



# Postgraduate Diploma / Master of Science in Environmental Toxicology & Pollution Monitoring

## Part-time by Distance Learning

Contact details at end of the document

### Overview

This is the only MSc in Environmental Toxicology & Pollution Monitoring in the United Kingdom. Since 1999, we have had over 200 successful graduates. With over 30 years' experience of teaching Environmental Toxicology, and 20 years teaching via online distance learning, the course team has a significant track record in Ecotoxicology education. This course investigates why pollution occurs, what the risks are to both humans and the environment, and what approaches to management we might have.

The specific objectives of the course are to develop an understanding of:

- The general mechanisms of **toxicity**.
- The basis of setting **environmental quality standards**.
- The behaviour of **contaminants in water, air and soil**.
- The **legislative controls** on contaminants.
- Analysing large datasets using techniques such as **Geographic Information Systems**.

### Starts Dates:

The course has two start dates per year (**20<sup>th</sup> September 2021** and **24<sup>th</sup> January 2022**). We can accept new applications until early September (for late September start) and early January (for late January start).

The full MSc takes 3 years to complete – timetable of modules is on page 5 of this document.

### Cost of Full MSc (21/22):

UK & EU: £6,270

Outside UK & EU: £14,910

Fees can be paid by instalments.

### Why Study Environmental Toxicology & Pollution Monitoring?

This subject has origins in development processes such as resource extraction and product manufacture, and this creates impacts that are seen in all parts of our global systems; on land and in air and water. In recent years the need for professionals with a clear understanding of pollution issues has grown steadily across a wide range of sectors.

Our students come from various backgrounds:

- The majority of students who register on this course are already working in the environmental field. We therefore aim to be as flexible as possible in terms of the topics studied and will give you the opportunity to focus on areas of particular interest to you and/or the organisation for which you work.

- Our students enrol for this course to develop their professional knowledge and to acquire new skills. They do this to improve their career and promotion prospects, change their career, or, if they are recently graduated, to specialise in a new subject area to enhance their job prospects.

## Why Study with Us?

- Established course with excellent reputation and feedback. Ulster University has been at the forefront of online learning and the School of Geography & Environmental Sciences accounts for more than 5% of all part-time postgraduate students studying the Physical Science in the United Kingdom.
- Flexibility of location – As a fully online distance learning student, you can study from almost anywhere, as long as you have a computer and internet access. The flexibility of e-learning also means that you can continue with the course even if you move to a new location or need to travel as part of your job.
- Aimed for people in full-time employment - choose the times you study each week to suit your lifestyle demands.
- Support and advice from experienced lecturers, librarians, e-learning and IT staff. We also employ past course graduates as mentors for further support.
- Access a wide range of online resources such as e-books, scientific papers, digital lectures and discussion boards all within a dedicated e-learning platform (Blackboard Learn).
- Two start dates per year (end of September and end of January).
- Entirely assessed by coursework – no formal examinations.
- Relevant work experience may be accepted in place of standard entry requirements.
- Competitive fees can be paid by instalments.
- Study for individual modules, a Postgraduate Diploma or a Master's degree – whatever your circumstances dictate. You can do the full MSc in stages as suits you.

## Additional Benefits

- The latest version of Microsoft Office is available to download for current students, free of charge. You can run Office on up to five desktop Mac or Windows workstations. You can also run Office Mobile on up to 5 mobile devices (on supported operating systems).
- A range of free downloads and links to products at discount prices is available to all students at the University,
  - Esri's ArcGIS and/or Erdas Imagine provided free of charge to students using GIS or remote sensing as part of their Masters projects.
  - McAfee Anti-virus software: Ensure your PC is protected against the latest threats by having anti-virus software installed. Students can download and install McAfee for free.
  - SPSS statistical software: Students can download SPSS which is a powerful statistical analysis program used for doing advanced statistical analysis of data for research and other projects.
  - Apple Educational Discount: Students qualify for special discounted pricing on Apple computers, software and select third party products.
  - Nvivo: NVivo is software that supports qualitative and mixed methods research. It lets you collect, organise and analyse content from interviews, focus group discussions, survey, audio - and now in NVivo10, social media data, YouTube videos and web pages.
  - Software4Students: Information is available from Software4Students on purchasing Adobe products, Kaspersky Anti-Virus & other security software. Microsoft Operating Systems and other software is also available.

