



OLLSCOIL NA
GAILLIMHE
UNIVERSITY
OF GALWAY

Foghlaim & Forbairt
Ghairmiúil d'Aosaigh
Adult Learning &
Professional Development

International *Summer School*

Ecology: Living Landscapes in
the West of Ireland

STUDENT HANDBOOK 2026



The contents of this booklet are for information purposes only and should not be regarded as the basis of a contract between a student and the University. The syllabus, fees or regulations may be amended at any time.

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INTRODUCTION

University of Galway

University of Galway is located on the banks of the River Corrib about 10-minute walk from the centre of Galway City. From Queen's College to National University of Ireland, the University's past is intertwined with the history of Galway and Ireland. Founded in 1845 with an initial intake of 63 students, University of Galway is now a thriving institution with over 19,000 full and part-time students, of whom 3,972 are international students representing over 115 countries across the globe and making up over 20% of the student population.

University of Galway is comprised of the College of Arts, Social Sciences, and Celtic Studies; College of Science & Engineering; College of Business, Law and Public Policy and College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences. The University offers a wide range of undergraduate and postgraduate degrees and diplomas of international standard, providing students with opportunities for personal and academic development, as well as giving them the knowledge and skills needed to pursue successful careers. The University's approach to innovative programme development means that courses are developed to reflect the ever-changing needs of society, the labour market and the economy.

The Centre for Adult Learning and Professional Development Office at University of Galway runs a series of part-time, flexible learning programmes for adult learners. Flexible learning options are available in Humanities and Social Sciences, Engineering, Science and Technology Studies. The International Summer School Office operates under the auspices of Centre for Adult Learning and Professional Development.

In tandem with its extensive range of programmes, the University campus has expanded and developed. Over recent years, University of Galway has embarked on a visionary development programme aimed at improving the University's campus facilities and student amenities. This major investment programme includes planning for new buildings, as well as extensions and renovations of existing facilities. The University is well on the way to creating the Campus of the Future, welcoming more students each year, and developing a prestigious and innovative University.

International Summer School

The International Summer School at University of Galway offers programmes in Irish Studies, Irish Language, Business and International Management, Ecology, Geology and Archaeological field schools. It also provides academic credit for the Galway Archaeological Field School, Achill Archaeological Field School, Caherconnell Archaeological Field school and the Irish Field school of Prehistoric History.

PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

This new course offers students practical experience of the natural environment in Ireland. It first provides students with an understanding of ecological concepts and practical field skills to identify and survey habitats and species. Students will gain an understanding of conservation and landscape management issues and develop their skills to evaluate the sustainable use and conservation of Ireland's ecological resources.

The summer school is an intensive three-week course with an emphasis on field-based learning. Teaching will be field based by means of lectures, excursions and discussions. Field trips will facilitate contact with the Irish countryside, habitats, flora, fauna and Irish conservation practitioners. Thus, students will have practical experience of the differing ecology of the landscapes of Co Galway. Assessment will be in the form of oral presentations, video blogs, self-assessment and learning journals. Students will be provided with access to learning materials through Canvas and from the University library. Facilities and time for private study have been incorporated into the programme.

Galway City is in a unique position to offer easy access to a vast array of scenic and biodiversity-rich habitats. To the south of Galway Bay, students will explore the ecology, conservation and sustainability of the Burren region a UNESCO World Geopark. In Connemara, they will visit the uplands and blanket bogs while in East County Galway they will learn about turloughs, eskers and raised bogs. On the field trips, the students experience the key aspects of geology, hydrology, and ecology of each habitat and appreciate how the interplay of these elements with anthropogenic activities shapes the environment. Students will also develop their practical field skills in habitat classification, plant species identification and a range of animal survey techniques.

Credits

In order to quantify learning and to place a value on it, courses are allocated credit units. Credits may vary; however, they represent a standard number of classes contact hours and average workload for a programme. This workload includes lectures, practical work, seminars, private work and examinations. The use of the term credits is common among the third level sector and provides a “currency” with which students may transfer from one course to another or gain exemption from elements of a particular programme.

This course carries 5 Semester Credits/10 ECTS Credits at graduate level

PROGRAMME AIM

This course is designed to encourage a holistic approach to studying Irish ecology by looking at all aspects of how Irish habitats are created and maintained through natural processes and anthropogenic activity. It will also consider conservation and sustainability issues in the west of Ireland and how sound understanding of these ecological processes is used to combat the challenges facing the Irish environment.

