

Royal Holloway, University of London

Course specification for a postgraduate award

MSc Sustainability Leadership

Section 1 – Introduction to your course

This course specification is a formal document, which provides a summary of the main features of your course and the learning outcomes that you might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if you take full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided. Further information is contained in the University prospectus, and in various handbooks, all of which you will be able to access online. Alternatively, further information on the University's academic regulations and policies can be found [here](#). Further information on the University's Admissions Policy can be found [here](#).

The global pursuit of progress has led to widespread industrialisation, overpopulation, resource depletion, pollution and other threats to our planet. Through the research and teaching of environmental and social sustainability we aim to preserve our world and its resources for future generations. Through studying the MSc Sustainability Leadership at Royal Holloway, University of London you'll develop the skills to communicate with experts across a variety of backgrounds, helping you to become an expert in sustainability and an attractive prospect for business, governmental agencies and NGOs.

This Master's course is delivered over one year of full-time study (52 weeks) or up to five years part-time study (260 weeks). On successful completion of the programme a student should have an understanding of the area of the MSc at a level appropriate for a postgraduate qualification. Whilst being a self-contained degree in its own right, the programme provides suitable and recognised qualifications for entry to PhD study in the same or a closely related field.

Your degree courses at Royal Holloway, University of London, will be delivered over one year, which normally involves modules to the value of 180 credits (which is equivalent to 90 ECTS credits¹).

While Royal Holloway keeps all the information made available under review, courses and the availability of individual modules, especially optional modules are necessarily subject to change at any time, and you are therefore advised to seek confirmation of any factors which might affect your decision to follow a specific course. In turn, Royal Holloway will inform you as soon as is practicable of any significant changes which might affect your studies.

The following is a brief description for some of the most important terminology for understanding the content of this document:

Degree course – Also referred to as 'programme', this term refers to the qualification you will be awarded upon successful completion of your studies. 'Courses' were formerly known as 'programmes' at Royal Holloway.

¹ The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) is a learner-centred system for credit accumulation and transfer. ECTS credits reflect the total workload required to achieve defined learning outcomes and their associated workload, including teaching hours and guided independent study. 15 UK credits is equivalent to 7.5 ECTS. 30 UK credits is equivalent to 15 ECTS. Further details on ECTS can be found within the [ECTS User Guide 2015](#).

Module – This refers to the credits you will study each year to complete your degree course. Postgraduate taught degrees at Royal Holloway comprise 180 credits. On some degree courses a certain number of optional modules must be passed for a particular degree title. 'Modules' were formerly known as 'course units' at Royal Holloway.

Section 2 – Course details			
Date of specification update	June 2026	Location of study	Egham Campus
Course award and title	MSc Sustainability Leadership	Level of study	Postgraduate
Course code		Year of entry	2027/28
Language(s) of Tuition	English		
Awarding body	Royal Holloway, University of London		
Department	Geography and Sociology	Other departments involved in teaching the course	Royal Holloway Business School
Mode(s) of attendance	Full time and part time	Duration of the course	One year (52 weeks) full-time Two to five years (104 - 260 weeks) part-time
Accrediting Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body requirement(s)	N/A		
Link to Coursefinder for further information:	https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/studying-here/	For queries on admissions:	https://royalholloway.ac.uk/applicationquery

Section 3 – Degree course structure				
3.1 Mandatory module information				
The following table summarises the mandatory modules which students must take in each year of study				
Module code	Module title	Credits	FHEQ level	Module status (Mandatory Condonable MC or Mandatory Non-Condonable MNC)
GG5012	Key Concepts in Justice, Development and Sustainability	30	7	MC
GG5020	Research Methods for Social Science	15	7	MC
MN5***	Leading Organisational Change for Sustainability	15	7	MC
MN5875	International Operations Management, Lean Production and Sustainability	15	7	MC
GG5036	Work-Based Learning	15	7	MC
GG5403	Dissertation	60	7	MNC
This table sets out the most important information for the mandatory modules on your degree course. These modules are central to achieving your learning outcomes, so they are compulsory, and all students on your degree course will be required to take them. You will be automatically registered for these modules each year. Mandatory modules fall into two categories: ‘condonable’ or ‘non-condonable’. In the case of mandatory ‘non-condonable’ (MNC) modules, you must pass the module before you can proceed to the next year of your course, or to successfully graduate with a particular degree title. In the case of mandatory ‘condonable’ (MC) modules, these must be taken but you can still progress or graduate even if you do not pass them. Please note that although Royal Holloway will keep changes to a minimum, changes to your degree course may be made where reasonable and necessary due to unexpected events. For example, where requirements of relevant Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Bodies have changed and course requirements must change accordingly, or where changes are deemed necessary on the basis of student feedback and/or the advice of external advisors, to enhance academic provision.				
3.2 Optional modules				
In addition to mandatory modules, there may be a number of optional modules available during the course of your degree. Although Royal Holloway will keep changes to a minimum, new options may be offered, or existing ones may be withdrawn. For example, where reasonable and necessary due to unexpected events, where requirements of relevant Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) have changed and course requirements must change accordingly, or where changes are deemed				

necessary on the basis of student feedback and/or the advice of External Advisors, to enhance academic provision. There may be additional requirements around option selection; please contact the Department for further information.

You must choose 30 credits of optional modules. These are normally selected from following;

- GG5013 Global Futures (30 credits)

OR

- MN5804 Responsible AI and Digital Innovation (15 credits) and MN5903 Sustainability and Accounting (15 credits)

Section 4 - Progressing through each year of your degree course

For further information on the progression and award requirements for your degree, please refer to Royal Holloway's [Academic Regulations](#).

