

Geography and Outdoor Education @GMIT Mayo Campus

Prospective Student Handbook 2021

“Getting to know yourself, others and the environment”



Galway Mayo Institute of Technology @ Castlebar

Tel: 094 9025700

Web Page

www.gmit.ie/campus/castlebar
<https://www.facebook.com/GMITOUTDOOR/>

Contacts

Kevin.oCallaghan@gmit.ie 094 9043281
Orla.Prendergast@gmit.ie 094 9043159
Stephen.Hannon@gmit.ie 094 9043121
Pauline.Jordan@gmit.ie 094 9043219

Introduction

This booklet has been compiled by the Geography and Outdoor Education Department of GMIT to help answer the many questions we are asked by prospective students. If you have any queries please feel free to contact Orla.Prendergast@gmit.ie .

Here in the Outdoor Education Department we strive to achieve the highest standards in the advancement of good practice in the delivery of outdoor education, adventure activity, environmental education, rural development and natural resource management. We also try to contribute, to the interest and development of the wider community of outdoor educationalists at regional and national level.

Finally, all of the staff here wish you all the best for the future ahead and hope that this degree will be rewarding, and that you will experience challenge, enjoyment, a sense of accomplishment and a gain a fulfilling career.

Go n-eirí libh!
The Course Team



Mountain Geology Fieldtrip

Geography and Outdoor Education

Geography and Outdoor Education share a common philosophy and tradition. Environment and Landscape is a core area within Outdoor Education and therefore Geography is a logical and natural extension of that core area. Outdoor Education is reliant on the natural environment for its location and inspiration. Graduates will be empowered to promote careful use and management of an increasingly threatened and fragile natural world and to educate others in wise use and sustainable practise. Graduates will have the expertise to become involved in Natural Resource management for a range of purposes. Rural Ireland is a contested landscape and the shift away from traditional landuses brings many challenges. Graduates will be well placed to manage the different and sometimes conflicting interests between rural landuses such as farming, tourism, outdoor recreation, nature conservation, forestry, renewable energy and other commercial interests.

Graduates can also apply for the Professional Masters in Education to teach Geography at second level.

Outdoor education incorporates three main areas;

- outdoor adventure activities
- environmental education
- personal and social education and development

Course Introduction

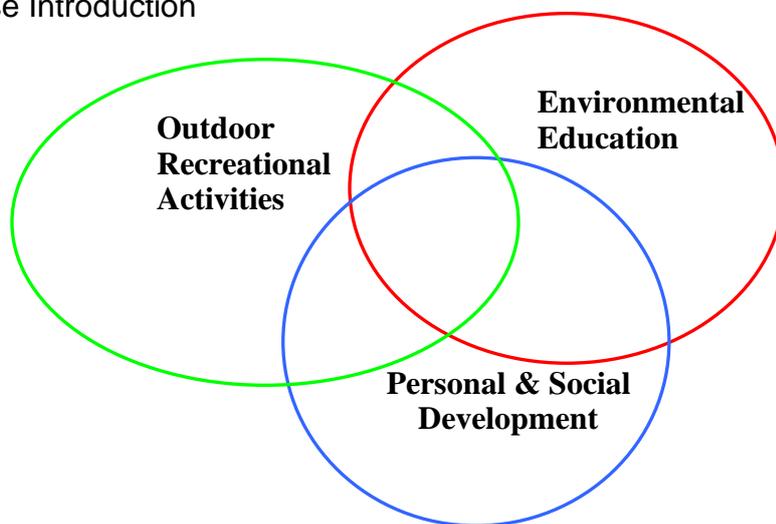


Figure 1 The Range & Scope of Outdoor Education

Outdoor Education uses outdoor activities such as canoeing, climbing, surfing, hillwalking and field studies for the purpose of personal and social development and as a means of becoming more knowledgeable about the natural environment.

The therapeutic, educational, developmental and recreational aspects of outdoor education are now widely recognised and utilised within many sectors in Ireland, such as schools, social care organisations, adventure tourism and youth services. There is now an increased need for professionals who can go forward and chart and manage the future development of outdoor education and outdoor recreation in Ireland.

Introduction to Outdoor Education

The outdoors is used in diverse ways for learning, therapy, tourism and recreation. Research evidence shows the therapeutic benefits of the outdoors and nature for wellbeing and there is a growing enthusiasm for using the outdoor classroom as a powerful and unique medium for learning and development.

