

1. Programme information sources

In order to prepare yourself well, we advise you to carefully read and study this document, with important information regarding your degree programme. In this document, you can find:

- a) '[How to prepare for your degree programme](#)' provides a step-by-step guide to prepare your degree programme before (and soon after) arriving in Groningen.
- b) The '[Course unit schedule](#)' contains a schedule of the course units in our master programme.

Furthermore, you can find information online:

[Ocasys](#) is our online course unit catalogue. Here you can find detailed information about all mandatory and elective course units in our master programme. Please ensure to use the 2024/2025 setting, when you consult Ocasys. Some information may still be in concept modus and will be updated soon.

2. Instructions and deadlines

Considering the preparation for your degree programme, we request you to inform us about these issues:

- **Before June 25:** Fill in the [Degree Confirmation Form](#) to inform us that you are planning to start your master's degree programme in September at the University of Groningen.

Please note: You may have already confirmed your attendance to the Admission Office, please note that this is a separate procedure and we request your confirmation as well.

In the confirmation form, you will indicate which elective courses you would like to be enrolled in for semester 1.

In case you plan to start your master degree programme in Groningen:

- **During the summer months:** Familiarize yourself with all information documents regarding your degree programme, as mentioned in this letter.
- **During the summer months:** We expect that the formal introduction to our programme will be on site on Friday 30th of August. You will be informed about the introduction in July/August. Plan your arrival in Groningen such that you can participate in all introduction events.

In case you have any questions about (the preparations for) your degree programme, please feel free to contact your academic advisor (Maartje Giesbers) by e-mail (academicadvisor.MScBIO@rug.nl). She will be happy to answer your questions.



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 groningen

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 and engineering

school of science and
 engineering

How to prepare for your degree programme

This information concerns the Master's degree programme

Marine Biology (MB)



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Study programme

This document describes the best way to prepare for the Master's degree programme Marine Biology. It involves matters such as the content of the study programme, planning, organizing individual study elements, various administrative issues and a description of the main sources of information.

The Marine Biology Master's degree programme is one of the four master programmes run by the **BioSciences Programme Team**. This team, which consists of a programme coordinator, an [academic advisor](#) and a programme assistant is responsible for the daily (administrative) operations of the master degree programmes Biomolecular Sciences, Biology, Marine Biology, and Ecology & Evolution. Each degree programme is led by a Programme Director that is responsible for the content and quality of their respective degree programme. During the duration of the programme, you may receive messages from the Programme team from the general email address msc.biosciences@rug.nl.

The last section of this document contains an extensive FAQ section with accompanying answers. In case you have any remaining questions, please do not hesitate to contact the [Academic Advisor](#).

Tracks

The Marine Biology Master's degree programme allows you to choose between a research (R) track (in which your focus will be on research) and a Science, Business & Policy ([SBP](#)) track.

We recommend giving some thought to which track you want to follow *before* you start your Master's programme, even though you do not actually need to make a definitive choice yet. If you do a research project with a minimum student workload of 30 ECTS in your first year, it can count towards either of the two profiles. Should you decide to continue in the research track, this means that your second research project needs to have a workload of at least 40 ECTS. You can make your definitive choice of track based on the experience and knowledge you gain during the first project.

Study element	Research track	SBP track
<i>Principles of Biological Oceanography</i>	5 ECTS	5 ECTS
<i>Principles of Marine Biology</i>	5 ECTS	5 ECTS
<i>Principles of Population Genetics in Natural Populations</i>	5 ECTS	5 ECTS
<i>Marine Conservation</i>	5 ECTS	5 ECTS
Research Project 1*	≥ 40 ECTS	≥ 30 ECTS
Research Project 2*	≥ 30 ECTS	-
Colloquium	5 ECTS	5 ECTS
Electives	≤ 25 ECTS	≤ 5 ECTS
SBP-courses (2 nd year)	-	20 ECTS
SBP-internship (2 nd year)	-	40 ECTS
Total	120 ECTS	120 ECTS

* The workload of the research projects may be switched.



Planning semester 1

Course units

Students in the Marine Biology Master's degree programme start their programme in September with a number of mandatory course units (see table above). You do not need to enrol yourself for the four mandatory courses.

