Date: 16-10-2026

BSc (Hons) Animal Behaviour and Welfare (Clinical) (with placement)

UCAS code	D390
Institution code	H12
Duration	4 years (full-time) including a one-year work placement.
Start date	September 2027
Location	Harper Adams University campus (and location of work placement)

If you are fascinated by why animals behave the way they do and want to make a meaningful impact on animal welfare, this animal behaviour degree provides the scientific knowledge and hands-on experience to help you do exactly that.

What will this degree entail?

You will study animal biology, animal behaviour, and animal welfare science, learning how behaviour is measured, interpreted, and applied to improve the lives of animals across companion animal, livestock, equine, zoo, and wildlife conservation settings.

Through practical training, behavioural assessments, and research projects, you will develop the skills needed to investigate real-world welfare challenges and make evidence-based decisions that support positive human–animal interactions.

You will also gain essential business and management knowledge, preparing you for diverse roles across the animal industries or for postgraduate study.

This degree has been provisionally validated by the CCAB Certification Ltd Accreditation Committee, confirming that it meets the academic requirements for individuals seeking to become clinical animal behaviourists.

A version of this course without a placement year is also available.

View the non-placement year route

Find out more about placement years

A-level entry requirements

- **Entry requirements for 2027 entry are not currently available. Please contact Admissions for advice**

Work Placement

Students undertake a placement during their third year in an animal-related organisation of their choice. You may want to gain experience working at animal hospitals and shelters, research facilities, zoos and wildlife parks, veterinary practices, livestock farms, stables, catteries and kennels or other animal-based organisations.

Careers

Animal behaviour and welfare is a rapidly expanding field, with employers increasingly seeking graduates who can apply scientific knowledge of behaviour to improve animal well-being. This animal behaviour degree prepares you for careers in:

- **Companion animal behaviour** — behaviour consulting, training, behaviour clinics
- **Livestock and equine industries** — welfare assessment, behaviour management
- **Zoos and wildlife conservation** — enrichment design, behavioural monitoring
- **Animal welfare charities** — advocacy, education, behaviour support
- **Research and education** — behavioural science, welfare research

Graduates also progress into roles with animal nutrition companies, pharmaceutical organisations, government agencies, and bodies involved in shaping animal welfare policy.

This course provides a strong foundation for postgraduate study, including pathways toward becoming a clinical animal behaviourist or advancing into specialised behavioural research.

What will I study?

Year 1		Year 2		Year 3	Year 4	
Animal Biology (A4001HF)	20	Principles of Animal Behaviour (A5037HF)	20	Placement year	Dissertation (HF)	40
Animal Husbandry and Management (A4002HF)	20	Ethics, Law and Business Practice (A5045HF)	20		Consultation Skills for Animal Professionals (HF)	20
Animal Health (A4003HF)	20	Animal Health and Behaviour (A5011HF)	20		Applied Animal Learning and Training (HF)	20
Evolution, Genetics and Behaviour (A4004HF)	20	Professional Development for Animal Careers (A5023HF)	10		Applied Health, Welfare and Behaviour (HF)	20
Skills for the Animal Scientist (A4006HF)	10	Applied Behaviour for the Clinical Animal Behaviourist (A5009HF)	20		Diagnosis and Treatment of Behavioural Problems (HF)	20
Introduction to Animal Welfare and Ethics (A4005HF)	20	Welfare Science (A5040HF)	20			
Business in Animal Industries (A4007HF)	10	**Electives**				
		Animals for Assistance and Therapy (A5012HF)	10			

Animal Biology

Year of study 1
Code A4001HF
Credits 20
Core/option Core
Module contact Jane Thomas

Underpinning knowledge and understanding of how the animals are organised, acquire nutrition and energy is an important aspect in studying animal-related courses and this module provides an introduction to the structure and function of animals. Within this module, you will learn the structure and organisation of biomolecules, cells, and tissues in forming complex organ systems in a range of animal groups. You will take a comparative and practical approach for learning, by observing and analysing the detailS relating to animals, within specialist learning environments.

Knowing organisation and unique characteristics of the animals that are around us then helps you to appreciate how they function effectively within their natural environment or production systems, giving you a broader foundation to explore further detail during your degree programme.