- StudentStore: Laptops can be purchased under the University Colleges and Information Systems Association (UCISA) National Laptop Agreement.
- Dell Products: DELL offer a computer initiative to students at the University.
- DreamSpark: As a University student you can download professional Microsoft developer, designer, and gaming software through DreamSpark at no charge.
- Free Student Membership of the [Institution of Environmental Sciences](#)

## Student backgrounds

Students come from a variety of backgrounds and have included employees from areas such as: The Pharmaceutical Industry; Oil, Gas and Nuclear Industries; Government Environmental Protection Agencies; Engineering and Mining Companies; Environmental Consultants; Laboratory Technicians and people from unrelated areas who may be thinking of a career change. The geographical spread of our students has been global, with students from many areas of the European Union and also further afield such as Australia, Canada, China, Japan, Malaysia, Nigeria, Sri Lanka and the United States. You do not need to visit Ulster at any stage to successfully complete this course.

## Quality Assurance

The course is validated every five years as is a requirement of the United Kingdom Quality Assurance Agency. At the last validation, the teaching team were commended on the following aspects of the provision:

- The innovative nature of the programme
- The relevance of the programme to the subject area
- The excellent structure of the research project module
- The ways in which the programme addressed wider community interests and made students aware of the independencies and social implications of their fields of study

This programme is accredited by the Committee of Heads of Environmental Sciences (CHES), the education committee of the Institution of Environmental Sciences (IES). CHES is the collective voice of the environmental sciences academic community and serves to enhance the quality of environmental education worldwide. A programme accredited by CHES is assured to meet high standards, contain a strong component of practical, field and theoretical activities, and has excellent opportunities for training, work experience and links to the professional environmental sector. Students enrolled on CHES accredited programmes can apply for free Student Membership of the IES and for a fast-track route to membership once they graduate, starting you on a route towards becoming a Chartered Environmentalist or Chartered Scientist. <https://www.the-ies.org/>



## Entry Qualifications

Applicants are generally expected to have a minimum 2(ii) Honours degree in a Science subject, but candidates with qualifications in other relevant subjects and those without the standard academic

qualifications will also be considered on an individual basis, based on significant relevant work experience. If English is not your first language, the majority of international students will submit scores in either British Council IELTS or the American TOEFL test. The minimum acceptable scores in these tests are as follows: IELTS 6.0 (minimum score of 5.5 in individual bands), TOEFL 550 (or equivalent in the computer or internet-based tests).

If you are unsure about your qualifications, email the course director ([rw.douglas@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:rw.douglas@ulster.ac.uk)).

## **Module Summaries**

The PgDip is made up of four taught modules (30 credits per module). There is one module in each semester (15 weeks) of a two semester University year, with one semester starting in late September and another in late January (you can start the course in September or January). The four modules accumulate to the award of PgDip in Environmental Toxicology and Pollution Monitoring (120 credits). At this stage you can take the PgDip Award or continue studying for the MSc (a further research module over 2 semesters, 60 credits) and receive the full MSc. The full PgDip/MSc normally takes three years to complete. There is no summer semester.

### **Postgraduate Diploma Modules:**

#### **EGM802 Environmental Data Analysis – 30 credits**

This module will provide new and synthesise existing knowledge and skills necessary to understand and analyse environmental data. Statistics, environmental modelling, geographical information systems and presentation skills will all be taught and demonstrated. The students will put this knowledge into action in the form of worked examples and assessments. Knowledge and evaluation techniques are provided in lectures, skills developed during worked examples and demonstrated by assessments.