Ireland possesses a distinguished inheritance of scenic, geological, archaeological and environmental resources including areas of outstanding landscape, six National Parks, important scientific sites, nature reserves and offshore islands. In addition there are extensive areas of upland terrain, a dramatic coastline and clean waterways that make Ireland an ideal base for countryside recreation and green tourism.

The development of these rural resources is dependent upon a variety of factors including the provision of appropriately trained personnel to assist in the management and sensitive use of these limited resources and often fragile habitats. Within the outdoor recreation sector, there has been significant growth of the number of people involved in outdoor activities. Increasing environmental consciousness and a desire for more active and healthy holidays has led to an increasing demand for outdoor recreation. The growth of adventure tourism including water sports and walking is seen as a key component in the expansion of the tourism industry in Ireland. In particular it is a very large industry along the Wild Atlantic Way. Large tourism developments such as Center Parc in Longford, Greenways and Blueways show the growth and investment in this area.

This growth in tourism numbers, while welcomed, brings with it challenges related to managing visitor numbers to avoid overcrowding and conflicts with local communities. Development of well designed and appropriate infrastructure that can cope with increased numbers are essential. Erosion and damage due to footfall need sensitive management approaches.

This programme will provide outdoor educators a multidisciplinary knowledge of the outdoor environment, the ability to interpret the landscape and environment for others and excellent interpersonal skills. Graduates will enhance the outdoor experience for their clients by ensuring that there are opportunities for learning about the natural and cultural landscapes that they travel through.

Environmental educational programmes are a core component of outdoor education. There is an increasing need to deliver high quality environmental programmes to young people and provide outdoor learning opportunities. The need for appropriately trained staff is amplified by the increased use of field trips in the Geography and Biology Leaving Certificate Syllabus. Outdoor education centres are developing an enhanced capability to deliver field studies through the use of specialised staff and improved facilities.

The Geography element of the programme seeks to instil an understanding of and responsibility for global environmental sustainability. The programme gives institutional expression to developments in landscape studies, which see multidisciplinary as essential to a proper understanding of heritage and culture. Geography is inherently multi-disciplinary and is unique in bridging the social sciences (human geography) with the natural sciences (physical geography). The Human Geography syllabus has strengths in rural development,

society and environment relations, landscape planning, environmental sustainability, cultural identity and representation, citizenship and environmental governance. The Physical and Environmental Geography syllabus covers areas such as geology, landscape history, environmental hazards, biogeography, biodiversity, natural resource management, environmental law and environmental economics.

The Geography and Outdoor Education course provides an exciting mix of academic study and technical training.

In addition to the academic content of the Degrees, students receive technical training and qualifications from the National Governing Bodies for adventure sport. Students are encouraged to reflect on the practical element of the Degree course through guided review and reflection. The students keep a Learning Journal, which records their reflections and helps build connections between the academic components of the Degree course.

There are five core areas of study in the BA honours Degree.

Core Areas

- Adventure Activities
- Geography, Landscape and Environment
- Psychology and Teaching/Facilitation Health and Safety
- Research Methods and Dissertation

Adventure Activities

This involves technical competence training and skills in instructing outdoor activities safely and efficiently with a conceptual understanding of the developmental and educational role of outdoor education. Adventure Activities in Year One allows students to attain personal proficiencies in a selection of adventure sports. Year Two provides leadership and instructional skills training while continuing to improve one's personal proficiency in the various activities. Year Three focuses on providing monitored instructional and organisational experience as well as assisting students to broaden their personal experience in the outdoors. The Adventure Activities modules provide students with practical experience of places, processes and concepts involved in the study of the Irish landscape and environment. The technical and leadership skills are supported by modules, which involve studying personal and group development and that develop communication and teaching skills. These modules will enable graduates to provide developmental and educational experiences to their clients rather than just a safely supervised outdoor excursion. The philosophy of the Leave no Trace ethic is integral to this core area as well as having relevance to all aspects of the programme.

Geography, Environment and Landscape

The Landscape and Environment modules study and explore the flora, fauna, geology and archaeology of the Irish landscape. These modules will enable graduates to interpret the rich cultural and natural diversity of the Irish landscape and will enrich the outdoor journey for both the graduates and their clients and students. These modules also stress sustainable use of the outdoor environment. This area will help empower graduates to promote careful use and management of an increasingly threatened natural world and to educate others in wise use and sustainable practise.