If you wish to enrol for **elective courses** in the first semester, you may indicate this in the Confirmation Degree programme form, or register yourself via Progress. Many elective course units have a limited capacity so it is important to register for them well in advance. In case there is no space available in a course, you may participate in that course unit during your second year.

Submit the [Degree Confirmation Form](#) before **June 25**. You may submit your preferences for elective courses on the Form.

All important information about course units, programme and schedules can be found on the Student Portal and on [Ocasys](#). Upon arrival in Groningen, we will introduce you to the internal Student Portal, for which you will need a [personal computer account](#). We recommend to already familiarize yourself with the [Student Portal](#) before arrival.

Study Mentor

An important characteristic of our Master's degree programme is that you yourself have to choose which course units, research projects, colloquium and electives you want to do and when to do them (during the two years nominally allocated for the programme). This allows tailoring the degree programme to your interests. You do need to discuss these choices with your **study mentor** first, to ensure that your plans meet the requirements of the programme.

The study mentor will be your main point of contact throughout the entire Master's programme. A mentor will be assigned to you after the start of your Master programme, usually during one of the first obligatory courses. You are solely responsible maintaining contact with your mentor during your entire programme.

A **Study mentor** is assigned to you during the first semester.

Planning semester 2

Research project

During the first weeks of the first semester, we will publish a selection of Master projects suitable as a first research project for all Marine Biology students. This will include suggestions from all research groups involved in Marine Biology. You can indicate your preferences for your first project and the Marine Biology staff will do their best to place you in one of the projects you choose. Also be prepared that some subjects are more popular than others and that we cannot accommodate all students first choices.

Most students will start their **first research project** in the second semester

After securing your research project, you should contact the examiner assigned to this project discuss your plans and timeline for the project.



Formalizing individual study elements: Programme Proposal Form

Because the Master's programme involves many optional components, there is a risk that students include study elements that do not meet the minimum requirements, e.g. an unsuitable research topic, a project that is too limited in time or subject matter, too little student workload, unauthorized supervisor, etc. The Board of Examiners is responsible for ensuring that the Master's degree programme maintains an acceptable level, which is why you require its approval for each individual study component before starting it.

You will need to complete a **Programme Proposal Form** for each individual study element and discuss this with your **study mentor**. You need to send the form to msc.biosciences@rug.nl and will hear within a few weeks whether the component has been approved or not. If you do not request approval of an individual study element in advance, you will be running a real risk: If the component is rejected after you have completed it, the ECTS credit points gained for that component will not count towards your Master's degree programme. So make sure to submit your Programme Proposal Form as early as possible before starting a new individual programme element, to prevent a potential problem!

Once you have found a first **research project**, discuss your plans with your mentor and complete the **Programme Proposal Form** with all relevant information for your first individual study component. Submit your form by email to the Programme Management (msc.biosciences@rug.nl) for approval by the Board of Examiners.

You do not need to enter your entire study plan on the Programme Proposal Form. You will probably decide on other/further individual study elements (second research project, colloquium) sometime during your first research project. This will be a good moment to include your new plans to your existing Programme Proposal Form and submit that to the Programme Management. And so on.

Planning year 2

During the second year of the programme, most students will conduct their second research project, colloquium and additional electives to fulfil the requirement of a total of 120 ECTS.

Graduation

In order to obtain your degree, you need to submit your complete study programme via Progress Portal for assessment by the Board of Examiners. You are advised to complete this step of your **diploma application** before starting your second research project, when you have obtained approximately 80 ECTS and completed your first research project. Deadlines for submitting your study programme to meet scheduled graduation ceremony dates can be found on the Student Portal.

Information and communication

In the Master's degree programme, you will have a lot more responsibility for obtaining information about schedules, the programme, registration, administrative matters, etc., than in your previous education programme. The most important sources of information on the Master's degree programme are:

- The [Student Portal on Brightspace](#): for the latest news and announcements, important forms, information about study and internships abroad, tips for preparing for the labour market, information on graduation, contact details, etc. The Student Portal is explained in [these instructions](#) and upon arrival in Groningen.
- *Study Mentor*: for all information about programme content, discussing your study plan, agreeing on your Programme Proposal Form, contacts abroad. A mentor will be assigned to you during the first semester.