#### **EGM820 Environmental Toxicology – 30 credits**

This module provides knowledge and skills necessary to understand the impact of chemicals in the environment. Specific areas covered include: the major toxicants, both organic and inorganic: sources, pathways and fate of major toxicants; specific effects on organisms (including humans); physiological & biochemical principles of toxicity testing; LD50 & NOEC; risk assessment of soils and water; environmental quality standards and toxicity quotients.

#### **EGM821 Pollution Monitoring – 30 credits**

This module provides the knowledge and skills necessary to monitor pollution of the environment. The topics included are: the key elements of the monitoring programmes for air, water and land; sample collection; chemical methods of analysis, including quality assurance; biological methods of analysis, including toxicity tests and bioassessment; use of environmental models; statistics, data analysis and assessing compliance and; critical loads. The student gains experience through lectures, supporting documents, directed reading and practicals.

#### **EGM822 Water Management – 30 credits**

This module introduces the theory and practice of water management. It is intended to provide an understanding of current methods of water treatment and distribution, sustainable use of resources and principles of water quality management and legislation. In addition it aims at teaching skills in analysis and interpretation of water quality data and in applying water legislation. Lecture-based teaching of key concepts is reinforced by linked case study based practical exercises. The module assumes no prior knowledge or experience of water management.

Order of modules for student starting September 2021 PgDip/MSc in Environmental Toxicology and Pollution Monitoring (1647/1648)			
<b>EGM802</b>	<b>Environmental Data Analysis (30 credit points)</b>		<b>EGM820</b>
<b>Academic Year 2021/22</b>	<b>Semester 1</b>		<b>Academic Year 2021/22</b>
<b>(teaching weeks)</b>	<b>Monday Starting</b>		<b>(teaching weeks)</b>
week 1	20-Sep-21		week 1
week 2	27-Sep-21		week 2
week 3	04-Oct-21		week 3
week 4	11-Oct-21		week 4
week 5	18-Oct-21		week 5
week 6	25-Oct-21		week 6
week 7	01-Nov-21		week 7
week 8	08-Nov-21		week 8
week 9	15-Nov-21		week 9
week 10	22-Nov-21		week 10
week 11	29-Nov-21		week 11
week 12	06-Dec-21		week 12
Holiday	13-Dec-21		Holiday
Holiday	20-Dec-21		Holiday
Holiday	27-Dec-21		week 13
week 13	03-Jan-22		week 14
week 14	10-Jan-22		week 15
week 15	17-Jan-22		
<b>EGM821</b>	<b>Pollution Monitoring (30 credit points)</b>		<b>EGM822</b>
<b>Academic Year 2022/23</b>	<b>Semester 1</b>		<b>Academic Year 2022/23</b>
<b>(teaching weeks)</b>	<b>Monday Starting</b>		<b>(teaching weeks)</b>
week 1	26-Sep-22		week 1
week 2	03-Oct-22		week 2
week 3	10-Oct-22		week 3
week 4	17-Oct-22		week 4
week 5	24-Oct-22		week 5
week 6	31-Oct-22		week 6
week 7	07-Nov-22		week 7
week 8	14-Nov-22		week 8
week 9	21-Nov-22		week 9
week 10	28-Nov-22		Holiday
week 11	05-Dec-22		Holiday
week 12	12-Dec-22		week 10
Holiday	19-Dec-22		week 11
Holiday	26-Dec-22		week 12
Holiday	02-Jan-23		week 13
week 13	09-Jan-23		week 14
week 14	16-Jan-23		week 15
week 15	23-Jan-23		
<b>Note:</b> Project module (EGM826 - 60 credit points) for MSc starts after successful completion of the above four modules. EGM826			

