

**MARINE AND NATURAL HISTORY PHOTOGRAPHY PLACEMENT YEAR**

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Dear [NAME]

Welcome to Marine & Natural History Photography Placement Year at Falmouth.

We're getting in touch with some important information about your course that will help you as you prepare to join us.

At the end of this letter, you will find a list of equipment that you should bring with you, as well as any other costs that you might incur throughout your course.

There is also some important information for those who wish to pursue underwater photography. Please note that the modules relating to underwater photography are optional; if you do not intend to participate in the underwater element of the degree, you don't need to worry about these forms and will be able to choose an alternative module exploring the natural world above sea-level. However, if you do want to join underwater photography, you must hold a recognised diving qualification before the course begins in September.

Your academic experience will be predominantly in person with some courses using a small amount of digital resources to support your learning. To engage in the digital learning activity, although you will be able to access IT suites on campus, you will benefit from a laptop to access the platforms and tools we use. You will be provided with free access to the Microsoft Office suite, (including Word, Excel and PowerPoint) while you study at Falmouth.

If you are eligible for a loan from Student Finance and have not yet applied, please do so immediately to ensure the loan is approved before you enrol. Once you enrol you are liable for the tuition fees. You can find more information from the Student Loans Company at: [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/student-loans-company](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/student-loans-company) Advice on managing your finances whilst studying can be found on the University's website here: [falmouth.ac.uk/study/student-funding/how-much-does-it-cost](http://falmouth.ac.uk/study/student-funding/how-much-does-it-cost)

Over the summer, you can join our Step into Falmouth Sessions. These online workshops are designed to provide advice and guidance on settling into university life. They are scheduled to take place across three weeks in July and August. Some of them will also be recorded so you can watch them back at a time that suits you. More information can be found at [falmouth.ac.uk/experience/new-students/step-into-falmouth](http://falmouth.ac.uk/experience/new-students/step-into-falmouth)

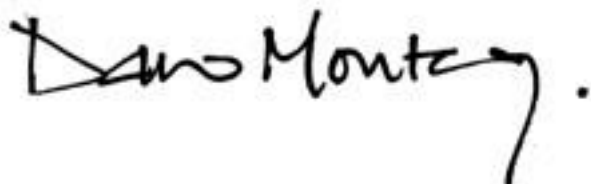
Over the summer, if you have any questions, you can join the Student Mentor team on Discord to talk about the course, living in Cornwall and what to expect at Falmouth. Our mentors are already studying on your course, so ask them anything you like. Find them at [falmouth.ac.uk/experience/new-students/mentoring](http://falmouth.ac.uk/experience/new-students/mentoring). Alternatively, email your name and your course to: [studentmentors@falmouth.ac.uk](mailto:studentmentors@falmouth.ac.uk) and they will be in touch.

Over the next few weeks, we'll email you more important information about your course and life at Falmouth. If you're going to be away or out of contact, make sure you ask someone to check your emails and reply on your behalf.

We know there is a lot to think about before you start at university. So, we're here to help. If you have any questions, just get in touch with Applicant Services on +44(0)1326 213730, use LiveChat on our website or email [applicantsservices@falmouth.ac.uk](mailto:applicantsservices@falmouth.ac.uk)

Finally, we wish you an enjoyable summer and we're looking forward to welcoming you to Falmouth in September.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Daro Montag." The signature is written in a cursive style with a period at the end.

**Dr Daro Montag**

Course Leader Marine & Natural History Photography

[daromontag@falmouth.ac.uk](mailto:daromontag@falmouth.ac.uk)

## Getting started

### Your offer

If you have a conditional offer, your place is subject to meeting those conditions. This means we're waiting to receive your results or some more information before your place can be finalised. You can see these conditions on your UCAS Hub

<https://accounts.ucas.com/account/login>

If you need to ask us anything about your offer, get in touch with our Applicant Services team on +44(0)1326 213730, use LiveChat on our website or email [applicantservices@falmouth.ac.uk](mailto:applicantservices@falmouth.ac.uk)

### Enrolment and Student Terms & Conditions

You'll get an email two weeks before the start of term telling you how to enrol online. You'll need to enrol before the first day of term to officially register as a student of Falmouth University and receive your undergraduate student loan.

