ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIPS

PROGRAMME QUALITY HANDBOOK 2026-2027

MSc Sustainability in Practice

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1. Welcome and Introduction

Welcome to MLA College. We are delighted that you have chosen to study with us. We will do all we can to ensure sure you get the maximum benefit from your time here – and that you will be well prepared for the next stage in your academic or professional career path.

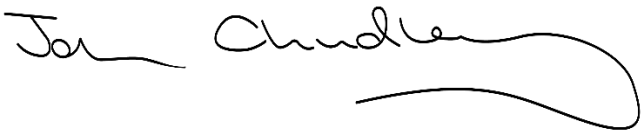
You will already know that MLA College is internationally recognised for its excellent reputation, and you will also benefit from the consistently high standards and expectations MLA College brings to all aspects of its teaching and learning.

You will find that all our staff are dedicated to ensuring you have the best experience possible. As well as being professional, intellectually challenging and up-to-date in their knowledge of the subject matter, we ensure that those teaching you do so in a research-informed, creative, responsive, and engaging way. Your tutors are supported by highly experienced professional colleagues who are here to give you advice and guidance on all aspects of your studies.

As a student at MLA College and the University of Plymouth your feedback is important to us, and we have in place a number of surveys conducted by MLA College during your period of registration. Please do take the time to complete these surveys which will inform our plans to ensure all students continue to receive the best possible experience during their time with us.

We want you to enjoy the best study experience possible and we are here to help create the best opportunities for what you want to do next.

Welcome again to the MLA College.



Professor John Chudley, Rector

MLA College

2. About this Handbook

This Programme Quality handbook contains important information including:
The approved programme specification
Module records

Note: The information in this handbook should be read in conjunction with the current edition of:

- our MLA College Student Handbook which contains student support- based information on issues such as finance and studying at HE available here
- Your University of Plymouth Student Handbook available here

3. Programme Specification

3.1. Programme Details

Awarding Institution:	University of Plymouth
Partner Institution and delivery site (s):	MLA College The Merchant, St Andrews Street, Plymouth PL1 2AX
Accrediting Body:	N/A
Language of Study:	English
Mode of Study:	Part time distance e-learning
Final Award:	MSc Sustainability in Practice
Intermediate Award:	None
Programme Title:	MSc Sustainability in Practice
UCAS Code:	N/A Applications handled directly
HECOS Code	100381 (Environmental Sciences) 100469 (Environmental Management)
Date of Programme Approval:	7th June 2022

3.2. Distinctive Features of the Programme and the Student Experience

- Student-led – the student will use their own personal work context as a focus for developing ideas about making meaningful, sustainable change to their organisations
- Participatory and Active – the student will enact and engage with the change making process, rather than just direct it
- Focused upon Partnership – taking SDG 17 as its starting point, the power of working together forms a central theme to your work.
- Interdisciplinary – whilst focused upon one aspect of sustainable development, students will be required to reflect upon the holistic nature of that development, covering aspects of environmental, economic, and societal change.
- Flexible to the needs of students - it uses distance learning to nurture independent work, within home communities and organisation, in order to test ideas of sustainable development in geographically familiar contexts.
- Fully supportive of student learning even at distance - it uses MLA College's award-winning Total Learning Package provision for studying at distance, providing support through asynchronous and synchronous delivery of seminars and tutorials.

3.3. Relevant QAA Subject Benchmark Group(s)

Geography (2022)

Earth Sciences, Environmental Sciences, and Environmental Studies (2022)

There are no specific L7 Subject Benchmarks in these areas

3.4. Programme Structure:

The structure of this Top Up is shown in Table 1. The course is PART TIME and at LEVEL 7. The module develops a participatory action research (PAR) approach to addressing a sustainability issue within the student's workplace or community. It begins by a full briefing and development tutorials where PAR and the ideas around its practice are developed and tuned to the needs of the individual student. The majority of the rest of the module focuses upon students attempting to deliver on their proposal, collecting artefacts on the way in order to develop a portfolio of evidence of practice. This is then reflected upon in a final summary.