## EGM826 Masters Project Module – 60 credits

On completion of the Postgraduate Diploma, students may continue to the Masters course. The award of Masters requires a pass in module EGM826, the Environmental Toxicology & Pollution Monitoring Project. This module is intended to give scope to investigate topics of particular interest, allowing students to develop and demonstrate the ability to undertake independent research. Topics may potentially include issues relevant to their workplace. The Masters project is assessed through a combination of a Research Proposal, Literature Review, Online Presentation and Final Research Paper (which may, with the agreement of your supervisor, be submitted for publication to an academic journal). The Project module takes another two semesters by part-time study (i.e. one year). Your initial project idea is developed in discussion with the Course Director. The Course Director then assigns you a University Supervisor who will help you complete the project. (University project supervisors currently include: Dr Richard Douglas, Professor Phil Jordan, Dr Aine Gormley-Gallagher, Dr Jenny Douglas, Professor Brian Rippey and Dr Joerg Arnscheidt).

The following examples of recent MSc projects illustrate the breadth of potential research areas:

- Spatial Distribution of Macroplastics and Microplastics in the Beach Sediment of Vancouver British Columbia.
- Ecological risk assessment for surface water receptors of the Gallego river associated with the presence of Lindane and other Hexachlorocyclohexane isomers waste in the Sabinanigo area of Spain.
- Natural Background and Anthropogenic Soil Arsenic and Cadmium Concentrations and their Bioavailability in the Gloucestershire and Somerset Regions.
- Sustainable Mining: Reducing The Effects Of Metaliferous Mining Waste Rock Through Effective Reuse.
- Is the Introduction of Derived No Effect Limits Causing Confusion for Downstream Users of Chemicals?
- Radiocaesium Red Grouse Guano Monitoring.
- The Assessment Of Antimicrobial Materials Using A Spectrophotometric Bioassay.
- The Development Of An Earthworm Avoidance – Reproduction Test For The Assessment Of Heterogeneously Contaminated Site Soils.
- Analysis Of Rainbow Trout Bioassay Results From A Lead/Zinc Smelter.
- Development Of Operating Parameters For Lycra® Effluent Bio-Treatment To Achieve IPPC Emissions Guidelines For BOD5 and COD.
- Risk assessment of PAH mixtures in soil: The use and misuse of benzo(a)pyrene.
- Evaluation of Chromogenic media for the detection of E.coli and Intestinal Enterococci in bathing water samples.
- Toxicity of Stable Strontium in Surface Freshwaters of the Oil Sands Region in Alberta, Canada – Deriving An Aquatic Guideline and Refined Chronic Effects Benchmark.
- Does rainbow trout farming have negative effects on the Kargiotis River (Cyprus)?
- Effects of pH, rainfall and land classification on raw water 2-methyl-4-chlorophenoxyacetic acid detections: Implications for drinking water.

Example of *past student* MSc published papers:

**Bucior, A.**, Rippey, B., McElarney, Y. and Douglas, R. (2021). "Evaluating macrophytes as indicators of anthropogenic pressures in rivers in Ireland." *Hydrobiologia* 848(5), 1087-1099.

**Gaston, L.**, Lapworth, D.J., Stuart, M. and Arnscheidt, J. (2019). "Prioritization Approaches for Substances of Emerging Concern in Groundwater: A Critical Review." *Environmental Science & Technology* 53(11): 6107-6122.

**Hickey, A.**, Arnscheidt, J., Joyce, E., O'Toole, J., Galvin, G., O'Callaghan, M., Conroy, K., Killian, D., Shryane, T., Hughes, F., Walsh, K. & Kavanagh, E. (2018). "An assessment of the performance of municipal constructed wetlands in Ireland." *Journal of Environmental Management*. 210: 263-272.

**Davies, A.J.** and Hope, M.J. (2015). "Bayesian inference-based environmental decision support systems for oil spill response strategy selection." *Marine Pollution Bulletin* 96(1-2): 87-102.