Module Learning Outcomes Being Assessed

Upon completion of students should be able to:

1. Differentiate between different Irish habitats and associated parameters
2. Explain the interrelation between different parameters that comprise landscapes and habitats
3. Survey a range of Irish species and habitat types using appropriate survey techniques
4. Consider potential species and habitat attributes and properties which can be used to undertake an assessment of the condition of species populations and habitats
5. Identify pressures and threats to habitat and species conservation in the West of Ireland and understand the underlying causes.
6. Describe a range of species and habitat conservation and management techniques.
7. Suggest suitable management strategies for the conservation of habitats and species in a range of scenarios.
8. Translate and apply their knowledge and skills from an Irish context to their home, or any other environment.

ASSESSMENT INFORMATION

Assessment for those requiring credits will be carried out on a continuous basis. The programme will be assessed and graded on the following basis:

Summary of Assessment

	Activity 1	Activity 2	Activity 3	Activity 4
	Learning Journal	Attendance & participation	Group projects	Group projects
Summary of Requirements	Responses to and reflections on programme topics.	Attendance at lectures & class activities. Completion of weekly self - assessment	Research a conservation topic and present case studies.	Make a video blog on one of the field trips.
Word count	2500	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable
Final Submission Date	One week after last day of Course (Friday, 11 th July)	Continuous	Last day of Course (Friday, 4 th July)	Three days after field trip
Submission Method	Digital Copy	Digital Copy	Group presentation	Video via Canvas
Assessment Weighting	50%	10%	20%	20%

Activity 1: Learning Journal

Students are asked to complete a Learning Journal in which they reflect on their understanding of ecological practice and how their participation in and learning from the Summer School programme has informed and enhanced their perspective of conservation ecology in general and Ireland in particular. When completing their Learning Journal students are encouraged to write in a reflective manner, that is to write in a way that shows they have thought about and mulled over the topic they have studied to bring about real learning.

Guiding points

This document should contain:

- A brief 'scene-setting' entry at the beginning on the student's expectations of the course.
- Responses to and reflections on the topics of the module. At sessions, specific questions will be raised for discussion and will be posted on Blackboard as a reminder for journal entries. Students should reflect on their opinions on the topics and whether and how what they have learned about might relate to them.
- Integration of new learning and current practice: what, if any, are the implications of students' new learning for their own practice? Do students now think about current conservation practice differently? Why? What is being done well? What can be improved? In what way do practices in the students' home country and Ireland differ? Which is better or do both have merit? In what way? Why? In what way will students use some of the information and learning gained throughout the programme?

Word count: approximately 2,500 words.

Assessment Criteria

Assessment activities will be assessed against the following criteria:

- Engagement in reflective thinking that demonstrates a deep awareness of ecological surveys and conservation management.
- Assimilation and integration of new knowledge in the approach to species and habitat management.
- Evidence of continued commitment to improve understanding of conservation ecology.
- Demonstration of critical evaluation of the issues surrounding conservation theory and practice.

Activity 2: Participation Self-Assessment

For this activity students are asked to self-assess their participation in class discussions, group activities and overall participation in summer School activities.

5 = excellent, 4 = very good, 3 = satisfactory, 2 = needs improvement, 1 = needs LOTS of improvement, 0 = not even close, I should have stayed home!

Student Name: _____

Date: _____

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Self-Rating Low – High</i>						<i>Example of behaviours displayed</i>
	0	1	2	3	4	5	
I prepared for classes by reading and contemplating relevant background material							
I contributed to class discussions in a meaningful way							
I participated actively in group work activities							
I worked well with fellow learners							
I listened attentively to others							
I participated enthusiastically in class, field work and assignments							
I took responsibility for my own learning							
I expressed information and ideas clearly							

Other ways you demonstrated optimal participation

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Activity 3: Oral Presentations

For this activity, students are asked to prepare a group project which will be based on activities and material covered in class and field trips of that week. The group will prepare an oral presentation on a specific aspect of species or habitat conservation management. The students will be expected to draw on the lessons they have learned over the course of the summer school and apply them in exploring this topic. Each group will be allocated a topic during the Summer School and given time to prepare a presentation to peers and to tutors

When preparing the presentation student should consider the following questions:

- What makes this topic interesting in relation to overall understanding of conservation ecology?
- What are the main conservation issues relating to the assigned topic, what information is required to assess the overall conservation issue?
- What are the possible conservation management options that apply to the assigned situation?
- What insights have students gained on how ecology and conservation in Ireland was and is being shaped?

Activity 4 – Video blog

Students will work in small groups with each group responsible for documenting one field trip in the form of a video blog. The students will make a short video covering all key aspects of the material covered on the field trip. They will describe environmental features of the sites visited including a summary of the geology, hydrology, climate. They will highlight the characteristic flora and fauna of the site and discuss conservation issues as relevant. Videos will be submitted via Canvas within three days of the trip.

ECOLOGY SUMMER SCHOOL TIMETABLE

International Summer School
Ecology: Living Landscapes of the West of Ireland
Monday 15 June –Friday 3 July 2026

Indicative Programme Timetable*

Week 1 – Monday 15 June – Friday 19 2026

Lecture venue: Block E room BLE-1006

Monday, 15 June	
9am-10am	Introduction to the practicalities of module such as timetable schedule, risk assessment, field trips, Blackboard access, record keeping etc. Module Introduction including Programme structure, Programme Aim, Outcome being assessed, Assessment methods, Credits, Recording of activity, Selection of topics for weekly oral presentations
10am-11am	Tour of the College, coffee break
11am-12pm	Introduction to the concepts of Ecology
12am-1pm	Introduction to the geology of the area.
1pm-2pm	Lunch
2-3pm	Biodiversity of County Galway and the West of Ireland
3pm-4pm	Introduction to basic video editing.
Tuesday, 16 June	
9am – 5pm	Field trip: Hydrology in a limestone environment
Wednesday, 17 June	
9am – 4pm	Field trip: Habitat identification. Visit to habitats in East County Galway.
Thursday, 18 June	
9.30am-4pm	Field Trip to Connemara involving field investigations of geology and relevant landscape elements.
Friday, 19 June	
9am-10am	Lecture – Animal survey techniques
10am – 1pm	Mammal survey work on campus. Collect trapping survey equipment. population estimation
1pm-2pm	Lunch
2pm – 4pm	Lab work – analysis of hair trap samples, footprints, bat acoustics, camera traps.

**International Summer School
Ecology: Living Landscapes of the West of Ireland
Monday 15 June –Friday 3 July 2026**

Indicative Programme Timetable*

Week 2 – Monday 22 June – Friday 26 June

Lecture venue: Block E room BLE-1006

Monday, 22 June	
9am- 10am	Preparation for the field trip Discussion of habitat identification (Fossit 2000) plant identification. Quadrats and transects.
10am – 5pm	Field trip to Burren National Park with habitat identification, mapping, vegetation surveys, plant identification. Quadrats, transects.
Tuesday, 23 June	
10am – 1am	Field trip Dangan: Moth Trapping, Sweep netting, Pitfall traps, grassland management issues.
9am -10 am	Lecture: Invertebrate survey techniques
2pm – 4pm	Invertebrate identification in the lab
Wednesday, 24 June	
8 am-10am	Introduction to coastal ecology
10 am-4pm	Field trip to Finavarra: Rocky shore investigations (animals, algae). Analysis of results
Thursday, 25 June	
9am – 10am	Lecture: Vegetation Succession – Sand dunes
10am – 4pm	Botanical Skills: Field trip with habitat identification, mapping, vegetation surveys, plant identification
Friday, 26 June	
9am – 10 am	Lecture: Freshwater habitats – classification, assessment and conservation.
10am - 3pm	Field trip to river site in Barna. River characterisation. Freshwater biological sampling and comparison at different locations and calculation of water quality index. Invertebrate identification.

International Summer School
Ecology: Living Landscapes of the West of Ireland
Monday 15 June –Friday 3 July 2025

Indicative Programme Timetable*

Week 3 – Monday 29 June – Friday 3 July
Lecture venue: Block E room BLE-1006

Monday, 29 June	
9am-10am	Protection of habitats and species in Ireland including introduction to European and Irish Legislation surrounding National Parks, NHA, SAC. habitat and species conservation etc.
10am- 4pm	Field trip: Connemara National Park field trip with discussion of recreation and conservation management. Sheep, cattle and Connemara Pony for habitat management. Assessment of upland habitats
Tuesday, 30 June	
9am-10.15am	Preparation for field trip-. Raised bogs, bog restoration.
10.30am - 4pm	Field trip to Ballydangan bog restoration project.
Wednesday, 01 July	
9am – 10am	Lecture – woodland ecology
10am- 2pm	Visit to Woodland restoration project site/Invasive species control sites Visit to Cong
Thursday, 02 July	
9am-10am	Introduction to Urban ecology
10am- 11am	Urban ecology – Galway City
11am - 11.30	Coffee
1pm - 4pm	Urban biodiversity Challenge
Friday, 03 July	
10am – 1pm	Assessments
1pm	Farewell

*Indicative timetable: The timetable will be finalised when student numbers are confirmed. It may be subject to slight changes dependant on weather or other unforeseen circumstances which may arise during the course.

ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATION

All academic administration queries should be directed to the summer school office on summerschool@universityofgalway.ie

Application

Visit our website for information on [how to apply online](#) and submit an application through the [Online Application Portal](#). The closing date for receipt of applications is **30 March**. Applications will be assessed on a rolling basis.

Fees

Tuition and accommodation costs must be paid in full, in Euro by Electronic Funds Transfer before **30 May**. University of Galway does not offer funding or financial aid to students to take part or complete any of the International Summer School programmes.

Registration

After you accept your online offer, a registration email will issue to your home email address with further information about registration and instructions on how to activate the student [Campus Account](#) and register for [Multi factor authentication](#). Once registered, all communication will be to your university email address, and it is the student's responsibility to check their student email regularly.

Results

Module results will be available to view online through Canvas, the online virtual learning environment. Questions about your results should be directed to your lecturer in the first instance. If you need an original hard copy transcript of your result, please contact the summer school administrator.

Deferrals, Repeats, Appeals and Rechecks

Discuss your results with your lecturer in the first instance.

International Summer School Grading System

The International Summer School Grading Chart below is the recommended model approved by University of Galway to inform conversion of our percentage marks into US letter grade and US GPA.

University of Galway %	US Grade	US GPA
70 – 100	A	4.00
60 – 69	A-	3.667
	B+	3.333
50 – 59	B	2.667
40 – 49	B-	2.333
	C	2.00
0 – 39	C-	1.667
	D+	1.33

	D	1.00
	F	0

TRAVEL AND VISA ADVICE

Visas

You can check if you need a study visa on the website of the Irish [Immigration Service](#). More detailed advice about study visas can be accessed at [Immigration and Health Insurance - University of Galway](#). As a summer school student, you will spend approximately three weeks in Ireland and therefore do not need to register with the Garda National Immigration Bureau. When checked by immigration officials on arrival in Ireland, your passport will be stamped up to the end of your summer school course. Should you wish to stay for a longer period, you may need to liaise with the Garda National Immigration Bureau after arrival to facilitate an extension to your stay. **Please ensure you bring your passport and original letter of offer with you to show to immigration officials at your point of entry to Ireland.**

Travel

The major airports in Ireland are Shannon (on the west coast, approximately 55 miles from Galway) and Dublin (on the east coast, approximately 135 miles from Galway). Shannon Airport is the closest international airport to Galway City.

1. [Shannon International Airport](#) is a 2-hour drive from Galway City. Shannon Airport is serviced by [Bus Éireann](#).
2. [Dublin International Airport](#) is a 2 ½ hour drive from Galway City. It is serviced by the most regular bus connections from Dublin Airport to Galway City centre: [Citylink](#), [GoBus](#) and [Bus Éireann](#).

A regular train service provided by [Irish Rail](#) operates from Dublin (Heuston Station) to Galway. The [Airlink](#) bus service provides regular departures from Dublin Airport to the city centre and Heuston Station. Airlink prepaid tickets can be bought at the Bus and Rail information desk at the airport. They can also be bought from the vending machines located at the bus departure points on the arrival's road. You can get a taxi from the airport to the centre of the city, but the bus is less expensive and just as quick.

Arrival in Galway

Upon your arrival at Galway Coach Park/Bus & Train Station, located adjacent to Eyre Square, several taxi services are available which can take you to check into your accommodation in [Goldcrest Village](#). [City Direct](#) provide bus services within Galway City and operate from Eyre Square.

Tourist Information

General information may be obtained from Ireland West Tourism Information Office, Forster Street. Tel. 091 537700 which is open 9am-5pm Monday-Saturday and closed Sunday.

Accommodation

Students will be housed in self-catering apartments at [Goldcrest Village](#) on University campus in Galway City. Housing provides students with single rooms in fully furnished, self-catering

apartments. Laundry facilities are available on site. Bed linen, crockery, etc are provided in the apartments. Student residences are a 12-minute walk to classes on campus.

Cost of Living Guidelines

As kitchen/cooking facilities are available at [Goldcrest Village](#) student residence, it is cost effective to buy groceries at local supermarkets and self-cater. Allow €80 - €100 per week to buy groceries. There is a small grocery store available at Corrib Village. Local supermarkets ([Dunnes Stores](#), Eyre Square Shopping Centre and Headford Rd., [Tesco](#), Headford Rd, [Lidl](#), Headford Rd, [Aldi](#), Headford Rd) are within a 15-minute walk of Corrib Village.

Local transportation: The average bus fare within the city is €2.70. Taxis cost from €15 - €20 (Within the general Galway City area).

Books and supplies: Approx. €60 - €80 depending on courses chosen.

Laundry/toiletries: Laundry at [Corrib Village](#) is coin operated and approximate costs are €3 per wash and €2 to dry (full machine loads). Toiletries can be purchased quite reasonably at supermarkets or local pharmacies.

Social Activities: Entrance to cinemas: €9 approx. student rate applies with a valid student ID card. Theatre tickets cost slightly more.

Health Care

There are a number of doctor's surgeries within walking distance of the university and operate a student discount for their services.

[Dr. Fergil Colohans Surgery](#) in the Headford Road Shopping Centre (Tel 091-565664). This service is available at a discounted student rate.

[Doctors Clinic](#) located at 32 Newcastle Road, (Tel 091 520340) is a General Practitioner's Service available to students.

[Doctor 365](#) located at University Halls, 3 Newcastle Rd, Galway, H91 WY01 (0818) 000 365

Emergency medical help

In the case of a serious accident, dial 112 for emergency services and request an ambulance. An **Accident & Emergency** service is available at University College Hospital Galway. This facility is located on the Newcastle Rd, close to University of Galway. Students with ongoing medical conditions are advised to contact the International Summer School Office (summerschool@universityofgalway.ie) in advance of arrival to discuss your medical support requirements. We advise that all students have private health insurance in place prior to arrival.

Time Management

One of the greatest challenges facing summer school students is time management. You will need to balance the commitments of attending class, doing course work and participating on field trips, while also making time to enjoy all that Galway City and its festivals have to offer. You may also want to visit other parts of Ireland while here. You will have a very busy schedule while in Galway, so it is worth considering scheduling time before the start, or at the end of the summer school to allow time to travel and enjoy a vacation.

Weather/Clothing

Ireland has a temperate climate and does not experience extremes of heat or cold. It does, however, have high rainfall levels. The weather is unpredictable and can change dramatically in a short period of time. For more advice on what to pack please see [here](#)

UNIVERSITY FACILITIES AND STUDENT SERVICES

Virtual Learning Environment

The virtual learning environment used at University of Galway is called [Canvas](#). All course materials, reading lists, assessment information is uploaded to Canvas and all interactions including live lectures, discussion boards, class announcements, emails will be communicated through Canvas. This online system uses your student email account as the main contact point for all programme information. You are obliged to regularly check this email account for all programme announcements and important information.

Student Campus Account

Once you are registered as a student, have activated your [campus account](#), registered for [Multi-factor Authentication \(MFA\)](#), changed your password then you will be able to access your [Student Email](#) account, which is provided by the University in collaboration with Microsoft.

The James Hardiman Library

The James Hardiman Library is located on the main campus. Library staff provide support, help and training to support you with your studies, research, or teaching. For more information click [here](#)

Information Solutions and Services

Information Solutions and Services provide several IT Services for students and a User Support Helpdesk to trouble shoot any student IT issues. Full details of services and contacts can be found on [here](#).

Printing Service

The print service allows users to print, copy and scan documents using the Multi-Function Printers (MFP) located around campus. Print jobs can be sent to a Multi-Function Printer (often referred to as a 'Print Queue', i.e., when you click File, Print and select your printer) via [PC's \(PC Suite\)](#), [Email \(through your University of Galway e-mail account\)](#) or [Wi-Fi \(requires wireless package download\)](#). For more information, please see [here](#)

Students' Union Shop

The Students' Union operates the campus shop, which is located in the basement of the library building, where students can buy newspapers at discounted rates, NUI Galway hoodies and t-shirts, phone credit, laptop bags, stationery, refreshments, lab coats, dissection kits, confectionery, minerals, hot beverages and all the grocery essentials you will need.

Restaurant Facilities

With 16 restaurants/café's on campus, ranging from contemporary café's and Fairtrade coffee/tea houses to an extensive food hall and café bar, there is something to suit all tastes at University of Galway! View the full list of facilities please refer to our website [here](#)

Gym/Sports Facilities

Students will have access to the [Kingfisher Sports Centre](#) at a reduced student membership rate. This facility includes a 25-metre swimming pool, state of the art gym, saunas and steam room.

SUMMER SCHOOL CONTACTS

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Useful Links

[Overview of IT Student Services](#)

[Canvas for Students](#)

[Campus Account](#)

[Student Email](#)

[Print Service](#)

[Library Guide](#)