Animal Husbandry and Management

Year of study 1
Code A4002HF
Credits 20
Core/option Core
Module contact Jane Thomas

It is important when studying animal-based courses that you have an understanding of animal management practices involved with a variety of systems and settings. This module will place emphasis on environmental requirements, nutritional needs, and species suitability where you will cover livestock, companion animals, exotic, aquaculture and equine species.

This module provides theoretical knowledge and practical animal husbandry opportunities required for safe human and animal interactions. This module provides a strong foundation to prepare you for future course-specific content.

Animal Health

Year of study 1
Code A4003HF
Credits 20
Core/option Core
Module contact Jane Thomas

This module enables you to explore how the body stays healthy in the face of disease challenges and explore causes of disease. The immune system faces challenges from pathogens on a daily basis. You will explore how the body deals with these challenges and what forms they can take. This knowledge is essential for anyone working with animals in order to maintain the health and welfare of animals in their care. Laboratory skills will be developed by working collaboratively, collecting data and interpreting results.

Evolution, Genetics and Behaviour

Year of study 1
Code A4004HF
Credits 20
Core/option Core
Module contact Jane Thomas

This module provides a broad overview of how the process of evolution through Darwinian natural selection has resulted in the diversity of life seen on Earth. The microevolutionary and speciation mechanisms underpinning evolution are explored, including the role of DNA, mechanisms of inheritance, coevolution and symbiosis. The classification of living organisms and the diversity of the animal kingdom are reviewed. The factors that led humans to domesticate plants and animals are considered, including the impacts of domestication on animal behaviour. The module is designed to give you a deeper understanding of evolution and its role in animal behaviour development.

Skills for the Animal Scientist

Year of study 1
Code A4006HF
Credits 10
Core/option Core
Module contact Jane Thomas

Within this module, you will acquire essential academic skills that can be applied to higher education and careers within the animal sciences. The module supports learning across other modules within the degree programme and allows time to develop competency within and beyond technically orientated learning. You will develop an awareness of personal and academic development to facilitate growth and development in the disciplines. You will explore the analysis and presentation of scientific data to support effective communication and collaboration with the scientific community.

Introduction to Animal Welfare and Ethics

Year of study 1
Code A4005HF
Credits 20
Core/option Core
Module contact Jane Thomas

This module provides an introduction to a range of industries which involve animals and the implications of those industries within a variety of settings on a national and an international scale. It will consider the ethics of societies' usage of different types of animals and the role of legislation and different organisations in the promotion of the interests of animals. Examples will be drawn from a range of diverse species and scenarios to illustrate the principles and practices discussed. The main ethical theories that are useful when exploring these issues are discussed and explained. Examples of how these theories can be applied to our interactions with animals are discussed.

During the module you will also be introduced to the concept of animal welfare, legislation within industries and welfare implications for animals. The content of this module will be of benefit to anyone considering working either directly or indirectly with animals in a range of environments. This module will equip you with underpinning knowledge which will support you throughout your degree in second and final year modules and ongoing interactions with animals.

Business in Animal Industries

Year of study 1
Code A4007HF
Credits 10
Core/option Core
Module contact Jane Thomas

An increasing proportion of people are involved with animals either socially or professionally. The business of animals is a growing part of the economy, one that has proved resilient when other business sectors falter. This module introduces the context for operating a business in animal-oriented companies. Differing business structures and operating models are explored, with a focus on the requirements for businesses to operate legally and sustainably.

You will be required to work collaboratively to evaluate real-world company approaches by researching why people and businesses are so invested in animals. You will learn to use digital tools and techniques to communicate effectively with a range of audiences from the general public to senior business managers. These competencies will be valuable for future projects.

Animals for Assistance and Therapy

Year of study 2
Code A5012HF
Credits 10
Core/option Core
Module contact Jane Thomas

The benefits of using animals for assistance or therapies has been widely recognised for centuries. Popularity of these approaches has increased within recent years, branching out into a variety of species and contexts leading to a need for greater emphasis on evidence-based approaches. You will explore scenarios where humans can benefit from interactions and assistance from animals, evaluating the science and ethics behind the benefits and risks of these interactions and relationships. Furthermore, current guidelines and protections around the use of animals within these industries will be discussed alongside the training and preparation process.