**Hagen, T.G.** and Douglas, R.W. (2014). "Comparative chemical sensitivity between marine Australian and Northern Hemisphere ecosystems: Is an uncertainty factor warranted for water-quality–guideline setting?" *Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry* 33(5): 1187-1192.

### **Academic Profile of the Course Team:**

Dr Richard Douglas (Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy) is Course Director and has research interests in the movement of metals in the environment. Other teaching members include Professor Phil Jordan, Dr Joerg Arnscheidt, Professor Brian Rippey and Dr Aine Gormley-Gallagher.

Recent Papers of the team:

Mellander, P.E., Jordan, P., Bechmann, M., Fovet, O., Shore, M.M., McDonald, N.T. and Gascuel-Oudou, C. (2018). "Integrated climate-chemical indicators of diffuse pollution from land to water." *Scientific Reports* 8.

Gormley-Gallagher, A.M., R.W. Douglas & B. Rippey (2016). "Metal to phosphorus stoichiometries for freshwater phytoplankton in three remote lakes." *PeerJ* 4. 10.7717/peerj.2749

Mellander, P.E., P. Jordan, M. Shore, N.T. McDonald, D.P. Wall, G. Shortle & K. Daly (2016). "Identifying contrasting influences & surface water signals for specific groundwater phosphorus vulnerability." *Science of the Total Environment* 541: 292-302.

Gormley-Gallagher, A.M., Douglas, R.W. and Rippey, B. (2015). "The Applicability of the Distribution Coefficient, K-D, Based on Non-Aggregated Particulate Samples from Lakes with Low Suspended Solids Concentrations." *Plos One* 10(7): 15.

McInerney, C.E., L. Maurice, A.L. Robertson, L. Knight, J. Arnscheidt, C. Venditti, J.S.G. Dooley, T. Mathers, S. Matthijs, K. Eriksson, G. S. Proudlove & B. Hanfling (2014). "The ancient Britons: groundwater fauna survived extreme climate change over tens of millions of years across NW Europe." *Molecular Ecology* 23(5): 1153-1166.

### **Student Feedback**

Feedback from students consistently shows that they find the course both challenging and enjoyable, and that despite studying at a distance, they feel very well supported by teaching staff, librarians and the course administrators. The fact that many new students join the course on the recommendation of previous students testifies to the satisfaction levels of graduates of the course.

### **Comments from Past MSc Environmental Toxicology & Pollution Monitoring students:**

#### **Colm Harkin, Senior Environmental Advisor, Australia**

This was my first experience of an online, distance learning course; and it was a number of years since I had completed my degree and having been working full time in the Environmental field. I found the provision of information was excellent and had no problems getting started. The overall experience was excellent and I would highly recommend the course based on the high quality of the resources and level of support from the people involved.

I found that the quality of information provided within each module was of a high standard, and very well considered for the study topics and assignments. The resources signposted within both the course material and online platforms were also of a high standard; and I definitely did not find myself wanting in

this regard.

Throughout the course, at both PgDip and MSc level, I found that the support and feedback available from the University staff and course tutors/e tutors was excellent. The tutors and staff were always very quick to reply and provided good feedback on assignments and coursework. On a personal level, I also found that the tutors and staff were very conscious and understanding of the demands of undertaking study while working full time.

There were numerous benefits to me from working on-line, most importantly that I was employed full time and wanted to continue studying simultaneously. When I started the course I was required to travel a lot for work, and the online format meant that I could access my course information and get updates quite easily while on the move or away from home. For the MSc portion of the course I was working permanently overseas and was able to continue my studies seamlessly.

This course has helped my career profoundly, allowing me to expand my scientific knowledge and pursue my own research. Obtaining the PgDip and MSc has allowed me to pursue and obtain my Certified Environmental Practitioner status (Australia/NZ) and has meant that I have been able to undertake and pursue further research opportunities. At the end of last year I applied for and obtained a Scholarship to undertake a PhD in Environmental Economics at the University of Western Australia, which (hopefully) I am able to pursue later this year.