- [Academic Advisor](#): for all other questions or possible flaws in information. Also, report any extraordinary circumstances affecting your study progress (illness, handicap, family matters, pregnancy, etc.), immediately to your Academic Advisor! Conversations with the Academic Advisor are always 100% confidential.
- BioSciences Programme Team: msc.biosciences@rug.nl
- Other standard University of Groningen information systems: *e-mail*, *Progress Portal*, *Ocasys*, etc. In addition, these systems will be explained in [these instructions](#) and upon arrival in Groningen.



Frequently Asked Questions

- **How does the document 'Course Unit Schedule' work?**

The Course Unit Schedule shows all course units that we offer in our programmes, and the time periods in which they are scheduled. Please note that this is the schedule for the duration of one academic year, to be used by first-year and second-year students in the master. The academic year is divided into two semesters, which are divided into two periods of 10 weeks (Period Ia and Ib for Semester I, and Period 2a and 2b for Semester II). During each 10-week period, you can take a maximum of three (consecutive) courses (15 ECTS).

Page 2 of the Course unit schedule document explains the abbreviations. Note the difference between fulltime course units, non-fulltime course units, and special course units:

A) Fulltime course units usually have a study load of 5 ECTS and can be recognized by being scheduled in only 3 or 4 weeks. Examples in the Marine Biology Master's programme are: Principles of Biological Oceanography, Principles of Marine Biology, Principles of Population Genetics in Natural Populations, and Marine Conservation. Of course, one cannot participate in multiple fulltime courses simultaneously.

B) Non-fulltime course units usually have a study load of 5 ECTS and can be recognized by being scheduled for about 5-10 weeks

Use [Ocasys](#) for course unit descriptions and the [time table generator](#) for day-to-day schedules. Don't be misled by these day-to-day schedules of some fulltime course units; They sometimes have only few scheduled lectures, but also in these course units you will be working fulltime, for example because of non-scheduled group assignments, preparing presentations, writing assignments, self-study, etc.

- **What is the difference between 'Master courses' and 'Elective courses'?**

You can find a list of all available course units in the [Marine Biology Master's Degree programme on Ocasys](#). It is compulsory to include 20 ECTS of programme-topic related course units ('Master courses') in your two-year study programme. The mandatory Master courses for the Marine Biology programme award you with 20 ECTS. Any additional master courses from the list of Compulsory Master course units will count as elective in your programme.

Available course units that are not mentioned on the Master course unit list can only count as 'electives' in your programme (20 ECTS for the research profile). The difference between Master courses and Elective course units is that the latter do not necessarily involve the general topic of your degree programme and are followed to broaden rather than to deepen your knowledge (as Master courses do).

- **Are there any course units that are worth mentioning, because they differ from most other course units?**

Yes, here are the most important ones, see also [Ocasys](#) for more details:

- [Laboratory Animal Science](#) is a course unit that you are only allowed to follow (and must follow) in case you are going to do a research project involving animal experimentation. Before registering for this course, your plans for the first (or second) research project need to be decided.
- [Orientation on non-Academic Careers](#) is a course unit for Master students who want to examine the possibilities of a career outside the academy. This is a non-fulltime course which students usually take while they are doing one of their research projects. In small groups (3-4 students) a case delivered by a company in the Netherlands or a neighbouring country is solved. The case report will be presented to the participating company during an excursion to all participating companies.



- iGEM is a worldwide competition on synthetic biology, in which the RUG partakes every other year. You can receive maximally 20 ECTS of elective study points for participation. Selection takes place during wintertime.

- **Can I choose two course units that are scheduled in the same time period?**

Usually no, because most course units are scheduled as full-time course units, so you won't be able to do something else (or be at a different location), such as following another course unit (full-time or part-time), preparing a colloquium or doing research. However, it is possible to combine a fulltime course unit with a lecture series course unit in which one or two lectures are scheduled during the month.

- **Can I follow a course unit at the same time as the research project?**

Always consult with your supervisor well in advance before planning a course unit! They must approve your plans. In practice, it is usually possible to interrupt a research project to follow a course unit, but if you can avoid doing this then you should. The time that you cannot spend on your research (usually 3 weeks per 5 ECTS course unit) is added to the end of your research project to ensure you earn the required number of ECTS for the project.

