

Module specification

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Module Code	SCI558
Module Title	Taphonomy
Level	5
Credit value	20
Faculty	FAST
HECoS Code	101218
Cost Code	GAFS

Programmes in which module to be offered

Programme title	Is the module core or option for this programme
BSc (Hons) Forensic Science	Option
BSc (Hons) Forensic Science with Placement Year	Option

Pre-requisites

None.

Breakdown of module hours

Learning and teaching hours	15 hrs
Placement tutor support	0 hrs
Supervised learning e.g. practical classes, workshops	15 hrs
Project supervision (level 6 projects and dissertation modules only)	0 hrs
Total active learning and teaching hours	30 hrs
Placement / work based learning	0 hrs
Guided independent study	170 hrs
Module duration (total hours)	200 hrs

For office use only	
Initial approval date	10/05/2023
With effect from date	September 2023
Date and details of revision	
Version number	1

Module aims

The aim of this module is to introduce students to what happens to the body between death and recovery. This module will introduce students to several different processes of preservation and decay in various contexts. In addition, students will be introduced to the biological and geological interactions that take place following death and deposition of remains. Students will be encouraged to critically examine current taphonomic research and the ethical implications involved in this type of research.

Module Learning Outcomes - at the end of this module, students will be able to:

1	Appraise the concept of taphonomy and the role it plays in forensic investigation.
2	Evaluate current research in forensic taphonomy and related fields of study.
3	Recognise and categorise the features and processes of decomposition.
4	Assess the variables that affect post mortem interval.

Assessment

Indicative Assessment Tasks:

This section outlines the type of assessment task the student will be expected to complete as part of the module. More details will be made available in the relevant academic year module handbook.

Assessment 1 – Oral Assessment (10 minutes)

Students will be asked to choose a research article on a given topic and critically evaluate the chosen article in an oral discussion format.

Assessment 2 – In-class Test (1 hours)

Students will be assessed on their ability to recognise and categorise different features and processes of decomposition and assess the different variables that affect the postmortem interval in the format of an in-class test.

Assessment number	Learning Outcomes to be met	Type of assessment	Weighting (%)
1	1-2	Oral Assessment	50
2	3-4	In-class test	50

Derogations

None.

Learning and Teaching Strategies

Students will be immersed in many practical sessions in the laboratory and in the field. These sessions will provide students with experience of observing taphonomic changes and preservation processes. Students will also gain an array of theoretical knowledge of taphonomy in different contexts and associated research.

Indicative Syllabus Outline

- Taphonomy in different contexts
- Stages of decomposition
- Differential decomposition & crime scene complexity
- Preservation processes
- Relative & absolute dating techniques

- Waterlogged environments
- Burial contexts & their effect on decomposition
- Scavenging
- Case studies
- Cognitive bias & it's implications
- Safe working practices

Indicative Bibliography:

Please note the essential reads and other indicative reading are subject to annual review and update.

Essential Reads

Pokines, J.T. & Symes, S.A. (2021), *Manual of Forensic Taphonomy*, Florida: CRC Press.

Other indicative reading

Haglund, W. & Sorg, M. (1996), *Forensic Taphonomy: The Postmortem Fate of Human Remains*, Florida: CRC Press.

Haglund, W. & Sorg, M. (2001), *Advances in Forensic Taphonomy: Method, Theory, and Archaeological Perspectives*, Florida: CRC Press.

Hayman, J. & Oxenham, M. (2016), *Human Body Decomposition*, Netherlands: Elsevier Science.

Ralebitso-Senior, T.K. (2018), *Forensic ecogenomics: The application of microbial ecology analyses in forensic contexts*, Cambridge: Academic Press.

Schotsmans, E., Márquez-Grant, N. & Forbes, S. (2017), *Taphonomy of Human Remains*, 1st Edition. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.

Employability skills – the Glyndŵr Graduate

Each module and programme is designed to cover core Glyndŵr Graduate Attributes with the aim that each Graduate will leave Glyndŵr having achieved key employability skills as part of their study. The following attributes will be covered within this module either through the content or as part of the assessment. The programme is designed to cover all attributes and each module may cover different areas.

Core Attributes

Engaged

Ethical

Key Attitudes

Curiosity

Confidence

Adaptability

Practical Skillsets

Digital Fluency

Organisation

Leadership & Team working

Critical Thinking

Communication