Psychology and Teaching/Facilitation,

This strand of the course addresses areas such as teaching, leadership, psychology, facilitation and group dynamics. The students will need underlying theory, skills and

competence to work effectively with people in a training, educational, therapeutic or recreational setting.

Health and Safety

The Health and Safety modules provide students with the ability to recognise and manage the risk element inherent in outdoor education, while being cognisant of the legislation and health & safety regulations in the industry. Fitness training and diet are also covered. The students also gain first aid and water safety qualifications within these modules.

Research Methods and Dissertation

This strand begins in first year with the IT module and is developed in subsequent years with a Literature Review in third year and Research Methods and Dissertation in fourth year.

The Degree Course Outline

Modules Year 1

Subject	Hrs/Week
Adventure Activities I	9
Communications	3
Earth Processes	3
Health and Fitness Studies	1.5
Information Technology	1.5
Anatomy & Physiology	1.5
Society and Environment	3

Modules Year 2

Subject	Hrs/Week
Adventure Activities 2	9
Geographies of Rural Development	3
Interpersonal Management	3
Safety & Legislation	1.5
Environmental Studies 1	2
Environmental Studies 2	2
Emergency Procedures	2
Work Experience	

Modules Year 3

Subject	Hrs/Week
Adventure Activities 3	8

Developmental Psychology	1.5
Digital Mapping and Multimedia	2
Teaching and Outdoor Education	1.5
Ecological Fieldwork	2
Advanced Emergency Procedures	2
The Irish Cultural Landscape	1.5
Human Activity and the Environment	1.5
The Built Environment	1.5
Sustainable Tourism Development	1.5

Modules Year 4

Subject	Hrs/Week
Dissertation	1.5
Coaching and Performance Enhancement	1.5
Experiential Learning-Expeditions and Facilitation	4
Introduction to Sociology	1.5
Environmental Management and Sustainability	4
Geographical Information Systems	1.5
Heritage Tourism	1.5
Adventure Tourism	1.5

Employment Opportunities for our Graduates

Adventure Tourism

- Guiding & expeditions
- Setting up own businesses

Development Training

- Foroige & Youth Services
- Probation Service
- Social Care
- NYP and Garda Diversion Projects
- Developmental Training Facilitator.
- Green/Nature therapy

Education Sector

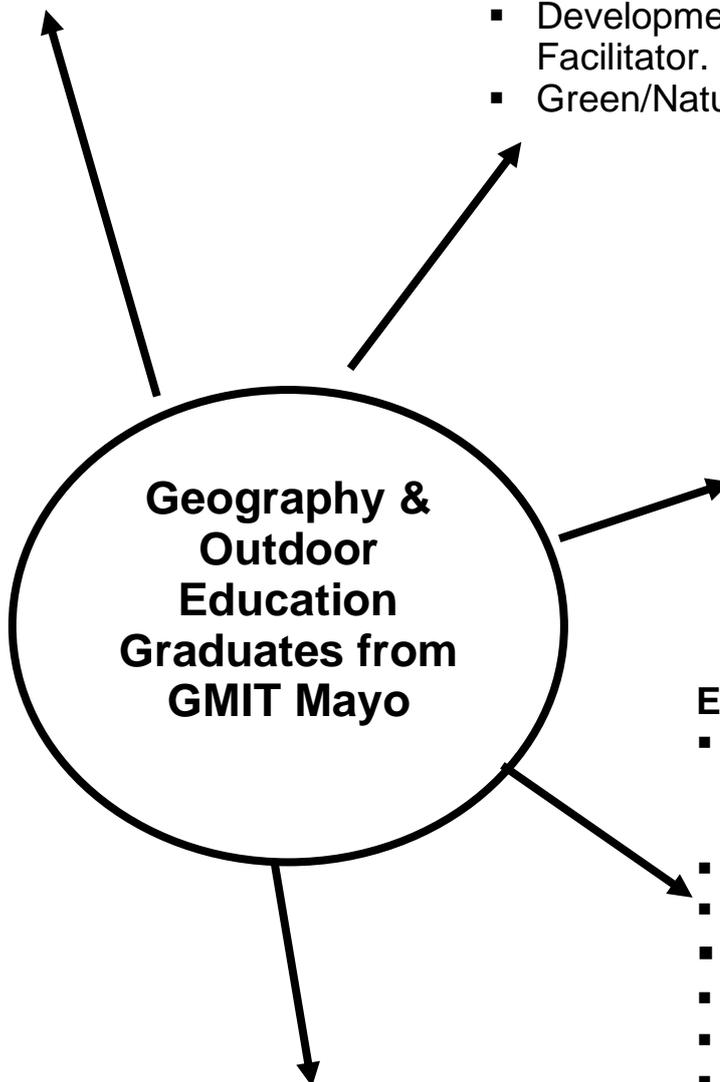
- Geography Teacher
- Providing programmes for Transition Year students
- Early School Leavers Sector
- Youthreach
- Forest schools
- Nature Kindergarten