Table 1. MSc Sustainability in Practice (Top Up) course structure

Level 7 part-time distance learning delivery
MLA728 Action Research Project (60 credits) 52 weeks

3.5. Programme Aims

- To provide a sound, and critical, understanding of sustainable development within a specific, personally meaningful context, particularly with reference to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- To enable students to understand the role of individuals, communities, and institutions in delivering sustainable development.
- To foster debate and enable students to express reasoned, evidence-based arguments.
- To enable students to take direct and participative action within their work or community to deliver sustainable change.

3.6. Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs)

3.6.1- Knowledge and understanding

On successful completion graduates should have developed:

1) A critical awareness of the fundamental concepts underpinning a specific issue within sustainable development

2) A comprehensive understanding of evaluation methodologies that can be used effectively to monitor project progress and outcomes

3.6.2. Cognitive and intellectual skills

On successful completion graduates should have developed:

1) An ability to relate theoretical concepts regarding sustainability to practical experience that is often complex in character

2) An ability to analyse and evaluate the success of personal and collective action for a chosen SDG

3) An appreciation for the role of leadership, organisations, and/or communities to the successful achievement of at least one SDG

3.6.3. Key and transferable skills

On successful completion graduates should have developed the ability to:

1) Communicate findings in a professional manner, through written work and verbal presentation

3.6.4. Employment related skills

On successful completion graduates should have developed the ability to:

1) Critically evaluate personal performance and the work of others

3.6.5. Practical skills

On successful completion graduates should have developed the ability to:

1) Choose appropriate methodologies for the completion of tasks and evaluation of project progress

3.6 Admissions Criteria, including RPL, RPEL and Disability Service arrangements

Qualification(s) Required for Entry to this Programme:	**Details:**
Level 2: - **Key Skills requirement / Higher Level Diploma:** **and/or** - **GCSEs required at Grade C or above:**	(All applicant) Maths and English at Grade C or higher.
Level 3: at least one of the following: - **AS/A Levels** - **Advanced Level Diploma:** - **BTEC National Certificate/Diploma:** - **VDA: AGNVQ, AVCE, AVS:** - **Access to HE or Year 0 provision:** - **International Baccalaureate:** - **Irish / Scottish Highers / Advanced Highers:**	N/A
Work Experience:	In the case of admission to the MSc Sustainability in Practice, MLA College are most keen to consider admission on the basis of work or life experience. Where an applicant presents with appropriate experience, this may be taken into account in lieu of certificated qualifications, regardless of age. Relevant experience will be considered on individual merit. Specific reference to RPL and RPEL is made below. However, it should be noted that due to the nature of the Programme, students should already be in leadership type roles that allow them to attempt change within their study context, be that work or

	community. Thus, a level of seniority and responsibility is required to successfully complete this work.
Other HE qualifications / non-standard awards or experiences:	120 level 7 credits in a related cognate area, or equivalent experience (see RPEL).
Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL): Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL)	Follows University of Plymouth Regulation which can be found here.
Interview / Portfolio requirements:	Applicants are expected to submit a full *Curriculum Vita* or résumé and an application form. Admissions tutors for MLA College will check all applications thoroughly and may also arrange an interview (usually by telephone or video conferencing) for potential students in order to assess their suitability for study. Offers of places are based on the information provided in the application documents and interview (where appropriate). In some instances, students may be required to undertake an interview (online, telephone or face to face), or to complete a portfolio assessment and interview. This may take the form of a portfolio of evidence of experiential learning. In line with University regulations, the learning derived from experience or study must be identified in order to be assessed. Identification must be made by the student, on the basis of systematic reflection on the experience or study and the provision of clear and evidenced statements about that learning. This will be formally reviewed to determine that the learning has in fact occurred and that it is still current, and equivalence to University credit weightings and levels. In the case of students being required to complete a form of assessment it will be governed by The University of Plymouth regulations and serves to demonstrate that they have satisfied the learning outcomes of the module(s) for which credit is claimed.
Independent Safeguarding Agency (ISA) / Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) clearance required:	No
English language requirements	If students have not obtained or do not have the appropriate entry qualifications in the English language, they may be required to produce evidence of English language ability. This will normally be the equivalent of:

	➢ GCSE Grade C or above in English language. ➢ IELTS 6.5 overall or above with a minimum of 5.5 in all four components (listening, reading, speaking and writing) ➢ For further information and alternatives to IELTS, see The University of Plymouth's international student entry requirements here.

