1. **Title of the module**

SACO8150 (SE815) Forensic Taphonomy

1. **Division or partner institution which will be responsible for management of the module**

School of Anthropology and Conservation, Division of Human and Social Sciences

1. **The level of the module (Level 4, Level 5, Level 6 or Level 7)**

Level 7

1. **The number of credits and the ECTS value which the module represents**

15 credits (7.5 ECTS)

1. **Which term(s) the module is to be taught in (or other teaching pattern)**

Autumn or Spring

1. **Prerequisite and co-requisite modules**

None

1. **The programmes of study to which the module contributes**

MSc Forensic Osteology and Field Recovery Methods

1. **The intended subject specific learning outcomes.  
   On successfully completing the module students will be able to:**

8.1 Understand decomposition from both a chemical and gross morphological perspective.

8.2 demonstrate a systematic knowledge of how environmental conditions affect human decomposition.

8.3 demonstrate a systematic knowledge of how to calculate post-mortem interval (PMI).

8.4 demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of how specific combinations of environmental conditions, and cultural and social traditions, can change the rate and trajectory of taphonomic processes.

8.5 Recognise taphonomic patterns and artefacts which are useful for medicolegal interpretation of death scenes.

8.6 Reflect on the ethics of working with human remains in investigative and research environments.

8.7 Critically appraise the contemporary research effort in forensic taphonomy.

1. **The intended generic learning outcomes.  
   On successfully completing the module students will be able to:**

9.1. critically evaluate and problem solve;

9.2. organise and present information in a clear and concise manner;

9.3. demonstrate advanced development of laboratory and practical skills;

9.4. demonstrate further development of communication by a variety of methods.

1. **A synopsis of the curriculum**

This module will introduce students to the field of forensic taphonomy. Taphonomy is the study of the degradation and preservation of organic remains (usually animal). It is a multidisciplinary field which seeks to understand the physical, chemical and biological processes underpinning the decomposition ecosystem. This knowledge can be applied to medicolegal death investigations to help reconstruct the circumstances surrounding a person’s death and estimate the time since death (post-mortem interval). Students will explore the history and theory of taphonomy, the details of decomposition, and how it varies in different contexts. Past and current post-mortem interval estimation techniques will be discussed, pressing problems highlighted, and the contemporary research enterprise and supporting ethical framework devoted to addressing these will be critically appraised.

1. **Reading list (Indicative list, current at time of publication. Reading lists will be published annually)**

* Haglund, W. D., & Sorg, M. H. (Eds.) (1997). *Forensic taphonomy: the postmortem fate of human remains*. CRC Press
* Haglund, W. D., & Sorg, M. H. (Eds.) (2001). *Advances in forensic taphonomy: method, theory, and archaeological perspectives*. CRC Press.
* Pokines, J., & Symes, S. A. (Eds.). (2013). *Manual of forensic taphonomy*. CRC Press.
* Schotsmans, E.M., Forbes, S.L. & Márquez-Grant, N. (Eds.) (2017). *Taphonomy of human remains: forensic analysis of the dead and the depositional environment*. Wiley.

1. **Learning and teaching methods**

Total contact hours: 30

Private study hours: 120

Total study hours: 150

1. **Assessment methods**
   1. Main assessment methods

Essay (3000 words) (50%)

Taphonomic Report (20%)

Poster & Presentation (30%).

13.2 Reassessment methods

Like for Like. Students failing unrepeatable elements (both the essay (50%) AND Taphonomic Report (20%) may only retrieve credit by repeating the entire module.

1. ***Map of module learning outcomes (sections 8 & 9) to learning and teaching methods (section 12) and methods of assessment (section 13)***

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Module learning outcome** | *8.1* | *8.2* | *8.3* | *8.4* | *8.5* | *8.6* | *8.7* | *9.1* | *9.2* | *9.3* | *9.4* |
| **Learning/ teaching method** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Private Study | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| *Lectures* | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** |  |  |  |
| *Practicals* | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** |  | **X** | **X** | **X** |
| **Assessment method** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| *Essay* | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** |
| *Taphonomic report* | **X** | **X** |  | **X** | **X** |  | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** |
| *Poster & presentation* | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** | **X** |

1. **Inclusive module design**

The School recognises and has embedded the expectations of current equality legislation, by ensuring that the module is as accessible as possible by design. Additional alternative arrangements for students with Inclusive Learning Plans (ILPs)/declared disabilities will be made on an individual basis, in consultation with the relevant policies and support services.

The inclusive practices in the guidance (see Annex B Appendix A) have been considered in order to support all students in the following areas:

a) Accessible resources and curriculum

b) Learning, teaching and assessment methods

1. **Campus(es) or centre(s) where module will be delivered**

Canterbury

1. **Internationalisation**

All methods taught in this module were developed in USA or Europe. We have guest lectures from

Interpol that will talk about different international aspects of forensic taphonomy methods, and how

some this will vary between different legal systems and temporal environments.

**DIVISIONAL USE ONLY**

**Revision record – all revisions must be recorded in the grid and full details of the change retained in the appropriate committee records.**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Date approved | Major/minor revision | Start date of the delivery of revised version | Section revised | Impacts PLOs (Q6&7 cover sheet) |
| 21.07.21 | Major | Sept 21 | 8,9,10,11,12,13,14 | Yes |
|  |  |  |  |  |