



Module Specification

Animal Behaviour and Cognition

Version: 2026-27, v2.0, Approved

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Part 1: Information

Module title: Animal Behaviour and Cognition

Module code: USPJJB-15-3

Level: Level 6

For implementation from: 2026-27

UWE credit rating: 15

ECTS credit rating: 7.5

College: College of Health, Science & Society

School: CHSS School of Social Sciences

Partner institutions: None

Field: Psychology

Module type: Module

Pre-requisites: None

Excluded combinations: None

Co-requisites: None

Continuing professional development: No

Professional, statutory or regulatory body requirements: None

Part 2: Description

Overview: This module explores a wide range of non-human animal behaviour from both a developmental and functional perspective, but also its relationship with the wider ecosystem and environment.

Features: Not applicable

Educational aims: The module aims to equip students to approach the explanation of animal behaviours in terms of their evolutionary underpinnings and behavioural

ecology. Through the exploration of topics such as deception in insects, communication in birds, and problem solving in primates, students will explore and analyse diverse behaviours from across the animal kingdom in terms of both proximal and ultimate explanations.

Outline syllabus: Topics covered in the module typically include:

Functions of Animal Behaviour: Principles of Evolution and Natural Selection (Adaptiveness; Kin Selection & Parental Care; Sexual Selection; Tinbergen)

Animal Senses, Perception and Cognition: Contributions to Fitness

Development of Animal Behaviour (Instinct; Learning Theory; Animal Memory), including animal play, imprinting, parenting and the development of birdsong

Causation of Animal Behaviour (Decision Making and Motivation: Mating Systems and Foraging)

Animal Culture and Social organisation, group living, dominance and cooperation

Coordination of Animal Behaviour: Communication; Language & Signals

Animal-human conflict and challenges to wildlife and biodiversity

Animal behaviour and its significance to addressing challenges to wildlife and biodiversity

Animal behavioural research methods and evaluation 1 (including field activities)

Animal behavioural research methods and evaluation 1 (including assessment workshops).

Part 3: Teaching and learning methods

Teaching and learning methods: The curriculum is interspersed with lecture content and outdoor activities which familiarise students with animal behavioural research methods and ethics. All learning activities are also shaped with a view to students considering the implications of the subject matter for humans, for sustainability and the conservation of biodiversity. To illustrate, students will be required to apply their understanding of animal behaviour to applied challenges such as: evacuation and relocation of animals from at-risk habitats (e.g. bush fires or deforestation); animal welfare in zoos, and communicating animal behavioural science to the general public.

Module Learning outcomes: On successful completion of this module students will achieve the following learning outcomes.

MO1 Understand and apply ethological and behavioural ecological approaches to explaining a range of non-human animal behaviours, and integrate both proximal and ultimate levels of explanation.

MO2 Design and effectively communicate ways in which knowledge of animal behaviour and cognition can be utilised in behavioural interventions and public engagement initiatives which address threats to welfare, sustainability and biodiversity.

MO3 Identify and apply appropriate research design, behavioural measurement techniques and ethical considerations to the design and evaluation of behaviour change and public engagement solutions.

Hours to be allocated: 150

Contact hours:

Independent study/self-guided study = 117 hours

Face-to-face learning = 33 hours

Reading list: The reading list for this module can be accessed at [readinglists.uwe.ac.uk](https://uwe.rl.talis.com/modules/uspjib-15-3.html) via the following link <https://uwe.rl.talis.com/modules/uspjib-15-3.html>

Part 4: Assessment

Assessment strategy: The module is assessed via a coursework portfolio which builds on students' formatively assessed Teams Class Notebook. This design supports students to engage with summative assessments that are: scaffolded; designed as 'real-world' tasks allowing for learner creativity and choice; and which support key employability skills and competences.

Formative Assessment:

In the opening six weeks of the module, the lecture content supports students to select a non-human species of their choice, and undertake an analysis of the: i) cognition and perceptual/sensory systems (e.g. learning, visual, auditory, mechano- and chemoreception), and ii) behaviour (e.g. feeding, predator avoidance, mating, social organisation). Students also identify two potential challenges related to their animal (e.g. human-wildlife conflict, conservation or welfare challenges).

Students then post this analysis to Teams Class Notebook and receive feedback to help develop their summative assessment pieces. Formative feedback provided to the student will focus on: i) developing their conceptual understanding; ii) guiding further reading, and, iii) facilitating students to consider the applied implications of their analysis. i.e. they will be helped to consider and further explore how the behaviour and cognition of the animal might be applied to issues such as: improving the human-animal interface; conservation education; captive care; captive or wild habitat augmentation; or species relocation/re-introduction.

Summative Assessments

Assessment Task: Written Assignment (2000-words) maximum

Using their prior analysis in the formative assessment report and the feedback they receive, students will then complete an intervention proposal. The students will be provided with headings and maximum 1000 word limit to synthesise the information

from their formatively assessed analysis and subsequent reading in order to create a proposal that:

Identifies a behavioural or conservation challenge to their chosen species named in the formative analytic report;

Articulates a proposed intervention to respond to the challenge;

Presents a concise and relevant review of what is already known about the relevant behaviours that underpin the challenge and proposed intervention;

Communicates a method for evaluating the proposed intervention (including detail of data collection and ethical considerations).