- **How should I plan my programme?**

All students start their programme in September with the series of mandatory Master course units. They continue the programme with an additional Master course, elective or essay, and then complete the first year with a research project of 30 or 40 ECTS. We recommend aiming for approximately 60 ECTS in the first year.

- **I plan to follow the SBP track. How should I plan my programme?**

The most logical course of action is to follow the SBP component of the programme in the second year (course units and the SBP work placement with a total of 60 ECTS, from September up to the summer break). You can follow all the other components in the first year: research project (≥ 30 ECTS), Master courses (20 ECTS) and electives (≥ 5 ECTS), which can consist of extra research or course units. You can also plan your colloquium (5 ECTS) at the end of the first year.

- **How long does a research project take?**

A full working week for a research project is 40 hours. One ECTS credit point is equivalent to 28 hours. A research project of 30 ECTS is equivalent to $30 \times 28 = 840$ hours, or 21 weeks (5 months) of full-time work. This amounts to about one complete semester, including holidays. A research project of 40 ECTS is equivalent to 28 weeks, or 6.5 months of full-time work.

- **Does my first research project have to have a workload of 40 ECTS?**

The first research project may also have a different workload, such as 30 ECTS, or even more than 40 ECTS (you can spend some of your elective ECTS on extra research). N.B. the last opportunity to increase the workload of your research project is during the Midterm evaluation, which takes place halfway through your research project.

- **How far do I need to plan ahead?**

You do not have to, nor can you, draw up a detailed study plan for your entire Master's degree programme straightaway (see above). Make sure that at the start of the programme you have a rough idea of which study components you might want to follow during the coming two years, and discuss this with your mentor. Hand in the first **Programme Proposal Form** as soon as you know the details of the first research project. Consult with your study mentor when you are filling in the further details and planning of study plan.

- **Can I work on study elements during the summer break?**

This is not prohibited, but your supervisors will tell you whether this is practically feasible. Many research groups will have a few staff members who continue working through the holidays, so there will often be someone present to provide supervision.



But first consult with your supervisors on whether this is both possible and feasible. Obviously, if you work on your colloquium you will need supervision, which will not be possible if your supervisor is on holiday leave. Moreover, there are colloquium requirements regarding the minimum number of scientific staff who must be present during your presentation, which will be difficult to arrange in the holiday season.

- **Can I enrol for course units in the Progress Portal and follow course units without prior approval via the Programme Proposal Form?**

Yes, you can. For Master courses and Elective courses listed on the [Ocasys](#) page of your degree programme, you do not need permission from the Board of Examiners. For courses that are not listed on this page, you need to obtain permission by submitting a request form that can be found on the Board of Examiners page on the Student Portal. You do not have to submit your courses on the Programme Proposal form.

Do not enrol for mandatory course units yourself, this will be done for you. Inform us of your elective course unit preferences by submitting the [Degree Confirmation Form](#) **before 25 June**. You will be instructed after arriving in Groningen about enrolling for course units yourself.

- **My academic writing skills are somewhat poor. What can I do about this?**

You will be required to write extensive reports and theses during your Master's degree programme. Many students have trouble finding the discipline to write or achieve the proper level of academic quality in their writing. The Student Service Centre (www.rug.nl/ssc) offers various writing course units and has a thesis support group for students who are having difficulty writing their research project reports. The Faculty of Science and Engineering also has similar thesis support groups; these have the added advantage of a focus on science, instead of the broader focus you will find in the support groups for the students of other faculties. Ask your Academic Advisor for more information if you are interested. Make sure you hold your supervisor responsible for providing good supervision: for example, you could agree to have a short meeting once a week to discuss your progress or to submit draft sections of your writing for the supervisor to assess. You could also ask for a workplace in the department where you could work on fixed days. It can also be stimulating to work together with your fellow students on your theses if you cannot find the discipline to spend whole days behind your computer. Contact the Academic Advisor as soon as possible if you are stuck and cannot find a way out.