When you enrol, you'll need to agree to and comply with the University's Student Terms & Conditions. These Terms & Conditions are important, and we encourage you to read them carefully, before enrolling. You can find them under 'Student Terms & Conditions' on our website [www.falmouth.ac.uk/student-regulations](http://www.falmouth.ac.uk/student-regulations)

### Tuition fees (per year)

2023-2024 full-time UK: £9,250

2023-2024 full-time International: £17,460

2023-24 placement year: £1,850

### Term dates

You can find our term dates on the website at [falmouth.ac.uk/experience/term-dates/term-dates-2023-24](http://falmouth.ac.uk/experience/term-dates/term-dates-2023-24)

Study Block 1 starts on Monday 18 September.

Teaching and assessment will be throughout the full 15 weeks of the study blocks.

### Your timetable

Your academic timetable shows all scheduled learning activities and your course timetable. It will be published in early September. After you've enrolled, you can view it via the Student Portal at [falmouth.myday.cloud/](http://falmouth.myday.cloud/) or the Falmouth University App. You can download the app by searching the Google Play Store or Apple Store.

### Welcome Week

Your timetable will show you where you need to go and when on Monday 18 September and throughout the week.

This is the week when you'll meet your course mates, course tutors and University staff. There will be important inductions to both your course and the wider University facilities and services, in addition to social activities organised by the University and Students' Union.

## Pre-course preparation, equipment and course costs

Before commencing the course, you will need to make sure you have the necessary kit. As a medium, photography is constantly developing so the following figures are intended as a rough guide of anticipated expenditure on the course starting in September 2022.

Although you will be able to borrow University camera equipment during term time, you are required to have the following list of items at the start of term:

- A **Digital SLR camera** of reasonable quality **with manual over-ride** to any automatic settings. Nikon, Canon or Sony are recommended as they are compatible with University equipment (Approximately £500-£1,000)
- **CF and SD memory cards (High speed) minimum 4GB, but higher recommended** (Approximately £25)
- **USB card reader for the above** (Approximately £10)
- **USB external hard drive, minimum 250GB recommended** (Approximately £50-£100)
- **Camera equipment holdall** that is large enough for extra items you may wish to use/purchase during the course (Approximately £50-£100)
- **Sturdy tripod** (Approximately £100-£200)
- **Academic year diary or equivalent electronic device** (Approximately £3)

### Laptop

You will need to have your own laptop, PC or MAC, on which you can access online learning materials and can process high resolution digital images. You will also need a reliable broadband connection (if you are living in University accommodation you will have this).

In addition to the above, the following items will also be required, but can be purchased during the first Study Block.

- Lens hood and UV/Skylight filter for each of your lenses (Approximately £50)
- DSLR cable release for your camera model (Approximately £15)
- Print Box for storing prints and submitting them for assessments, these can be purchased at the university or online retailers (Approximately £20)
- In addition, there will be several stationery items that you will need to purchase during the course such as notepads, A4 binders, pens and so on (Approximately £20)

### Optional analogue equipment

During the second study block of the first year you will be introduced to traditional film technologies. You are likely to use the following equipment, please bring it along if you have it. Much of this can be purchased second-hand from students when you are at Falmouth or from web-based outlets (anticipate spending about £50):

- Film SLR camera with or without filters (bring one if you have it, but no need to go and buy one)
- Patterson's Universal developing tank to take 35mm and 120mm films
- Negative filing system binder (loose leaf type)
- 120 negative filing pages for above binder
- Magnifier - Linen tester or Lupe

- 12-inch cable release to fit an analogue camera (screw thread with lock)
- Pair of white cotton gloves
- Spotting brush - No1 sable
- Black print spotting medium or tube of black water colour or gouache

You may need to purchase additional items to suit your developing practice as you progress through the course. Tutors will give advice where needed to support the purchase of additional equipment.

### **Ongoing Materials costs**

You are expected to provide most of the photographic materials yourself such as film, printing paper and so on. The actual cost will depend on the amount and type of work you do. You are advised to allow approximately £350 for materials per year. This is particularly important in your final year as you will be required to have your portfolio pictures professionally printed.