### **Anthony Wilson, Technical Advisor, Northumbrian Water Group, England**

I have to admit that for someone who had been out of education for a while I found the course challenging, however the quality of the materials and resources available for the modules helped me to overcome the challenges and allowed for me to focus in the studies and on the assignments. I found the online discussion forums particularly helpful and gave me a chance to interact with fellow students and e-tutors. The support and feedback from the e-tutors and staff was excellent and certainly helped to break down any perceived barriers that there may be with online learning.

Online learning suited my personal circumstances as it meant that I could juggle full time employment, family and study and spreading the ETOX MSc course over three years part time meant that the workload from the course was more spread out allowing me to manage it more effectively.

The course has had the desired effect on my career and not long after completing it I applied for (and got) a position in the Wastewater Compliance department where the skills learned during the ETOX course are directly applicable and help investigate and understand the impact of fats, oils and grease (FOG) discharges on the sewer network as well as pollution incidents on water courses.

### **John Paul McEntee, Executive Chemist, Monaghan County Council, Ireland**

My overall experience was one of fulfilment that I chose to do this course. It was a challenge to balance the demands of the course and continue working but the online delivery of the course made this run smoothly. I still refer to the notes and lecture content provided by the course on a regular basis as it is very relevant to my current role.

Support and feedback was available from tutors and even fellow students through the easy to use online portal. If I ever needed any help a tutor was never far away. As I am in full time employment and live over 2 hours away from the campus, online delivery was essential. I found the online portal very reliable and easy to use. It also provides an excellent forum to talk to other students. Since completing the course I have been promoted 3 times and I am now in a middle management chemist role in a local authority. I currently work in implementation of the Water Framework Directive.

### **Tony Hickey, Water and Wastewater Optimisation Analyst, Ireland**

I found the course very engaging and broadened my knowledge of environmental fate of contaminants.

The course was also very relevant to my work and has helped to give me a more holistic perspective of environmental toxicology in my work setting and will be very beneficial to my career going forward. The course material provided was on a very user friendly platform. I found the course material was relevant to the subject matter. Studying online was the best option for me because it gave me flexibility with a busy family and work life. It was also made easier by the flexibility of the course lecturers and tutors to students needs and also their prompt reply to questions. Overall I would recommend the course.

**Julie (Elliot) James, Manager, Toxicology & Regulatory Affairs Intertek Scientific and Regulatory Consultancy, Canada**

The overall experience of the course - great, course was interesting. Resources / professors / assistants were always available. Course modules moved at a good pace. The quality of the materials and resources available for your modules – Great.

The benefits of learning online - excellent. I was able to continue working and earn my degree at the same time. Taking time off from work for in class learning would have been difficult

How the course has helped my career - I feel that I am regarded a more highly.

**Shane Dalligan, Quality Control Chemist, Forest Tosara Ltd, Ireland**

I found the course to be well paced, informative and challenging. The required input in terms of time was well measured. The support network was strong and lots of useful information was easily accessed. The online resources were of a high quality and the response times were very efficient.

The feedback was very useful and informative, the e-tutors are incredibly supportive. The convenience of time management is apparent, being able to work to your own timetable in situations whereby your lifestyle or work schedule otherwise prohibits alternative forms of study.

An increase in knowledge has catered for salary increments and generally showing a willingness to learn or a desire to become a better/more useful/skilled employee has reflected favourably upon my employers.

**Rebecca Richardson, Senior Environmental Health Scientist, Australia**

Initially I was worried about motivating myself to undertake an online MSc course but I needn't have worried. The course materials were comprehensive, delivered regularly and in a timely manner. The online support from fellow students, e-tutors and lecturers was fantastic and prompt, with no question too silly to answer. Being able to draw on your own work experiences when undertaking some of the module assessments improves your critical thinking skills in the workplace. The valuable skills and knowledge I gained during this course have provided me with more career opportunities, including a promotion at work and I am about to commence a PhD. I would definitely recommend this course.