3.7. Non-Standard Regulations

This course is delivered via distance learning, and MLA College **will apply its approved NSRs** *(as approved by University of Plymouth 15th June 2021)*.

3.8.1 For modules delivered via distance learning - 28 (calendar) day Extenuating Circumstances Extension for Late Submission: in exception to the UoP's Extenuating Circumstances Policy and Procedures, both self-certified and evidenced applications for Extenuating Circumstances (EC), considered valid by MLA College, will be offered 28 calendar days as an extension to the assessment deadline. Additionally, poor internet connection, where appropriately described as an employment driven issue causing the missing of an assessment deadline (e.g. whilst 'at sea'), may be considered as a valid extenuating circumstance.

3.8.2 Where students are completing a programme of study that has a progression route to undertake another programme within that level of study (e.g. BSc to BSc (Hons), PGCert to PGDip to MSc) and based on their provisional marks have achieved the final module, the IAAB can make the decision that the student may be admitted to the following programme without requirement to wait for the full University Award Assessment Board.

The IAAB will consider ratifying the decision following the marks being confirmed by the Subject Assessment Panel, receipt of the IAAB minutes and subject to the University regulations (or approved non-standard regulations) and policies having been appropriately followed

3.8.3 In the event of failure or non-submission, with or without a valid extenuating circumstances claim, the IAAB will consider the student in line with the University regulations and approved non-standard regulations. The IAAB may refer the student, and if relevant, through assisting with appropriate information, advice, and guidance (IAG), accept a student decision to repeat instead of refer, without requirement to wait for the full University Award Assessment Board:

The IAAB will consider ratifying the decision following the marks being confirmed by the Subject Assessment Panel, receipt of the IAAB minutes and subject to the University regulations (or approved non-standard regulations) and policies having been appropriately followed. Referral period windows of opportunity will follow that of normal University regulations or policies for postgraduate dissertations and for other assessments a period of ten weeks; however, these time periods for undertaking the referral may fall within each of the following three terms following the failure or non-submission. If the student fails to respond to the invitation to refer across those three terms then the student's study will be interrupted, and they may then return to repeat at a later date without loss of an attempt. These aspects reflect the diverse professional natures of the students as well as potential communication barriers and distractions from

work that may affect their studies. Opportunities to pick up a referral or a repeat attempt are available to students each term, and students who take up this opportunity, but who do not submit their referral work risk losing the chance to submit as the same attempt unless they have valid extenuating circumstances.

3.9 Transitional Arrangements for existing students looking to progress onto the programme

Not applicable

(PGT) Mapping table that reflects which core modules contribute to the Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs)

Module	**Credits**	**C** core **E** elective	Programme Learning Outcomes contributed to (for more information see Section 2.6)																				Compensation Y/N	**Assessment element(s) and weightings** E1 - exam E2 - clinical exam T1 - test C1 - coursework A1 - generic assessment P1 - practical
			1 Knowledge & understanding				2 Cognitive & intellectual skills				3 Key & transferable skills				4 Employment related skills				5 Practical skills					
			1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4		
MLA728: Action Research Project	60	C	x	x			x	x	x		x				x				x				N	C1, P1
Learning Outcomes 60 credits			1	1			1	1	1		1				1				1					

4. Module Records

UNIVERSITY OF PLYMOUTH MODULE RECORD

SECTION A: DEFINITIVE MODULE RECORD. Proposed changes must be submitted via Faculty/AP Quality Procedures for approval and issue of new module code.