### **Personal items**

By the very nature of the course, you will be expected to work in all sorts of locations and weather conditions. It is therefore essential that you come fully prepared with the right sort of personal clothing to protect yourself from the elements and meet risk assessment requirements. This list is not exclusive, so please use it as a guide; you are likely to have some of this kit already, but if buying new you should be able to equip yourself for the outdoors for approximately £300:

- Anorak or weather/wind-proof jacket
- Warm headgear
- Strong waterproof boots/shoes
- Wellington boots
- Gloves
- Waterproof trousers, as jeans are not always appropriate, particularly in wet weather
- Mobile phone for emergencies

Although not essential, you might find a pair of 8x30 binoculars are useful. These can be purchased in Falmouth from Associated Photography with prices ranging from £20-£150 ([associatedphotography@btconnect.com](mailto:associatedphotography@btconnect.com) or +44(0)1326 319591). The course has negotiated a discount of 20-30% depending on brand. You will need to show your student ID card (issued when you have enrolled and are on campus), but you should shop around for the best price.

One of the main features that brings students to Falmouth is access to the sea. Even though the climate is milder than most of the UK it is advisable to wear a wetsuit if you plan to be in the water for a prolonged period (more than a few minutes!). Wetsuits and snorkelling kit can be hired for approximately £15 or purchased for £80-£200.

### **Field Trips**

During the course there are a number of one-day field trips. These cost of these is covered by your fees. In addition, there may be the possibility of an optional international field trip or period of study abroad. The cost of these will depend entirely on location, means of travel etc. For example, the recent trip undertaken by our underwater photography group to the Red Sea cost approximately £1,500.

It should be stressed that, whilst undoubtedly offering an excellent experience, international travel is not essential for successful completion of the course.

**Professional placement**

You can access support from the University Employability team to help you prepare and search for placement opportunities. Usually, students undertake paid placements so you should be able to earn whilst you are working. Depending on where your placement is, you will need to be prepared to factor in costs such as accommodation, costs of travel, etc. If you are unable to find a suitable placement, you will be able to transfer to the 3-year version of the course.

## Essential paperwork: Underwater Photography

**The following information is only for those students who wish to pursue underwater photography. If you do not intend to participate in the underwater element of the degree you do not need to read beyond this point.**

It will help us in our planning if you intend to participate in underwater photography when you join the course in September if you could fill in this form as soon as possible:

<https://forms.office.com/e/Zg3FXGG16K>

To join us on underwater photography you must also complete the following registration forms and return them to: [dive@falmouth.ac.uk](mailto:dive@falmouth.ac.uk) as soon as possible.

The forms can be accessed via the following link:

<https://www.falmouth.ac.uk/experience/new-students/welcome-letters/underwater-photography-registration>

- 1. Registration form**

Please complete and return this form as soon as possible if you intend on joining underwater photography at Falmouth.

- 2. UKDMC Medical form**

This is a self-assessment form that does not require a signature from a GP. If you answer 'yes' to any question on this form you will need clearance to dive from a hyperbaric doctor prior to joining the program. Please see the Marine and Natural History Photography welcome letter below for further information.

- 3. GP Medical Form**

Please fill in this form and arrange for your GP to sign and stamp it as a confirmation of your medical history.

Please read the welcome pack prior to completing these forms.

## Marine and Natural History underwater photography welcome pack

### Course Structure

Underwater Photography is an optional element of the course, and is split in to two stages.

#### Stage 1 (Panasonic and Olympus micro 4/3 cameras)

Stage1 will begin in March 2024. In order to undertake this option you will need to opt for **Exploring Practice – Underwater** module in the second study block of your first year. If you meet our program entry requirements (as below) then you will have the opportunity to join our underwater photography program with costs covered by the course.

In Stage 1 you will be inducted on to our entry level underwater photography equipment and taught the basic principles of underwater photography with a singular light source (strobe).

Successful completion of Stage 1 Underwater Photography will enable you to book our entry level underwater photography equipment for your independent photography projects.

#### Stage 2 (Nikon DSLR cameras)

If you successfully complete the Stage 1 module (**Exploring Practice – Underwater**) you will have the option to enrol in the Stage 2 module, **Extending Practice – Underwater**.

In Stage 2 you will be inducted onto our professional underwater photography equipment and taught advanced principles of underwater photography with a dual light source (strobes).

Successful completion of the course will enable you to book our professional level underwater photography equipment for your independent photography projects.

The fee for this course covers:

- Health and safety provisions from external contractors.
- Equipment, pool and facilities hire.
- Advanced underwater photography instruction / lectures.
- Technical support
- Access to our professional underwater photography equipment

As these modules also require external contractors it may not be possible to reschedule any sessions that are missed. It is therefore essential that you attend all of your timetabled sessions unless you are unfit to dive.