Environmental / Ecological

- Environmental Education Officer Green Schools, Clean Coasts & ECO UNESCO
- Park Guides in National Parks
- Eco tours operator
- Field Studies Officer
- Rural Recreation Officer
- Community Development
- Water Catchment Management
- Environmental Mapping with GIS

Outdoor Recreation / Education Sector

- Instructor/Senior Instructor
- Managers of Outdoor Education Centres when appropriately experienced
- Adventure Tourism operators
- Coaches and trainers
- Sport Development Officers



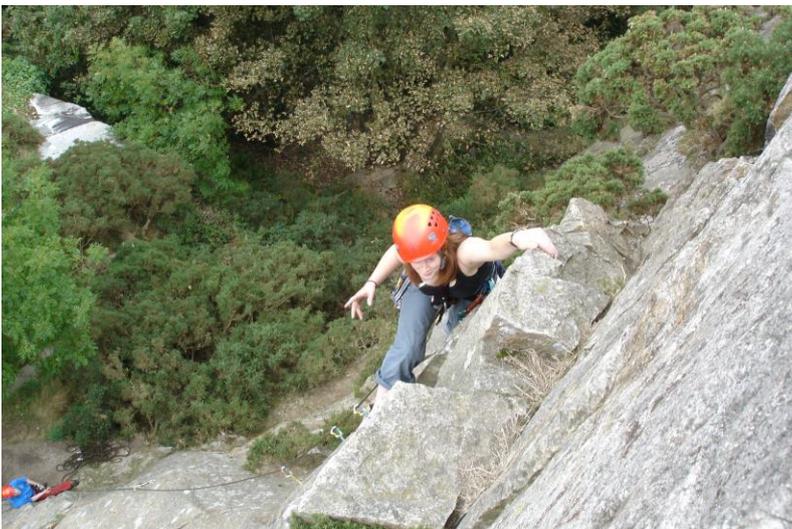
The Adventure Activities Modules

The Adventure Activities Modules are an important component of the course here in GMIT. The outdoor education course is almost unique amongst Third Level College offering adventure activities as part of their core curriculum.

The approach to training on the course is based on giving more responsibility to the students for **self-learning** each year. There are 25 days formal training for students during the college year. It is obvious that students would gain only the most basic personal proficiency if they were to confine their adventure activities to these days. It is expected and assumed that the students are building on this formal training in their own time and develop and practice what has been taught. This expectation means that much of a student's free days could be spent gaining experience and skills in the various activities. This will have implications for students who are working and for the time management of all students.

There can be no guarantee that a student will reach a particular level of personal proficiency or instructor qualification during the course as so much of how a student progresses is under the control of the student. There are many opportunities during the course and those students who are keen, enthusiastic and organised can expect to progress quickly though their qualifications. Involvement in the college adventure sports clubs plays a crucial role in this personal training and development.

Much of the marks for the Adventure Activities Module is based on a reflective **Learning Journal** that students keep to log and to reflect on their experience of both formal and personal training. The aim of the activity-training course is to educate a professional for the outdoor sector who can grow and develop with changes as they happen and so become a **lifelong learner**. The journal encourages the students to critically analyse the sessions in which they have been involved and to evaluate their personal performance and set improvement goals for themselves.



Climbing in Dalkey Quarry

Adventure Activity Training Year 1

By the end of year 1 students will have the opportunity to receive the following qualifications and training provided they have met the qualifying criteria.

- Mountain Skills (MS) Training and Mountain Skills (MS) Assessment
- Orienteering Proficiency Training
- Level 2 Kayak Proficiency Training and Assessment
- Level 3 Kayak Proficiency Training river and sea
- River Safety Rescue Level 1

Notes

In addition students will have received training in Caving, Surfing, Sailing, Bushcraft, Coaststeering, River Rescue, Archery, Leave no Trace and Rock Climbing.

