

COLCHESTER

ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Research Handbook



Thank you for your interest in conducting your research project with Colchester Zoological Society. Please read through all the information in this handbook before filling out the application form. Once you have completed the application form, please return to the Research Lead at jemmadias@colchesterzoo.org.

Please note that applications can be submitted at any time of the year. Please apply as far in advance as possible and a minimum of one month before the proposed research start date to allow for the application to be processed.

Introduction

Research is one of the primary objectives of Colchester Zoological Society. Colchester Zoological Society aims to continually increase their research potential and output in view of the growing need for knowledge necessary for undertaking conservation tasks and the unique opportunity and environment that the zoo offers for a wide variety of research areas.

Mission statement

Colchester Zoological Society is dedicated to encouraging, supporting, and conducting research that improves captive animal management, benefits conservation programmes and contributes to the body of scientific knowledge about animals and their natural habitats.

Aims and objectives

- Encourage research that supports the mission of Colchester Zoological Society.
- Support and participate in research that furthers understanding of behaviour, husbandry, welfare, environmental enrichment, nutrition, reproduction, ecology, and conservation.
- Support and participate in research that evaluates visitor perception to support Colchester Zoological Society's aim to promote conservation through education.
- Publish research findings which enhance understanding of wildlife, captive animal management and conservation programmes.
- Expand staff and visitor knowledge through promoting research.
- Develop links with universities and other institutions to promote zoological research.

Research staff

Research staff are responsible for overseeing all onsite research, and assessing its viability in terms of welfare, husbandry, and captive breeding. They will be the student's first point of contact and are also responsible for acting as a liaison between researchers, keepers, curators, and any other relevant staff.

Priority Research

Through your academic studies, you may have a research project you wish to propose to Colchester Zoological Society. Whilst individual projects will be considered based on their impact on conservation and welfare, all research must be non-invasive and cause no distress to the animals being studied.

Alternatively, Colchester Zoological Society produces a list of priority topics which we are keen for students to adapt into research projects. The list includes areas that have been identified by research staff, Zoo Directors, and Animal Management staff. Please contact the appropriate research staff via email to request the current priority list

Application Procedure

1. Colchester Zoological Society requests that initial contact be made by the tutor/project supervisor or the student.
2. The first stage of the process will be to discuss project ideas with the relevant research staff at Colchester Zoological Society.
3. An application form must be completed providing information about you, your academic details and proposed project details.
4. Once the application has been submitted it is subject to assessment by Zoo Director and the Curator based on the logistics of the project and the project design
5. Research applications are assessed as soon as possible. Students should be aware that under some circumstances it may take up to one month to accept or decline a project, as it must reach the agreement of all staff. Therefore, the student should apply within plenty of time.
6. The applicant will be informed as soon as possible as to whether the application has been accepted or rejected. There may be some modifications or alterations suggested.
7. If the project is accepted, the student will be invited to attend an induction with research staff.
8. Before data collection commences, the researcher **MUST** provide a copy of their university ethics approval; they will then be issued with a research pass at a cost of £30 plus a £50 deposit (£15 plus a £10 deposit for short term studies of up to 3 days). Deposits will be returned when the final report is submitted to Colchester Zoological Society. Unfinished projects will forfeit the research deposit paid at the start of the study.

Assessment of Research Proposals

All research proposals will be assessed by the Zoo Director and the Curator based on the project design and the logistics. The guidelines for assessment are:

- Compatibility with Colchester Zoological Society's mission to conserve and protect wild animals and their natural habitats and to promote zoological research.
- Value to captive animal management, conservation, or scientific knowledge.

- Subject to ethical review, to ensure that animal welfare is not compromised and compatibility with relevant legislation. All research should involve non-invasive methods, to impose minimal stress to the animals.
- Impact of the proposed research on staff and visitors.
- Compatibility with management and husbandry routines.
- Methodology of the proposed research. Proposals should have realistic aims and sound scientific method for data collection and analysis.