**Paddy Lambe, Corporate Environmental Consultant, Dublin Institute of Technology, Ireland**

I graduated from the MSc in Environmental Toxicology and Pollution Monitoring in 2013. Since then, the course has helped me develop my skills as an environmental consultant. It gave me the skills and the confidence to understand complex issues and respond to client needs in a meaningful and effective way. Since graduating, I was able to move from my workplace to a different Environmental Consultancy focusing on international environmental projects. I have also worked for the past 2 years as a part time lecturer for a local University delivering courses to degree level students. The course also helped me achieve full membership of the Institution of Environmental Sciences and become a Chartered Scientist through the Science Council.

I studied the MSc course over three years while working as an Environmental Consultant. The flexibility of the course allowed me to work independently and within a schedule which was 100% flexible around my personal and professional commitments. I actually completed most of the second year of the course in a different timezone when I worked on a remediation project in the Caribbean. The fact that I was able to do this meant that the development of my career through work experience did not suffer as a result. The support I received from my tutors during the course was excellent, from the efficient response time, to the high quality guidance it offered. I felt that during the course, even though the majority of interaction was in an online environment, I really bonded with my classmates and tutors alike. This was one element of the experience that I was not expecting and was quite encouraging. The quality of training materials also provided for an interactive learning experience. These key issues shaped my overall experience of the course which I can say has had a profound impact on my career and personal achievement goals that will stay with me for the rest of my life. I would very much recommend this type of learning for anyone wishing to further their career prospects in Environmental areas and would appreciate the overall flexible learning style it offers.

#### **Andrew Davies, ConocoPhillips, Scotland**

Farewell! I've finished the course now, passed my MSc and even had my project accepted for publication! I guess I'll have my account with the Portal and Blackboard revoked soon...so this is a very fond farewell to all my fellow students and the wonderful teaching and support staff at Ulster. I've had a brilliant time doing the course, honestly and hugely enjoyed it and I'm very grateful to the staff. All the best to you students!

#### **Ronan McShane, Loughs Agency, Northern Ireland**

I have had the most extraordinary journey from 2011 to 2013 and then completing the thesis in 2014-2015; the break was well needed. So if you find yourself bowing out after the PG Dip don't give up, take a year to relax the grey matter and then climb the last mountain. It has been exhausting I must admit, but I am 100 times the person having completed it with a whole new outlook on life.

So good luck to all, I can remember the first day of the course and even jumping for joy when accepted to do both the PG Dip and MSc on both occasions. As I sit here now it is in serene calm after the storm, with a huge smile on my face as I have only 3 weeks until my graduation. So I am sending my best wishes to all those who have just started.

#### **Past Graduate Video Interviews**

Below are three YouTube interviews from the Course Director and recent students – they outline their experience on the course, including experience of the research project:

<https://bit.ly/37cbLdq>

<http://bit.ly/2y0kZJQ>

<https://bit.ly/2lvq07z>

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **How does a distance learning course work?**

Most of the course materials, student support and general study guidance and resources are provided via a teaching platform called Blackboard. Students download digital versions of their teaching materials (e.g. illustrated documents, podcasts, practical instructions) at the start of each week and work through them at their own convenience. Coursework (e.g. projects, tests etc.) is also submitted via Blackboard. Unlike a traditional classroom environment, students studying online use communication mechanisms such as discussion boards, chat rooms or video-conference tools to interact with staff and other students, and are not required to attend the campus at any time during the course (though they are welcome to visit the university to use its facilities or meet with staff if they wish).

Many students choose to study by distance learning because they do not have the option of enrolling for an on-campus course, while others prefer the flexibility of time and location afforded by studying online over the face-to-face teaching and interaction of an on-campus course.