Principles of Animal Behaviour

Year of study 2
Code A5037HF
Credits 20
Core/option Core
Module contact Jane Thomas

Their complex behaviour is one of the main factors that distinguish the Animalia from the other Kingdoms of Life. This module aims to explore the richness and diversity of the behaviour we see in the animal kingdom, considering the various factors that have influenced its evolution. Although there will be an

emphasis on the more complex behaviour patterns seen in the higher animals, this module will consider the behaviour of animals in general. This diverse approach will help in the understanding of the general principles which underpin the development of the various patterns of behaviour we observe in animals. Throughout this module you will learn the key principles behind animal behaviour, including how animals perceive and respond to their environments, and understand how behaviour is adapted to enhance animal survival.

Ethics, Law and Business Practice

Year of study 2
Code A5045HF
Credits 20
Core/option Core
Module contact Jane Thomas

It is vital that interactions with clients and colleagues are carried out professionally and appropriately in order to ensure that clinical animal behaviourists comply with legal and ethical requirements.

This module explores the responsibilities and limitations of the role of the professionals who may be involved in a clinical animal behaviour case. The module will determine the legal and professional issues that may arise when consulting with members of the public and considers how these issues may be avoided or resolved. A thorough understanding of the UK legal and judicial processes will be developed in order to demonstrate how these underpin the behaviourists' actions when consulting with a client and patient. Development of business awareness including business planning and legal requirements.

Animal Health and Behaviour

Year of study 2
Code A5011HF
Credits 20
Core/option Core
Module contact Jane Thomas

Health and behaviour are linked and it is important to recognise the relevance of behaviour when considering a domestic animal's health and welfare. There may be behavioural consequences of medical disorders and certain behaviours can impact on health both positively and negatively.

This module is designed to introduce you to common health concerns seen in a range of animal species and to consider the links to behaviour. You will consider preventative health measures and the control and management of disease, as well as practical management approaches to promote the health of animals and medical differentials in behavioural disorders. You will learn how to recognise the difference between "normal" behaviours and "abnormal" behaviours and also how normal behaviours can be expressed inappropriately leading to problems for owners or animal managers. You will discover how the suppression of natural behaviour can impact on health and welfare.

Aspects of animal physiology, nutrition, health and general husbandry introduced in earlier modules will form an essential background for this module.

Professional Development for Animal Careers

Year of study 2
Code A5023HF
Credits 10
Core/option Core
Module contact Jane Thomas

Within this module, you will develop the scientific, personal and transferrable skills required for a career in the animal industry. You will advance your understanding of future career opportunities and learn to identify employers' needs in a changing job market.

This module will introduce you to research and its use within the animal sciences. You will undertake data

analysis, presentation and interpretation, whilst exploring how data is used to inform change, innovation and practice in animal industries. You will assess the quality of primary research in the context of study design and data analysis, presentation and interpretation and develop the skills required for analysis and evaluation of published data.

Working in the animal sciences facilitates continuing professional development and an opportunity to enhance and develop your employability potential is paramount for your future career. This module will cultivate readiness for work through personal development planning and reflection, helping you to identify your key strengths and areas for development.

This module builds on key skills developed in Skills for the Animal Scientist (level 4) and both should be considered as continuing professional development within the curriculum.

Applied Behaviour for the Clinical Animal Behaviourist

Year of study 2
Code A5009HF
Credits 20
Core/option Core
Module contact Jane Thomas

Through this module, you will apply knowledge of animal behaviour in management contexts. This module will cover the principles and methods of quantitative studies of animal behaviour. This module aims to teach you to devise and conduct a variety of behavioural experiments and use the knowledge and understanding gained from the Principles of Animal Behaviour module to interpret your data. Knowledge of factors affecting animal behaviour and an understanding of the rationale behind presented behaviour is integral for Clinical Animal Behaviourists in practice. Throughout this module, you will develop an understanding of how behavioural disorders develop in animals and consider factors related to them.

Welfare Science

Year of study 2
Code A5040HF
Credits 20
Core/option Core
Module contact Dr Ellen Williams

Evidence-based management is important in ensuring positive welfare experiences for animals in managed settings. Animal welfare is of major concern to those working in various animal industries, as well as to the public. In this module, you will be introduced to the scientific discipline of animal welfare science, including the ways in which welfare can be assessed in a broad range of species. The physiological and behavioural changes that occur when welfare is compromised will be studied, and you will explore how these indicators may be used to assess an animal's welfare status. Finally, you will consider the issues that affect the welfare of many groups of animals such as farm, companion, zoo and research animals, and identify ways in which they can be overcome.