### Underwater Photography Entry Requirements

#### Diving Qualifications

All underwater photography participants must hold a recognised diving qualification equivalent to the following:

- BSAC Sport Diver
- PADI Rescue Diver

These are the most common qualification agencies in the UK, other qualifications will be accepted providing they are of the equivalent training level as those outlined above.



**\*Please ensure you are qualified before the course begins in September, we will require your medical paperwork and qualification numbers in your first week of term. Whilst it may be possible to complete elements of your dive training when you arrive in Falmouth if you have already booked with a local dive school, we strongly recommend you complete your qualifications in good time prior to starting the course. Typically, between inclement weather and course commitments, completing dive qualifications in September before term begins can prove exceptionally difficult. If you miss the qualification deadline we cannot guarantee you will have an alternate opportunity to take part in underwater photography.\***

### **Medical Clearance**

All students must be declared medically fit to dive prior to undertaking any practical dive activities as part of the university. You will be asked to complete the following forms:

#### ***GP Medical form***

This form will ask a number of questions regarding any known existing medical conditions. You must confirm every box on this form and then have the form officially confirmed by your GP. If you answer 'yes' to any of the medical queries on this form then you will need to be referred to a hyperbaric doctor to be deemed medically fit to dive. Your GP is not able to confirm your fitness to dive as many conditions and medications can have contraindications when underwater. We strongly advise that you prioritise confirming your medical fitness prior to booking any dive courses. If you are already qualified to dive you will still be required to provide certified medical clearance. Some conditions such as asthma or mental health considerations can take in excess of 6 weeks to resolve. You will not be eligible to join underwater photography without medical clearance. Please ensure you complete this process with your local GP. Registration and transfer of medical details can be a lengthy process and ultimately may result in you missing the course if you wait to do this in Falmouth.

#### ***UKDMC Form***

This is a self-certification medical form, it appears very similar to the GP medical form but does not require a signature from a professional medical body, unless you have medical notes that need clearance.

#### **Underwater Photography Registration form**

This form is to register your interest in joining underwater photography. If you intend to join the course then please fill in and return this form as soon as possible. If you are yet to complete your dive qualifications then please leave this section of the form blank, your qualification details can be added at a later date.

#### **A dive in UK waters within 6 months of starting the underwater photography course**

The UK presents different environmental considerations underwater to those that you may have qualified in, if you have done so abroad. All of our prospective students should have completed a UK dive within 6 months of the Underwater Photography program commencing, to ensure that you are comfortable in the environment and your skills are current.

***All the necessary forms have been included on this page with instructions on where to send them upon completion.***

***The deadline for having medical clearance and your relevant qualifications completed is 18 September 2023.***

### **Equipment Requirements**

Alongside the Falmouth University team we have an external dive contractor that provides students with additional health and safety cover and equipment. If you do not have your own dive equipment our contractor will provide you with all necessary items to join the program (including wetsuits) with the exception of a dive mask. Due to covid 19 it has been deemed necessary for all students to have their own personal mask.

If you wish to dive on your own personal equipment, then your equipment must be professionally serviced every 12 months. You will not be able to use personal equipment that is not in service.

### **Essential Items**

- Dive mask
- Minimum 16GB SD card
- 4 x AA rechargeable Batteries for strobe. We recommend Eneloop Pro. \*if you intend on joining the L2 program you will need 8 batteries.

### **Recommended Items**

- Dry Robe
- Dive hood
- Dive boots
- Dive fins
- Re-useable water bottle
- Personal dive computer
- A bottle of 'Sea Gold' antifog

**\*If you intend to use your own personal dive regulator then you must also have a personal dive computer.\***

### **FAQ**

#### **I'm already qualified to dive, why do I need a medical?**

Whilst you may have been able to gain diving qualifications (even with known medical issues), the UK has strict regulations on assessing if individuals are fit to dive and able to operate as an effective 'buddy' whilst underwater. If you have a known medical condition and have managed to attain your diving qualifications without a referral to a medical professional, we advise that you contact your training agency to discuss this further.

#### **What happens after the underwater photography course.**

Once you have successfully completed the Stage 1 dive program you will be able to book out our entry level underwater cameras for use in your university projects. You will also be invited to join our Stage 2 program where you will be instructed on the use of professional standard underwater photography equipment. Upon completion of Stage 2 you will be able to use our high end cameras for use in your university projects.