It may be the case that only some aspects of the proposal are not suitable, therefore, the Zoo Director and Curator may accept the proposal on the provision that some aspects are altered.

Terms and Conditions

Colchester Zoological Society agrees to fulfil the following conditions:

1. Before commencement, all research to be conducted with Colchester Zoological Society must be assessed and approved by Colchester Zoological Society to ensure scientific and ethical validity, that animal welfare is not compromised and that it complies with relevant UK and EU legal requirements.
2. Any equipment or questionnaires to be used in the study **MUST** be approved by Colchester Zoological Society in advance of the study being completed
3. The researcher must understand prior to the commencement of the project that an animal/s may not be available for study at short notice due to emergencies, e.g., veterinary care or conditions may change which could potentially affect the research, such as enclosure design, husbandry management or group composition. In such cases, Colchester Zoological Society will ensure to inform the researcher of any necessary changes as soon as possible.
4. Colchester Zoological Society will provide basic information about the animal(s) and their enclosures (if available), diets and husbandry related to the project.
5. Any information (including biological samples, data, photographs, film footage etc) provided by Colchester Zoological Society remains the property of Colchester Zoological Society and can only be used for agreed research.
6. Data and biological samples acquired from Colchester Zoological Society premises may only be used for the purposes stated in the approved application documents and may not be passed onto third parties without prior consent from Colchester Zoological Society.
7. CCTV footage must be analysed on-site at Colchester Zoological Society using a Colchester Zoological Society owned laptop. Research staff will organise a space for the researcher to analyse footage and will arrange for any software to be available for this where appropriate. Raw data only will be permitted to be taken off-site.
8. Research staff will not act as immediate academic supervisors for research conducted in association with Colchester Zoological Society unless otherwise arranged but as a support for research conducted during your time studying as Colchester Zoological Society.
9. To provide free access to Colchester Zoological Society during the pre-agreed data collection period for the purpose of their specific research project.

- Colchester Zoological Society reserves the right to refuse admission at any time and revoke any agreed upon research agreements.

Whilst conducting research in association with Colchester Zoological Society, the researcher agrees to fulfil the following conditions:

- Research projects carried out in association with Colchester Zoological Society must be fully written up and students must provide an electronic copy of the final report within one month of the course submission deadline. If a study lasts longer than 12 months, the researcher must send a progress report every 12 months to Colchester Zoological Society until the report is finalised.
- All reports on research carried out in association with Colchester Zoological Society must fully acknowledge Colchester Zoological Society. Dependent on mentoring contribution of research staffs and/or Zoo Directors, co-authorship may be used as an acknowledgement.
- Once data collection is complete, raw data **MUST** be submitted with clear and instructional annotations to Colchester Zoological Society. If data is not published or submitted for publishing after a period of one year from the conclusion of the study, Colchester Zoological Society reserves the right to publish data. In such cases, the researcher will be contacted, and all due acknowledgements will be given.
- It is the researcher’s responsibility to notify research staffs of any changes regarding your personal details, such as contact details, or research information.
- The researcher will adhere to all Health and Safety guidelines as laid out during the research induction; if the researcher is seen or is reported to have ignored any of these instructions, then the research partnership with Colchester Zoological Society may be terminated.
- Before data collection commences, the researcher needs to arrange any accommodation or travel necessary for accessing Colchester Zoological Society.
- Upon completion of your final write up, the researcher will be invited to present their project to relevant staff members at Colchester Zoological Society.

Application Checklist

Application form	To be completed after initial contact has been made. Return to Research Lead.	
University Ethics Approval	Copy to be sent to Research Lead before data collection commences.	
Research Agreement	To be signed by student and Research Lead before data collection commences.	
Final project	Electronic copy to be sent to Research Lead up to ONE MONTH after submission.	
Project Summary	To be returned to Research Lead with final project.	