- **What should I do if exceptional circumstances arise, such as illness, psychological problems, disability, family circumstances, pregnancy, etc.**

Contact your Academic Advisor as soon as possible. Your personal circumstances will always be treated confidentially; the Academic Advisor will never discuss your situation with others (lecturers, parents, etc.) without your explicit permission. In many cases the academic advisor may be able to help and otherwise they will refer you to another service if you so wish. If your studies are delayed due to such circumstances, financial compensation may be available via the University's Graduation Fund. It is important that you report the circumstances to an Academic Advisor as soon as possible to be eligible for this fund. If you fail to report or report too late, you will not be compensated.

- **I still have questions after reading all information documents. What should I do?**

Please ask your questions to the Academic Advisor (Maartje Giesbers: academicadvisor.MScBIO@rug.nl), she is happy to help you out. Many incoming students find it quite hard to understand all the information before arriving in Groningen as the programme and environment may be very different from what you are used to in your home country. Please do not worry: before and after arrival in Groningen, we will help you as much as possible, so you will soon understand the most important aspects of the programme, and you will settle in well within our faculty. Good luck and we are looking forward to receiving you!

TIME TABLE MARINE BIOLOGY MODULES 2024/2025

	2024										2025										IIa					IIb																			
	Ia					Ib					2025					February		March			April			May			June		July																
	September		October			November			December		January																																		
Monday	2	9	16	23	30	7	14	21	28	4	11	18	25	2	9	16	23	30	6	13	20	27	3	10	17	24	3	10	17	24	31	7	14	21	28	5	12	19	26	2	9	16	23	30	7
Marine Biology	<i>Oceanography</i>		<i>Marine biol.</i>			<i>Marine Cons</i>			<i>PopGenetics</i>							MES-GC		Polar eco.									NIOZ																		
																Water management																													
SBP track (year 2)	<i>SBP: Science & Business</i>					<i>SBP: Science & Policy</i>					<i>SBP</i>					Work placement																													
Ecology and Evolution	² Behaviour EE					² Evol. theory					Gen. EE					² Res.Prop		IslandBio																											
	⁴ Mol. meth. in E&E																																												
	² Ecol. Res. Skills					² ConsPract					² AdvPCEc					Flyway Ec.																													
Biology						MathBio					Radiolso					LAS		Mathematical Models in Ecology and Evolution																											
						AdvMicros					⁴ ProgC++					ProgC (cont)					Modelling								Adv.Statist.																
											ModBio					BioComp		Orientation on Non-academic Careers																											
Biomolecular Sciences						¹ ToolSys										¹ AdvGenEng		iGEM Competition																											
	iGEM vervolg					Biocatalysis & Green										Chemistry																													
Electives (other programmes)																																													
Education and Communication	Res. methods science and comm																				Basiscursus Master Lerarenopleiding																								
																					Masterstage 1																								
																					Skills in Science Communication EC																								
Energy and Environmental Science	Energy, Atmosphere and Resources										Modelling Energy										Systems																								
	Ecology and Ecosystem Sustainability										Sustainable										Society																								
MPS											MS																				MS														
Week no	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	
Academic no	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16		17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42		