Mountain Skills

Students should have a total of 15 walks completed for entry to the assessment. Mountain Skills is a Failed Element. Students must pass the assessment to pass the year.

Adventure Activity Training Year 2 & 3

Students will have the opportunity to receive a selection of the following qualifications and training provided they have met the qualifying criteria.

- Mountain Leader (ML) Training
- Level 2 Kayak/Canoe Instructor Training
- Level 3 Kayak/Canoe/Sea Proficiency Training and Assessment
- Level 1 Surf Coach Training and Assessment
- Rock Climbing Instructor Training
- Indoor Climbing Wall Instructor Training
- Powerboat Level 2 and Safety Boater
- Leave no Trace Trainer
- Caving Fundamentals
- Basic Cave Leader
- Orienteering Leader
- Beach Life Guard
- Snorkelling Instructor
- Coaststeering Proficiency
- Archery Instructor
- Coastal Navigation
- Day Skipper
- VHF Radio Licence

Notes

There are registration and some other costs associated with these qualifications.

Many of the pre requirements for assessment are dictated by the relevant NGB. It is expected that the student takes personal responsibility for completing these pre requirements and for arranging assessment. These courses are run subject to minimum numbers and are not offered as a matter of course.

Outdoor Equipment

The college has built up a selection of specialist outdoor equipment which is utilises in the delivery of the Degree in Outdoor Education and Leisure. This equipment currently comprises of:

24	River specification kayaks
18	Sea Kayaks
3	Double Sea Kayaks
3	Slalom kayak
14	Surf Boards
16	Steamers
20	Wetsuits
28	Buoyancy Aids
30	Spraydecks
12	Sets of snorkelling Equipment
14	Sets of rockclimbing equipment
12	Sets of caving equipment
10	windsurfers
10	Archery sets & Targets & Safety Net
1	Set Orienteering equipment
12	Sets of windsurfing gear

Camping equipment for 35 people

A varied selection of materials to run initiative exercises

Organisations such as Petersburg OEC, Achill OEC, and Delphi provide training as part of the course and we have use of their equipment.

Equipment you need for the Course

Over the three/four years of the Degree Courses in Castlebar students will be expected to purchase some of their own essential outdoor gear ,mainly hillwalking gear....the tools of their trade. To assist students in this the college has arranged discount with local outdoor retailers. In addition the lecturers will advise students on appropriate personal equipment to purchase. There is no need to buy gear before starting the course. All technical and safety equipment is supplied such as buoyancy aids, helmets, harness, paddles, kayak, surf boards.

First Year

Hill walking Boots, Rain Gear, Flask, Compass (Silva Type 4), Sleeping Bag and mat, OS Maps sheets 37 & 30., Bivy Bag, Ruck Sack , Headtorch, Wetsuit Booties, first aid kit.

Adventure Capital of Ireland

County Mayo, with the longest coastline along the Wild Atlantic Way is an excellent location for a wide variety of adventure sports. Westport is considered the Adventure Capital of Ireland and we utilise locations along the Wild Atlantic Way and in dramatic mountain landscapes. We are also close to the highest concentration of adventure centres and organisations in Ireland which provides us with industry links and employment opportunities for graduates. The rich cultural landscape and the varied natural habitats of Mayo, Ballycroy National Park, and Nephin Wilderness provide ideal outdoor classrooms for many modules.

Safety Considerations- Advice

There is an inherent risk associated with participation in adventure sports. It is the responsibility of both you and staff who work on GMIT Outdoor Education programmes to take steps to minimise these risks.

Things you are responsible for when out on official GMIT adventure activities classes

- You should never feel any pressure to perform any task you think you not safely capable of doing. If you have any concerns discuss it with the staff. Learning when to say no is important.
- Have the equipment/ clothing you were requested to have on the activity such as raingear or suitable footwear. This is vital for your safety and the well-being of the rest of the group. Staff have the right to refuse to let you participate in an activity if they have concerns about your safety. If you let staff know well in advance you don't have certain equipment, they may be able to sort a solution.
- Be physically prepared for the activity. If you are ill or have any medical problem it is your responsibility to let staff know. Occasionally it may be necessary for you to do another activity or not participate that day. If staff have any concerns about your ability to participate in an activity ,staff have the right to refuse to let you participate in an activity if they have concerns about your safety.
- Some activity sessions such as river kayaking build in difficulty of rivers from week to week. If you miss one week you might fall behind the standard of the rest of the group and not have the skill level to participate the next week. Full attendance is vital for your safety. Staff have the right to refuse to let you participate in an activity if they have concerns about your safety.
- Wear your seatbelt when on GMIT minibuses. Check others have theirs on too.
- Some hazards such as Weils disease which you get from water sports mainly and Lymes disease which is from ticks are hard to diagnose and potentially serious.
- It is a requirement of many of the National Governing Bodies of adventure sports that trainee participants and instructors gain a high level of personal experience and leadership experience. The Outdoor Education course provides you with technical leadership training in a range of adventure sports. However, you will gain the much of your personal and leadership experience outside of timetabled class hours. In this case you have a big responsibility for your own safety.
- Don't do any adventure on your own. Go in groups of at least three. Make sure all the group has suitable equipment and ability. Having back up is vital if you have an accident.
- Check the weather forecast and make a plan for the day based on the weather. Cancel completely or shorten your activity or change location to suit the weather. Most accidents are caused or made worse by unsuitable weather conditions.
- Make sure someone knows where you are going and when you should be back and what to do if you don't return such as who to contact.

- Be organized with the right gear and make sure everyone in the group is prepared. A group is only as strong as its weakest link. Always think -what if something goes wrong?- bring the safety equipment needed to cope.
- Do some research/reading on the area before making a definite plan. Local knowledge is very useful. Ask more experienced people for advice on where to go.
- Have a backup safety plan. Think in advance about how you can shorten your day, get off the hill or river or sea etc. if things change unexpectedly. Turning back or changing plans is a big part of adventure activities- don't get fixed on an ambitious plan.

Equipment Deposit

Each student is required to pay an equipment deposit of €50. This deposit is used to encourage students to return gear promptly and in the same condition that as it was issued. This system is essential to maintain our store of equipment because so many different year people use the store. The store is managed by Kevin Higgins the Outdoor, Construction and Heritage Studies Technician.

Student Support

If you are having difficulties, whether personal or academic, the sooner you contact someone the better. The Year Tutor or Course Co-ordinator is the obvious one to contact if you have academic problems. Cathy McGovern is an Education Support Officer and can provide assistance to students with learning difficulties such as dyslexia. Michelle Kerins O'Brien, is the Counsellor, and the obvious one for personal difficulties. However, do not confine yourself to those. Any staff member to whom you find it easy to talk, or whom you find approachable, is a good starting point.

Tuition, Assessment and approaches to Study

Tuition

There is a considerable difference between the approaches taken to tuition in most second level schools and the approach to tuition taken in third level institutions. The main difference would be the emphasis on personal responsibility for one's learning. The lecturer introduces the topics and thereafter the student must engage in research, discussion and reading if they are to fully comprehend the material. Students will have to develop their own method for noting the pertinent points of a lecture and filing these for later study and reference.

Assessment

A high percentage of student evaluation is assessed during the term by Continuous Assessment work such as reports, essays and journals. One consequence is that there isn't the stress of cramming for the once-off exam type evaluation with the work instead spread over the year. Another consequence is that students need to employ careful time management strategies or they will find themselves unable to cope with the number of assignments they receive during term.

Some subjects have up to 70% Continuous Assessment (CA) and it is very important that students realise that they can have passed or failed a subject even before they sit any final examination. Note that Information Technology and Adventure Activities are 100% CA. First Years have one exam at Christmas and the rest in May.

Careers Paths of some of our Students

There is a booklet available that gives you plenty of ideas on careers options. Check the website or email Orla.

Postgraduate courses

BA (hons) graduates can apply for a range of Masters courses and post-graduate courses, within Ireland ranging from Environmental Science, Counselling, Rural Development, Geographical Information Systems, Sustainability, Philosophy, Youth Work, Primary School Education and Sports Psychology.