Placement year

Year of study 3
Core/option Core

Read our dedicated Placement Learning pages for information on the many benefits of the placement year.

Dissertation

Year of study 4
Code HF
Credits 40
Core/option Core

The dissertation is designed to allow you to develop the skills and personal resilience needed to undertake a sustained, significant and high-quality research project. In conjunction with a supervisor, and in light of detailed course-specific advice, you will select a topic for investigation. You will then plan, execute, report and present your project. The module will draw upon learning from other taught modules, but it also requires a high degree of independent learning.

You will need to apply your learning about the research methods associated with your discipline as you locate data to support your project; you may need to apply methods creatively according to the nature of your research topic. Throughout the module, you will be expected to make choices about the scale and manageability of your work; you will also need to apply good time management skills to ensure success. The project will require you to search for literature related to your topic and to read independently. You must make decisions about the direction of your research, and you will be expected to work proactively to benefit from supervision opportunities.

You will be expected to ensure that each part of your project is ethically sound; this means following protocols but also by developing an ethical mindset which is sensitive to stakeholders and issues arising in the research process. You must also ensure that you attend to issues of health and safety throughout your research.

Consultation Skills for Animal Professionals

Year of study 4
Code HF
Credits 20
Core/option Core
Module contact Jane Thomas

Effective and professional interactions with animal owners, clients and other professional colleagues are vital to ensure that animals are managed appropriately with first consideration for their welfare and health. Animal professionals need to be skilled in the art and science of counselling and be able to effectively analyse data gathered in order to apply this knowledge to synthesize effective care, management and treatment protocols.

This module introduces the student to the underpinning theories of counselling and discusses the skills required of the counsellor in order to effectively gather relevant information to ensure that effective management and treatment protocols can be synthesized. An evaluation of an animal owner's understanding and ability to adhere to instruction is essential to maximise a successful outcome and a full understanding of the limitations is required. A sound understanding of the legal, professional and ethical issues that the animal professional may encounter is vital.

Applied Animal Learning and Training

Year of study 4
Code HF
Credits 20
Core/option Core
Module contact Jane Thomas

We have changing societal and legal expectations from the animals we live with, and this comes with an increasing demand for training and behaviour support in all areas, whether this be in a domestic, formal training or rescue shelter environment. Alongside these expectations is an increasing awareness of the potential for scientific, welfare-friendly and effective training methods.

This module explores the underlying theories and practical approaches commonly used to train new actions and to modify problematic behaviour in animals. It is essential for handlers, trainers and behaviourists alike to have a strong understanding of the methods available to them and an awareness of the implications of

these choices for the animals in their care.

You will learn to prepare suitable training programmes for a range of common challenges and be able to assess progress, review and make suitable adaptations appropriate to the individual.

Applied Health, Welfare and Behaviour

Year of study 4
Code HF
Credits 20
Core/option Core
Module contact Jane Thomas

This module aims in incorporate concepts studied at Level 4 and 5 with application to real-world case studies. This will include consideration of husbandry and management practises, biosecurity, disease aetiology and their impact on disease susceptibility, animal behaviour, welfare and potential economic impact disease and management solutions may have on the business. Independent study will permit students to develop the ability to discriminate, evaluate and analyse information from a variety of sources.

This module will include phenomena-based learning and evaluating solutions in order to communicate this back to industry and research communities.

Diagnosis and Treatment of Behavioural Problems

Year of study 4
Code HF
Credits 20
Core/option Core
Module contact Jane Thomas

Domesticated animals can develop behaviours that will be considered by their owners to be problematic. In many cases these “problem behaviours” will be normal behaviours inappropriately expressed. There are many techniques that have been developed over recent years to help the animal behaviourist to treat these conditions and minimise any welfare compromise to the animal and inconvenience to the owner.

This module explores the behavioural states of domestic animals that commonly contribute to behavioural problems and evaluates the range of techniques that can be used to treat them. Consideration of behavioural modification techniques are considered in detail in order to prepare you to use these techniques when treating behavioural cases. It is vital that you have a reliable understanding and knowledge of the drugs commonly utilised in clinical animal behaviour and these will be discussed in detail with particular reference to inappropriate application and the potential health and safety and legal and moral issues associated with their use. Other techniques used in clinical animal behaviour such as pheromonal, dietary and herbal interventions are also considered in terms of their efficacy, safety and the ethics of their use in order to ensure you have an awareness of their appropriate and safe use.