Progression throughout the year/s is monitored through performance in summative or formative coursework assignments. Please note that if you hold a Student Visa and you choose to leave (or are required to leave because of non-progression) or complete early (before the course end date stated on your CAS), then this will be reported to UKVI.

All postgraduate taught students are required to take and pass the non-credit bearing Moodle-based Academic Integrity module SS1001 in order to be awarded. The pass mark for the module assessment is stated in the on-line Academic Integrity Moodle module. Students may attempt the assessment as often as they wish with no penalties or capping. Students who otherwise meet the requirements for award as stipulated in the [Academic Taught Regulations](#) but fail to pass the Moodle-based Academic Integrity module will not be awarded.

Section 5 – Educational aims of the course

The aims of the course are:

- to provide a systematic understanding of knowledge relating to problems of environmental sustainability and corporate social responsibility;
- to develop critical awareness of current qualitative and quantitative research methodologies relevant to the subject area under investigation;
- to develop conceptual tools for analysing and evaluating complex problems in the fields of both sustainability and ethical business;
- to provide structured opportunities for students to develop and test their own hypotheses in relation to issues in the areas of sustainability and management;
- to provide a suitable level of training for students interested in careers in government, international and non-governmental organisations, teaching, journalism or corporate life, as well as postgraduate research.

Section 6 - Course learning outcomes

In general terms, the courses provide opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate the following learning outcomes. (*Categories – Knowledge and understanding (K), Skills and other attributes (S), and Transferable skills (*)*)

Course learning outcome

1. To define and critique key concepts and debates in sustainability, development and management relevant to the key issues in the 21st century.
2. To evaluate how management practices, including corporate responsibility, fit into a programme of sustainable development within an organisation.
3. To critically appraise the links between corporate actions and resulting environmental problems and to evaluate the role of environmental management in addressing these.
4. To apply and evaluate, to a professional level, advanced social-science research methods relevant to the field of sustainability and management including an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of different policy options.
5. To demonstrate a practical ability in the dissemination of academic information to a professional and/or broader public audience via written, online, visual and audio material.
6. To plan, design and execute a rigorous and safe piece of independent research in the field of sustainability and management.

Section 7 - Teaching, learning and assessment

Teaching and learning methods mainly comprise lectures, seminars and workshops but will vary according to the intended outcomes of the particular module or session. Lectures provide coverage of the essential subject matter, literature review, and summaries of the key debates, as well as supplying guidance for further study or library work. Each module provides guided reading and indicative bibliography, and throughout the programme, considerable emphasis is placed on independent study and library work, often in preparation for seminars, workshops and lectures. In addition to consolidating and supplementing lectures, seminars or workshops enable students to practise and develop their analytical, problem-solving and research skills. They employ a range of approaches, including case studies, discussion, role-plays, one-to-one interactions, question and answer sessions, or computer-based training. Research skills are further developed to a professional level through the design and production of an independent research dissertation, which involves quantitative and/or qualitative techniques and also serves to integrate knowledge and skills acquired throughout the programme.

Assessment methods vary, in accordance with the skills and knowledge being tested for a specific topic or module. Assignments may involve group work, where assessment is of the work of the group as a whole. Individual projects, in-course tests, group presentations, individual presentations, reports, quantitative analysis, and essays are all used at some point in the assessment of the course. Full details of the assessments of individual module can be obtained from the [Department of Geography and Sociology](#) and the [Royal Holloway Business School](#).

Contact hours come in various forms and may take the form of time spent with a member of staff in a lecture or seminar with other students. Contact hours may also be laboratory or, studio-based sessions, project supervision with a member of staff, or discussion through a virtual learning environment (VLE). These contact hours may be with a lecturer or teaching assistant, but they may also be with a technician, or specialist support staff.

The way in which each module on your degree course is assessed will also vary. Assessments designated as 'summative' will receive a mark which will count towards your overall mark for the module, and potentially your degree classification, depending on your year of study. On successful completion of the module you will gain the credits listed.

More detailed information on modules, including teaching and learning methods, and methods of assessment, can be found via the online [Royal Holloway Curriculum Catalogue](#). The accuracy of the information contained in this document is reviewed regularly by the university and may also be checked routinely by external agencies.

Section 8 – Additional costs

There are no single associated costs greater than £50 per item on this degree course.

These estimated costs relate to studying this particular degree course at Royal Holloway. General costs such as accommodation, food, books and other learning materials and printing etc., have not been included, but further information is available on our website.

Section 9 – Indicators of quality and standards	
QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) Level	7
Your course is designed in accordance with the FHEQ to ensure your qualification is awarded on the basis of nationally established standards of achievement, for both outcomes and attainment. The qualification descriptors within the FHEQ set out the generic outcomes and attributes expected for the award of individual qualifications. The qualification descriptors contained in the FHEQ exemplify the outcomes and attributes expected of learning that results in the award of higher education qualifications. These outcomes represent the integration of various learning experiences resulting from designated and coherent courses of study.	
QAA Subject benchmark statement(s)	http://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/subject-benchmark-statements
Subject benchmark statements provide a means for the academic community to describe the nature and characteristics of courses in a specific subject or subject area. They also represent general expectations about standards for the award of qualifications at a given level in terms of the attributes and capabilities that those possessing qualifications should have demonstrated.	

Section 10– Intermediate exit awards (where available)		
You may be eligible for an intermediate exit award if you complete part of the course as detailed in this document. Any additional criteria (e.g. mandatory modules, credit requirements) for intermediate awards is outlined in the sections below.		
Award	Criteria	Awarding body
PG Diploma	Passes in at least 120 credits, with fails of between 40% to 49% for up to 40 credits condonable (with the exception of any course specific requirements).	Royal Holloway and Bedford New College
PG Certificate	Passes in at least 60 credits with no condonable fails	Royal Holloway and Bedford New College