring tools.

- Online Module Leader

- Programme Regulations.

- The Online Library: This provides a range of full-text, multidisciplinary databases where journal articles, book reviews and reports can be found.

- University of London library: Registered students may use the resources located within the Senate House library.

- A University of London email account and web area for personal information management.

Quality evaluation and enhancement

The University of London delivers the majority of its online and distance learning programmes through a collaboration between the University of London Worldwide and federation members of the University of London. However, some of the flexible and distance learning programmes draw solely on academic input from the University of London and are delivered without academic lead by a federation member. The policies, partnerships (where applicable) and quality assurance mechanisms applicable for the programmes are defined in the following key documents: The Quality Assurance Schedules, Guidelines for Examinations, General Regulations and, for each programme, programme specific regulations.

Awards standards

All University of London qualifications must comply with the Office for Students' (OfS) Conditions of Registration relating to quality and standards, which includes condition B5 (sector-recognised standards). This is to ensure appropriate standards for each qualification. In addition, every online and distance learning programme that is developed by a federation member institution of the University of London (or a consortium with representation by more than one federation member) will be developed to the same standard as would be applied within the institution concerned. Proportionate and robust approval procedures, including external scrutiny and student engagement are in place for all programmes. Learning materials are written, and all assessments are set and marked by academic staff who are required to apply the University's academic standards.

Review and evaluation mechanisms

Some of the key mechanisms in place to assure the standards of all University of London qualifications and the quality of the student experience, include:

- Annual programme reports: produced for all programmes in order to review and enhance the provision and to plan ahead;
- Independent external examiners: submit reports every year to confirm that a programme has been assessed properly and meets the appropriate academic standards;
- Annual student performance, progression and completion statistics;
- Periodic programme reviews: carried out every 4-6 years to review how a programme has developed over time and to make sure that it remains current and continues to provide a good student experience.

Enhancements are made as necessary to ensure that systems remain effective and rigorous.

Student feedback and engagement

The principal channel for collecting feedback from students is the Student Experience Survey. Carried out every year, this collects feedback from the student body on a range of topics relating to the student lifecycle. The results are analysed externally and then considered in a number of different ways, including by the programme team, principal

committees and the senior leadership team. Details of any resulting actions taken are published on the Virtual Learning Environment and the Student Portal.

Additionally, on completion of their programme of study students will be invited to take a survey that seeks to measure what they have gained from their studies.

There are also opportunities for students to get involved in governance. An undergraduate and postgraduate student member is appointed by the University to the majority of committees through an annual appointment round. Some programmes also recruit student members at the programme level. Students are frequently invited to take part in quality review processes such as Periodic Programme Reviews, Programme approval, Thematic Reviews, MOOC review panels and ad hoc focus groups. Opportunities such as these are advertised through social media and on the website. More information can be found on the website.

Students can also apply to join the Student Voice Group, which meets four times a year to consider initiatives for enhancing student experience. Notes from these meetings are published on the Student Portal.

After graduation

Further study

Successful completion of the programme may serve as preparation for students who wish to go on to take further study in both the subject area and potentially many other subject areas. Enquiries about further study opportunities should be directed to the University of London Student Advice Centre '*Ask a question'* button in the Student Portal.

Graduate employment routes

This programme is targeted at career minded individuals who wish to develop their professional skills with master's level understanding and skills applied to careers in business, environmental management, local government, policy work, and in environmental groups and charities. Possible professions include sustainability manager, nature conservation officer, or environmental consultant. This degree can also be useful in becoming a planning and development surveyor or town planner.

The Alumni Community

Upon finishing a course of study, graduates automatically become members of the University of London Alumni Network, a diverse community of over 100,000 alumni in more than 180 countries. The Alumni Community can provide individuals with lifelong links to the University of London and each other. Benefits include social and networking events, access to local groups, a bi-annual magazine, social networking groups, and the opportunity to become an Alumni Ambassador for the University of London.

More information is available on the alumni webpage.

Follow the alumni community on social media: Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn