



St Andrews Course BL3400 Tropical Research and Field Study



Introduction

The School of Biology at the University of St Andrews has joined with Operation Wallacea to provide the course “BL3400 - Tropical Research and Field Study”. This course combines the high academic standards of teaching and research of St Andrews with the expertise and facilities in tropical research provided by Operation Wallacea. The course is designed to allow students to join Operation Wallacea expeditions where they will receive extensive training in the habitat they choose to visit and then become an integral member of a tropical field research group. During the course the students will be assessed on their level of learning and have to demonstrate and apply many of the skills and knowledge they will learn during their time there. Prior to the expedition students will enrol at St Andrews University online and gain access to teaching material and online resources from St Andrews Library. Then once the expedition is complete credit can be transferred from St Andrews University to the students home University/College through existing or new affiliation arrangements.

Expedition Structure

Students undertaking St Andrews course BL3400 to gain Course Credit for their Operation Wallacea expedition will join one of their research sites during the summer as a Research Assistant. Operation Wallacea expeditions operate on a weekly schedule with a variety of week long options from which students can choose from to build their own personalised expedition itineraries lasting from 4 to 10 weeks, students may design their expedition to cover certain interests or potential credit requirements by signing onto relevant options. Students signing on to receive course credit must complete 4 weeks of accredited options within their expedition to fulfil the course, additional time on expedition can be used to gain more experience but will not be assessed or used to gain additional credit. The week long options come in three categories;

Required Training Courses

This will usually be the first week of the expedition and comprise of a week long course offering training in the specific environment in which the student chooses to do their expedition. Required Training courses available are Jungle Training and Introduction to Forest Ecology in Indonesia, Honduras and Guyana; Coral Reef Ecology Courses in Indonesia, Honduras and Cuba; Bush Training and Savannah Ecology in South Africa, and Introduction to Amazonian Ecology and Conservation in Peru.

Additional Training Course

Many sites offer unique training opportunities that the students can join for a week to gain additional skills in general research or the specific environment they are in. These include the DNA analysis option in Honduras and Cultural Experiences in Honduras and Indonesia.



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Research Projects

The main focus of Operation Wallacea is to conduct research into a wide variety of species and habitats at each site. Specific research groups focus in on each of these and students can join a group as a Research Assistant for a week at a time learning the specifics of research in that field.

The 4 weeks of accredited expedition has to include a Required Training Course and a minimum of two weeks on Research Projects. This means a student planning their 4 weeks of credit gaining options within their expedition can do either;

1 week of Required Training and 3 weeks on Research Projects

OR

1 week of Required Training, 1 week of Additional Training and 2 weeks on Research Projects.

Course Teaching Details and Credit Allocation

During the expedition the student will experience a huge range of teaching and experience gaining opportunities. The following is a break down of the weekly time allocation of scheduled participation, however while on site the student will essentially live full time in a genuine tropical research environment.

	Frequency per week	Hours	Number of weeks	Total
Lectures	8	1	1	8
Seminars	1	1	4	4
Tutorials	1	1	1	1
Practicals	6	8	4	192
Total				205 Hours

In addition to this time students will be expected to do considerable preparation work prior to the expedition in the form of a literature review.

The module is being offered as 20 Credits on the St Andrews scale which translates to 10ECTS credits. Its expected that US universities will award 3-5 credits for the course, however the actual allocation will be entirely down to each universities discretion.



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Assessment Methods

The course comprises four assessment methods, all of which will be finished and submitted by the end of the expedition.

1. Knowledge assessment in class tests - 20%

1 hour of short answer exams run at the end of the Required Training Week and based on the knowledge gained during this week. This will include question on species identification, general ecology and research methods in the specific environment.

2. Student Assessment Form from field academic - 10%

An assessment of the student's application and work rate during an Additional Training Course and Research Projects. This is recorded on the Student Assessment Form. One of these forms will be required from each of the academics that the students works with during an Additional Training Course or Research Project. Therefore each student will have a number of such forms by the end of their expedition and the average grade of these will be submitted towards the final module assessment.

3. Field work Journal - 20%

All students will be required to keep a Fieldwork Journal in a robust note pad. Students should complete this on a daily basis, and text should be **strictly scientific**. The journal should detail the knowledge gained in terms of research methods, conservation issues learned, techniques used, and species seen. This will be signed on site and returned to St Andrews for assessment.

4. Research Proposal - 50%

The student will submit a Research Proposal of a project they have designed that can be used to promote the conservation of an element of the environment in which they have spent the majority of their expedition. This is a purely theoretical project, students will not have time to complete the research while on site. The Research Proposal will constitute the majority of the work by the student and be in the form of a 1500 word report. It is expected that the title selected will focus on a specific element of research they will experience during their expedition (e.g. DNA application in conservation, herpetofauna conservation in the forests, coral reef fisheries protection), therefore the student will gain research experience relevant to their Research Proposal that can be used in its write up.

Contact

If you have any questions about the course or Operation Wallacea expeditions please email standrewscredit@opwall.com or phone the US office on 973 920 0487.

More information is available on the website www.opwall.com/Universities/credits.shtml