MODULE CODE: MLA728	MODULE TITLE: Action Research Project	
CREDITS: 60	FHEQ LEVEL: 7	HECOS CODE: 100381, 100469
PRE-REQUISITES: None	CO-REQUISITES: None	COMPENSATABLE: N

SHORT MODULE DESCRIPTOR:
The module actively involves students in experiences that benefit their wider community or organisation. It focuses on students working within the sustainable development field, undertaking work that is mapped against at least one UN SDG. Arguing for the benefits their work brings, reflecting upon their experiences and critical incidents, students gain real world insight into the challenging nature of work in this area.

ELEMENTS OF ASSESSMENT			
C1 (Coursework)	75%	P1 (Practical)	25%

SUBJECT ASSESSMENT PANEL to which module should be linked: MLA

Professional body minimum pass mark requirement: N/A

MODULE AIMS:
This module aims to develop skills of reflection and critique through the lens of work experience and particpatory action research within the sustainable development field. Students will agree a scheme of work which focuses on, at least, one UN SDG, establishing an action research approach designed to progress meaningful change. Reflecting upon their experience, both through a critical incident log and final reflective report, they will summarise whether their work has enabled progress on their chosen SDG, enabling them to delve into aspects of leadership and strategy for creating sustainable solutions to real world problems.

ASSESSED LEARNING OUTCOMES: (additional guidance below; please refer to the Programme Specification for relevant award/ programme Learning Outcomes).

At the end of the module the learner will be expected to be able to:

Assessed Module Learning Outcomes	Award/ Programme Learning Outcomes contributed to
Critque the fundamental concepts underpinnng a specific issue within sustainable development	3.6.1.1
Evaluate methodologies that can be used effectively to monitor project progress and outcomes	3.6.1.2
Relate theoretical concepts regarding sustainability to practical experience	3.6.2.1
Analyse the success of personal and collective action on a chosen SDG	3.6.2.2
Evaluate the role of leadership, organisations, and/or communities to the successful achievement of at least one SDG	3.6.2.3

Communicate findings in a professional manner, written, and through verbal presentation.	3.6.3.1
Critically evaluate personal performance and the work of others	3.6.4.1
Choose appropriate methodologies for the completion of tasks and evaluation of project progress	3.6.5.1

DATE OF APPROVAL: 07/06/2022	FACULTY/OFFICE: Academic Partnerships
DATE OF IMPLEMENTATION: September 2022	SCHOOL/PARTNER: MLA
DATE(S) OF APPROVED CHANGE: N/A	SEMESTER: ALL YEAR
MODE OF DELIVERY: Distance Learning	

SECTION B: DETAILS OF TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

Items in this section must be considered annually and amended as appropriate, in conjunction with the Module Review Process. Some parts of this page may be used in the KIS return and published on the extranet as a guide for prospective students. Further details for current students should be provided in module guidance notes.

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2026-27

NATIONAL COST CENTRE: 124 (Geography and Environment)

MODULE LEADER: Marie Hale

OTHER MODULE STAFF: TBC

Summary of Module Content

The content of this module will be predicated upon the context of the work experience itself. It is expected that students will experience some form of community or organisationally focused action to understand the role of organisations in facilitating this, as well as showing the power of individual action as part of a wider group. This will begin a process of reflection upon the learning outcomes described above.

SUMMARY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING		
Scheduled Activities	Hours	Comments/Additional Information
Lecture	5	NA
Tutorial	45	Discussions that are either with peers and tutor or between student and tutor. Formative tasks will be included here, with opportunity for feedback at next tutorial.
Self-Study	550	Work experience, reflection and assessment preperation
Total	600	(NB: 1 credit = 10 hours of learning; 10 credits = 100 hours, etc.)

SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT

Element Category	**Component Name**	**Component Weighting**
Coursework	Portfolio ALOs 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8	100%
Practical	Online Viva ALOs 1, 3,5, 8	100%

REFERRAL ASSESSMENT

Element Category	**Component Name**	**Component Weighting**
Coursework	Portfolio	100%
Practical	Online Viva	100%

To be completed when presented for Minor Change approval and/or annually updated	
Updated by: Ann Timms Date: 10 August 2026	**Approved by**: Claire Deacon Date: 7 September 2026