Environmental

- MSc in Outdoor & Environmental Education, University of Edinburgh
- MSc in Coastal Zone Management, University of Ulster.
- MSc in Sustainable Architecture, North Wales,
- MSc in Environmental Protection and Conservation, DIT
- MSc in GIS and Remote Sensing, University College Cork
- MSc in Ecological Assessment, University College Cork
- Diploma in Field Ecology, UCC

Counselling & Support

- MA in Counselling, University of Strathclyde
- MA in Ethics, NUI Galway
- MA in Family Support, NUI Galway
- MA in Management for Community & Voluntary Services, All Hallows, Dublin
- MA in Community and Youth Work, NUI, Maynooth
- MA in Criminology, DIT
- Diploma in Addiction Studies, UCD
- MA in Family Support Studies, NUIG

Community / Society Related

- MA Environment, Society and Development, NUIG
- PGDip in Remote and Offshore Medicine, RCOS Edinburgh

Sport

- MSc in Applied Sport and Exercise Psychology, WIT
- MSc in Sport Management, UUU

Therapeutic / Therapy related

- MA in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and Interviewing, WIT
- PGDip in Practice Based Play Therapy, NUIG
- Post Graduate Diploma in Drama Therapy, NUI Maynooth

Geography

- MSc in Sustainable Rural Development and Project Planning, Queens University Belfast
- Post Graduate Diploma in Geography, University College Cork

Business

- MSc in Business, Innovation, Technology & Entrepreneurship, WIT

Education Related

- Professional Master in Education
- Graduate Diploma in Education, St. Patricks, Drumcondra
- Graduate Diploma in Education, Hibernia College

- MA in Development Education, MIC & UL
- MA in Primary Education, Hibernia College
- Erasmus Mundus in Outdoor Adventure and Experiential Education

Additional Opportunities-Adventures abroad

The programme is committed to providing students with additional optional opportunities to pursue adventure sports in a variety of locations.

For example from September 2017 to May 2018 these optional trips included

- Hillwalking & climbing trip to Snowdonia , North Wales
- Rock climbing in Costa Blanca, Spain
- Coastal sailing week from Kinsale to Westport
- Hillwalking in Kerry and hillwalking in the Mourne Mountains
- Seakayaking weekends in Clare & Connemara,
- River Kayaking in Kerry
- Climbing weekends to The Burren and to Dalkey Quarry

As part of the Expedition module in Year 4, students canoed across Scotland along Lough Ness and the Caledonian Canal.

Exchange USA and Sweden - Adventures abroad

We have an exchange programme with Western Carolina University, USA and every year three students have an opportunity to study Parks and Recreation studies for a year in the heart of the Appalachian Mountains. Western Carolina is an excellent location for whitewater kayaking and a variety of other adventure sports. We also have links with the University of Galva in Sweden and students can spend a semester of Year 2 there studying Arctic Ecology.

Industry Consultation & Liaison

The lecturing staff are some of the most experienced outdoor instructors and teachers in Ireland. At a national level the staff have been involved with the main National Governing Bodies (NGBs) for adventure sports and with national training initiatives and other strategic planning committees.

Staff members are active climbers, sailors, bikers, sea and river kayakers and cavers. Recent achievements by staff include a trans-Atlantic sailing crossing in winter, a seakayaking/sailing expedition to Greenland and a Trans Pyrenean mountain bike trip.

They have

- * Participated in numerous mountaineering, sailing and kayaking expeditions in Africa, North America, Nepal, Norway, Greenland, Pakistan and South America.
- * Represented Ireland at the World's kayak surfing and Worlds canoe polo and have been placed in such events
- * Coached the National Canoe Polo squad

The Outdoor Education Course at GMIT has developed liaisons with the various sectors involved in the outdoors in Ireland such as

- Chairing The Department of the Marine Interdepartmental Working Group on safety standards in outdoor education / activity centres
- Development of syllabi for Marine and Countryside Guides,.
- Writing of modules for FETAC–
- Tutor Training with Coaching Ireland
- Monitoring of Centres for Safety Standards
- Chairing Bord Oilíunt Sleibhe, the Irish Mountain Training Board
- Duchas’s Landscape studies working group
- Chairing Canoe Ireland Training and Development Committee
- Representation on The Recreational Educators Forum
- Representation on Institute of Leisure and Amenity Managers
- Consultation for the Department of Education’s Physical Education Pilot Programme
- Consultation and design of teamwork programmes
- Assessing at a senior level for National Governing Bodies, The National Mountain and Whitewater Centre and the National Coaching and Training Centre.
- Development of Blueways



Visitor Management field trip Snowdonia National Park



The Outdoor Classroom on the Bangor Trail



Environmental Management Practical



Footpath construction fieldtrip to the Mourne Mts



Beach lifeguard training Old Head Beach



Exploring Coastal Geomorphology



Woodland Ecology



Wild Nephin National Park Expedition



Mountain Geology