#### **Do we do underwater photography in the third year?**

Not officially, though this is due to your third year being self-directed. If you choose to pursue underwater photography as your final project then provided you have completed Stage 1 / Stage 2 you will be able to continue with underwater photography independently.

**Does / can the university train us to dive?**

No. We have 7 practical weeks allocated per dive program (Stage 1 and Stage 2). This does not afford us the time to conduct formal dive training. Our focus on the course is to develop and escalate your underwater photography skills across a diverse stock of equipment. It is important that you feel comfortable with your dive skills before undertaking the course, this allows you time in your practical sessions to focus on photography as opposed to dive skill refinement.

**Can I get my qualifications when I start at university?**

It is strongly advised that you come to university qualified to the required standard. Whilst it is possible for you to finish elements of your training in Cornwall, the dive operators can be very busy during the autumn period and we tend to experience more inclement weather which limits the days available to dive. The dive programs can't be put on hold to resolve qualification issues and you won't be guaranteed a place to take part at a later date if you miss the program deadline. We will require your training agency paperwork on the 18<sup>th</sup> of September 2023.

**Who should I get qualified with?**

There are a number of training agency's available for you to choose from that are recognised globally. The most common include BSAC, PADI and SSI. The primary difference between these options will be pricing so it is worth researching a variety of operators local to you, it may be a surprise to find that there's a plethora of inland training agency's that utilise quarries as training environments, so don't fret if you don't live coastally.

**Do I really need to be a PADI rescue diver / BSAC sport diver?**

Yes, this level of instruction provides you with essential rescue and multitasking skills. These skills enable you to effectively plan any independent dives you undertake as part of the university and act as a proficient buddy underwater; these qualifications also markedly increase your multitasking skills which are essential for underwater photographic practice. In the long term these qualifications are the minimum requirement for entry onto an HSE diving course, a qualification you will need to work towards if you intend to pursue a career in UK diving post university.

**Why does my GP have to confirm my medical records?**

When diving with us at Falmouth, we must conform to specific health and safety standards as outlined by the HSE (Health and Safety Executive) and our internal dive policy. Our priority above all else is ensuring the safety of all of our underwater photography participants. This includes ensuring beyond any reasonable doubt, that our cohorts are medically fit to enter into an underwater environment, and, are capable of acting as an effective 'buddy' to those who enter this environment with them.

**Will getting my GP form signed cost me money?**

In some cases, yes. It depends upon your GP surgery. Our local surgery in Penryn charges a £50 administration fee for this service. It is worth phoning your local practice to check in advance.

**I answered yes to a question on the medical form, what happens now?**

In the first instance you should email the Falmouth Dive Safety Officers on [dive@falmouth.ac.uk](mailto:dive@falmouth.ac.uk), who will be able to advise you on your next step. The issue may just require a phone consultation, or you may need to book an appointment to see a hyperbaric doctor. It can take a while for an appointment date, so please don't delay. DDRC in Plymouth offer phone consultations for £5 and these can be booked on their website:

[www.ddrc.org/diving/fitness-to-dive/](http://www.ddrc.org/diving/fitness-to-dive/)

**My GP said I'm fine to dive, why do I have to visit a hyperbaric doctor?**

GPs are generally not trained in hyperbarics. Many prescription medications and medical conditions can have contraindications when taken to pressure, so all prescription medicines and conditions must be signed off in line with our dive policy and for your own personal safety.

**Where can I find a Hyperbaric Doctor?**

If you go to the UKDMC website, you will find a list of medical referees.

[www.ukdmc.org/medical-referees/](http://www.ukdmc.org/medical-referees/)

**How long will it take to clear any medical conditions?**

Some conditions and medications can be cleared with a phone call, but others can take a series of weeks should you need to keep a diary for the doctor.

**What happens if I'm not allowed to dive?**

In the event that a unique circumstance prevents you from obtaining clearance to dive you will still have an opportunity to practice and develop your in water photographic skills. Those who do not opt into the underwater photography course will be introduced to 'Splash' photography. For this we have a selection of equipment available for you to use ranging from a Canon G9X's to Olympus Tough cameras.

**Can I dive in my surf wetsuit?**

No, if you intend on diving in your own wetsuit then this suit must be manufactured for diving and suitable for our water temperatures. Please contact a local dive store to discuss a suitable wetsuit before you purchase.

**Can I use a drysuit?**

Yes. You may use a drysuit if you have one and have been trained to use it. We do not provide drysuits for use on the course.