Coursework Funding Application (1000 words)

Using their analysis presented in the formative assessment report and the feedback provided, students will complete a funding application for a public engagement grant. The application will use the structure and criteria from an authentic grant process supported by the Association for the Study of Animal Behaviour. Guided by their formative feedback, students are required to:

Summarise the cognition and behaviour of the species discussed in their formative report;

Explain the value of engaging the public with this information (e.g. conservation, education);

Identify how they would approach the articulation of this information for a public audience (e.g. film, school outreach talks; short publication);

The assessment will be accompanied by full assessment briefs and criteria, and will support the student in achieving all module learning outcomes. In addition, the intervention and grant proposals have also been selected for their relevance to real-

world tasks and the professional skills we are seeking to nurture in our graduates. They will demonstrate to future stakeholders (including potential employers) the student's skills in producing outputs with real-world impact and relevance. Through the summative feedback, learner choice, and bespoke nature of the assessment and topic focus, students will have the opportunity to produce original and innovative work.

Assessment tasks:**Written Assignment (First Sit)**

Description: Written Assignment (2000 words maximum)

Weighting: 100 %

Final assessment: Yes

Group work: No

Learning outcomes tested: MO1, MO2, MO3

Written Assignment (Resit)

Description: Written Assignment (2000 words maximum)

Weighting: 100 %

Final assessment: Yes

Group work: No

Learning outcomes tested: MO1, MO2, MO3

Part 5: Contributes towards

This module contributes towards the following programmes of study:

Psychology with Criminology [Frenchay] BSc (Hons) 2023-24

Psychology with Criminology {Foundation} [Frenchay] BSc (Hons) 2023-24

Criminology with Psychology [Frenchay] BSc (Hons) 2023-24

Criminology with Psychology {Foundation} [Frenchay] BSc (Hons) 2023-24

Sociology with Psychology {Foundation} [Frenchay] BSc (Hons) 2023-24

Sociology with Psychology [Frenchay] BSc (Hons) 2023-24

Psychology [Frenchay] BSc (Hons) 2023-24

Psychology [Frenchay] BSc (Hons) 2024-25

Psychology with Criminology [Frenchay] BSc (Hons) 2024-25

Sociology with Psychology [Frenchay] BSc (Hons) 2024-25

Criminology with Psychology [Frenchay] BSc (Hons) 2024-25

Psychology {Foundation} [Frenchay] BSc (Hons) 2023-24

Sociology with Psychology {Foundation} [Frenchay] BSc (Hons) 2023-24

Sociology with Psychology [Frenchay] BSc (Hons) 2024-25

Criminology with Psychology [Frenchay] BSc (Hons) 2023-24

Criminology with Psychology {Foundation} [Frenchay] BSc (Hons) 2022-23

Criminology with Psychology [Sep][PT][Frenchay][6yrs] BSc (Hons) 2021-22

Sociology with Psychology [Frenchay] BSc (Hons) 2023-24

Sociology with Psychology {Foundation} [Sep][PT][Frenchay][8yrs] BSc (Hons) 2019-20

Sociology with Psychology [Sep][PT][Frenchay][6yrs] BSc (Hons) 2021-22

Sociology with Psychology {Foundation} [Frenchay] BSc (Hons) 2022-23

Sociology with Psychology {Foundation} [Frenchay] BSc (Hons) 2023-24

Criminology with Psychology {Foundation} [Sep][PT][Frenchay][8yrs] BSc (Hons) 2019-20

Criminology with Psychology [Frenchay] BSc (Hons) 2024-25

Criminology with Psychology {Foundation} [Frenchay] BSc (Hons) 2023-24

Criminology with Psychology [Frenchay] BSc (Hons) 2024-25

Psychology with Criminology [Frenchay] BSc (Hons) 2024-25

Sociology with Psychology [Frenchay] BSc (Hons) 2023-24

Sociology with Psychology [Frenchay] BSc (Hons) 2024-25

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Sociology with Psychology {Foundation} [Frenchay] BSc (Hons) 2023-24

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Psychology with Criminology {Foundation} [Frenchay] BSc (Hons) 2022-23

Criminology with Psychology {Foundation} [Frenchay] BSc (Hons) 2022-23

Psychology [Frenchay] BSc (Hons) 2022-23

Psychology {Foundation} [Frenchay] BSc (Hons) 2022-23

Sociology with Psychology [Sep][PT][Frenchay][6yrs] BSc (Hons) 2021-22

Sociology with Psychology {Foundation} [Sep][PT][Frenchay][8yrs] BSc (Hons) 2019-20

Sociology with Psychology {Foundation} [Frenchay] BSc (Hons) 2022-23

Criminology with Psychology [Sep][PT][Frenchay][6yrs] BSc (Hons) 2021-22

Criminology with Psychology {Foundation} [Sep][PT][Frenchay][8yrs] BSc (Hons) 2019-20

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Psychology with Criminology {Foundation} [Sep][PT][Frenchay][8yrs] BSc (Hons) 2020-21