¹ Course for Biomolecular Sciences, limited access

⁴ Course is organized in a 5 and 10 ECTS version

² Course for Ecology and Evolution, limited access

italics = compulsory for track

■ week without contact hours

Abbreviation	Module	Code	Abbreviation	Module	Code
AdvGenEng	Advanced genetic engineering	WMBS006-05	Math models in E&E	Mathematical Models in Ecology and Evolution	WMEV013-06
AdvMem	Advanced Membrane Biology	WMBS007-05	Masterstage 1	Masterstage 1	TEM0205
AdvMN	Advanced metabolism and nutrition	WMBM004-05	MES-GC	Marine ecosystem service & global change	WMMB008-05
AdvMicros	Advanced light microscopy	WMBY016-05	Modelling	Practical modelling for biologists	WMBY009-05
AdvPCEcol	Advanced Population & Community Ecology	WMEV008-05	Modelling Energy Systems	Modelling Energy Systems	WMEE0XX-05
Adv. Statist.	Advanced Statistics	WMBY018-06	MolDyn	Molecular Dynamics	WMBS003-05
ASM	Applied Statistics and Machine Learning	WMBM024-05	Mol. meth. in E&E	Molecular Methods in Ecology and Evolution 2021/2022	WMEV007-10
Advanced Biocatalysis	Advanced Biocatalysis	WMCH033-05	MM&ASBio	Molecular Modeling and Analysis in Structural Biology	WMBS021-05
Advances in chemical biology	Advances in chemical biology	WMCH014-05	MS	Microbiological safety	WMMP004-01
Adv MamBio	Advanced Mammalian Cell Biology	WMBS022-05	NIOZ	NIOZ-course: www.nioz.nl/marine-masters-en	NA
Basiscursus Lerarenopleiding	Basiscursus Lerarenopleiding	TEM0105	NBDC	Nutrition, Brain Development and Cognition	WMBM020-05
Behaviour EE	Behaviour, Ecology and Evolution	WMEV003-10	Oceanography	Principles of Biological Oceanography	WMMB003-05
BDAB	Big Data and Applications in Biomedicine	WMBM025-05	Orientation on Non-academic Careers	Orientation on Non-academic Careers	WMBY032-05
BI&MT	Biophysical Imaging & Manipulation Technique	WMPH047-05	Polar Ecosyst	Polar Ecosystems	WMMB009-05
BioComp	Practical Computing for Biologists	WMBY008-05	Pop.Genetics	Principles of Populations Genetics in Natural Populations	WMMB005-05
Coll.	Colloquium MEME	WMEV001-05	ProgC++	Programming C++ for biologists	WMBY010-05
ConsPract	Conservation Ecology Practices	WMEV004-05	ProtEnz	Protein and Enzyme Engineering	WMBS004-05
DSB	Data Science in Biomedicine	WMBM023-05	Radiolso	Radioisotopes in Experimental Biology	WMBY011-05
Eco-farming	Ecology of sustainable farming 23/24	WMEV009-05	res. methods science and comm	Research Methods in Science Education and Communication	WMEC005-05
Ecol. Res. Skills	Ecology research skills	WMEV005-10	ResProp	Research Proposal Ecology and Evolution	WMEV012-05
Ecology and Ecosystem Sustainability	Ecology and Ecosystem Sustainability	WMEE0XX-05	SBP: Science & Policy	Introduction Science& Policy	WMSE002-10
Ecosystems shores	Ecosystems Mediterranean Rocky Shores	WMMB010-10	SBP: Science & Business	Introduction Science & Business	WMSE001-10
EMDA	Evolutionary Medicine Diseases of Affluence	WMBY025-05	SBP: work placement	Work placement Business and Policy	WMSE003-40
EMID	Evolutionary Medicine Infectious Diseases	WMBY024-05	SeqMethods	Next-generation sequencing methods and data analysis	WMBS023-05
Evol. theory	Evolutionary Theory	WMEV006-05	Skills in Science Communication EC	Skills in Science Communication EC	WMEC006-05
EM BM	Electron microscopy of biological macromolecules	WMBS011-05	SkillsBio 1	Skills for Biology 1: Professional Perspectives and Career Orientation	WMBY029-05
Flyway. Ec	Flyway Ecology 22/23	WMEV010-05	SkillsBio 2	Skills for Biology 2: Quantitative Research Methods	WMBY028-05
F&EB	Function and Evolution of Behaviour	WMBC004-04	Sustainable Society	Sustainable Society	WMEE0XX-05
Gen. EE	Genomics in Ecology & Evolution	WMEV011-08	Synthetic biol. & Systems chem.	Synthetic bioloy & Systems chemistry	WMCH021-05
iGEM Competition	International Genetically Engineered Machine competitor	WMBS013-20	TBAs	Tropical Biology Association summer field courses	NA
Energy, Atmosphere and Resources	Energy, Atmosphere and Resources (EES)	WMEE0XX-05	Tools syst	Tools and approaches of systems biology	WMBS005-05
IntroBR	Introduction to Biomolecular Research	WMBS0XX-05	Water management	Transitions in water management	GEMTRWATM
IslandBio	Island Biology	WMEV016-05			
LAS	Laboratory Animal Science	WMBY026-05			
Marine biol.	Principles of Marine Biology	WMMB004-05			
Marine cons.	Marine Conservation	WMMB011-05			
MathBio	Mathematical models for Biology	WMBY031-05			
ModBio	Modelling Complex Biological Systems	WMBY027-05			