### **What help is available for people studying by distance learning?**

The course is supported by the academics responsible for each module and by one or more e-tutors (who are experienced Environmental Toxicology graduates). Students are encouraged to use the Blackboard forums to discuss course-related matters with staff and other students and to seek help when required, and can also contact us via email, phone, Skype, or in person, as preferred. General information about the course, contact details for relevant staff, study skills advice and links to other resources are provided through Blackboard, and our course administrator will assist you with any non-academic issues or direct you to the appropriate person, if you need assistance with things like enrolment, access to the University's electronic journals and ebooks, technical queries etc.

### **How is the course assessed?**

Each module is assessed entirely by coursework – there are no formal university exams. Coursework consists of a mixture of assignments such as project reports, practical write-ups, presentations and online tests. We place strong emphasis in coursework on developing and enhancing practical and data analysis abilities, as well as academic and professional skills such as report-writing.

### **How many hours a week does the course take?**

In addition to working through course materials, students need to spend time reading and preparing for tests and assignments. The amount of time taken up each week depends on various factors including aptitude, experience and motivation, but as a general guide, part-time students should expect to allocate anything from 6 to 20 hours per week for the 15 weeks of a module. No teaching takes place during the summer months.

### **The Online Environment**

To take this course, you will need access to a computer with a fast internet connection. The course uses the Blackboard learning environment – this is one of the largest online education software providers in the world. You will automatically get access to this when you become a registered student with the Ulster University.

You will find that this course is much more flexible than traditional on-campus university courses as you can study using your own computer and the internet, at your own pace, any place and any time (within given timeframes). A lot of people mistakenly assume that they will feel isolated in an online course. To

their surprise, most find that the course actually provides a high degree of personal contact as the online format facilitates communication in ways that would be impossible in other situations.

As a distance learning student with Ulster University you can:

- Submit work quickly and easily using the Blackboard internet technology.
- Email your lecturer or e-tutor with queries or problems as they arise and receive fast, useful feedback to ensure successful progression.
- Liaise with other students by email or through discussion forums and use shared ideas and information.
- Use the University's extensive online resources of electronic journals, books and databases.

### **Cost of the Course (Fees)**

**Fees for students from the UK and EU\*** (2021/22 entry) are £6,270 for the Masters; if you only wish to study for the PG Dip, the fees are £4,180. Modules can also be taken on an individual basis.

**Fees for students outside the UK and EU** (2021/22 entry) are £14,910 for the Masters; if you only wish to study for the PG Dip, the fees are £9,940.

<https://www.ulster.ac.uk/finance/student/tuition-fees-rates/tuition-fees-202122>

Fees can be paid by instalments. The university also offers flexible payment options to spread the cost of the course over their study period. You can pay each year's fees up-front or in five or ten equal monthly payments each year.

Further details of fees and instalment plans can be found at:

<https://www.ulster.ac.uk/finance/student/tuition-fees-rates/tuition-fees-202122>

Further study costs are kept to a minimum. Online text books and scientific articles needed for study are available free when you start each module.

Please note that there are currently no grants or scholarships for the course (however keep a check on the course homepage as we have had Commonwealth scholarship funding in the past). From 2018/19 academic year, the Government provides a tuition fee loan to UK students for postgraduate study. The Postgraduate Tuition Fee Loan is available for postgraduate courses studied distance-learning part-time, over no more than three years. <https://www.gov.uk/masters-loan>

Past graduates from Ulster can receive a 10% discount on their tuition fees

<https://www.ulster.ac.uk/finance/student/tuition-fees-rates/tuition-fees-discounts/alumni-discount>

## **Further Information**

If you have any additional queries relating to any aspect of the course, please do not hesitate to contact either:

### **Course Director**

#### **Dr Richard Douglas**

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### **Course Support Assistant**

#### **Niamh McInerney**

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### **Applying for the course**

You can apply online at:

<https://www.ulster.ac.uk/courses/202122/environmental-toxicology-and-pollution-monitoring-26893>