

## Masters in Research (Human Geography)

For students entering in 2006

Awarding Institution:	The University of Reading
Teaching Institution:	The University of Reading
Faculty of Science	Programme length: 12 or 24 months
Date of specification: 08/2006	
Programme Coordinator:	Dr Sophia Bowlby
Board of Studies:	MSc Research (Human Geography): Dr Bowlby, Dr Cater, Dr Holt, Dr Lloyd Evans, Dr Morse, Dr Musson, Professor Potter
Accreditation:	Not applicable

### Summary of programme aims

The aim of the programme is to prepare students for research careers either in academia or in non-academic organisations where geographical research skills and knowledge are required.

More specifically the programme aims to:

- To provide students with an appropriate grounding in the main philosophical approaches to social science research.
- To develop students' understanding of the ways in which epistemological and theoretical debates in the social sciences have influenced both general research approaches in geography and its sub-areas and specific theoretical debates within the subject
- To provide training in a wide range of quantitative and qualitative social science and geographical research methods.

### Transferable skills

Research methods, bibliographic and computing skills, report writing; seminar presentation; internet skills, research management and team working, career development skills.

### Programme content

		<b>Credits</b>	<b>Level</b>
<b>EDMES2</b>	<b>General Research and Transferable Skills</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>M</b>
<b>EDMES1</b>	<b>Essentials of Research Methods (Web-based)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>M</b>
	<b>Research Methods Course</b>		
	Module 1: Design and conduct of research (compulsory)	<b>10</b>	<b>M</b>
	Module 2: Statistical Methods Mode A (compulsory)	<b>10</b>	<b>M</b>
	Module 3: Interviewing/Observation (compulsory)	<b>10</b>	<b>M</b>
	Module 4: Questionnaires (compulsory)	<b>10</b>	<b>M</b>
	<b>30 credits chosen from:</b>		
	Module 5: Survey Design	<b>10</b>	<b>M</b>
	Module 6: Secondary data analysis	<b>10</b>	<b>M</b>
	Module 7: Ethnographic approaches	<b>10</b>	<b>M</b>
	Master's level subject specific modules made available via GSSS		<b>M</b>
<b>GGMGRP</b>	<b>Geographical Research</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>M</b>
	Module G1. Geographical Traditions		
	Module G2. Researching Geographical Environments		
	Module G3. The Practise of Research in Geography: additional sources and skills		
	Research Seminars		

### **Part-time/Modular arrangements**

The programme may be taken over 12 months full-time or 24 months part-time. The *Research Methods Course* and *Generic and Transferable Skills* take place on Thursdays and Fridays and the *Geographical Research* course takes place on Wednesdays throughout the three terms.

Part time students take 50 credits of course work in Year 1: *Essentials of Research Methods*, the majority of the *Generic and Transferable Skills* course, and *Core Modules 1, 2 & 3* and present a poster at the GSSS student conference. These lectures all take place on a Thursday in the Autumn and Spring terms. They also do Modules G1 and G2 of the *Geographical Research* course in the Autumn and Spring terms respectively, this work amounts to 20 credits. The *Geographical Research* seminars take place on a Wednesday. Part-time students are also expected to do 20 credits worth of work towards their dissertation over the summer of their first year thus bringing the total amount of credits up to 90 in Year 1.

In Year 2 part-time students take Core Module 4, and 3 additional modules. Unless they opt to take a subject specific course, these lectures take place on Fridays in the Autumn and Spring terms. They also take Module G3 of *Geographical Research* in the summer term and complete their Dissertation over the summer. This work amounts to 90 credits – 50 credits of course work and 40 credits for the Dissertation.

In both years students are expected to attend the staff/student seminars in Geography which take place on several Thursday lunchtimes in the Autumn and Spring terms.

### **Assessment and Progression requirements**

The University's taught postgraduate marks classification is as follows:

<b>Mark</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
70 – 100%	Distinction
60 – 69%	Merit
50 – 59%	Good standard (Pass)
<b>Failing categories:</b>	
40 – 49%	Work below threshold standard
0 – 39%	Unsatisfactory Work

Candidates must achieve an overall average mark of 50% or better in the taught modules in order to qualify for the Masters Degree.

#### *Masters Degree*

To pass the MSc students must gain an average mark of 50 or more overall including a mark of 50 or more for the dissertation. In addition the total credit value of all modules marked below 40 must not exceed 30 credits and for all modules marked below 50 must be less than 60 credits.

Students who gain an average mark of 70 or more overall including a mark of 70 or more for the dissertation and have no mark below 40 will be eligible for a Distinction. Those gaining an average mark of 60 or more overall including a mark of 60 or more for the dissertation and have no mark below 40 will be eligible for a Merit.

### *Postgraduate Diploma*

To pass the Postgraduate Diploma students must gain an average mark of 50 or more. In addition the total credit value of all modules marked below 40 must not exceed 30 credits and for all modules marked below 50 must be less than 60 credits.

Students who gain an average mark of 70 or more and have no mark below 40 will be eligible for the award of a Distinction. Those gaining an average mark of 60 or more and have no mark below 40 will be awarded eligible for a Merit.

### **Admission requirements**

Entrants to this programme are normally required to have obtained a degree at the equivalent of UK 2.1 honours or better in geography or a social science. However, motivated applicants with other degree backgrounds are strongly encouraged to apply.

Admissions Tutor: Sophia Bowlby

### **Support for students and their learning**

University support for students and their learning falls into two categories.

1. Learning support includes IT Services, which has several hundred computers and the University Library, which across its three sites holds over a million volumes, subscribes to around 4,000 current periodicals, has a range of electronic sources of information and houses the Student Access to Independent Learning (S@IL) computer-based teaching and learning facilities. There are language laboratory facilities both for those students studying on a language degree and for those taking modules offered by the Institution-wide Language Programme.
2. Student guidance and welfare support is provided by the Programme Director, the Careers Advisory Service, the University's Special Needs Advisor, Study Advisors, Hall Wardens and the Students' Union.

Departmental support is provided through:

- The course coordinator and the student's project supervisor
- A detailed course handbook.
- Departmental Postgraduate committee – on which students are represented.

Each student will have a supervisor with expertise in the subject area of the student's dissertation project. It is the responsibility of the *supervisor* to give guidance to the student through regular meetings. For full-time students we expect meetings between supervisor and Higher Degree students to take place fortnightly in term time, more frequently at critical stage of the work and less often in vacation periods when an supervision timetable must be agreed in advance. For part-time students meetings normally take place monthly. It is the responsibility of the *student* to raise with the supervisor any difficulties or problems which occur in the course of the work and to submit coursework and progress reports as required by the course handbook.

### **Career prospects**

The programme particularly attracts graduates who intend to undertake a higher degree by research and/or to work in the future in consultancy. Some of the latter may already be in employment, and wish to complete the MSc course on a part-time basis, working on a research project relevant to their job.

### **Educational aims of the programme**

The main educational aim is to prepare students for research careers either in academia or in non-academic organisations where geographical skills and knowledge are required. Therefore the programme aims to:

- provide broadly based training in social science research philosophies and methodologies
- examine the ways in which philosophical and epistemological debates in the social sciences have been engaged with in Human Geography
- provide training in subject-specific methods
- train students in the skills required to investigate a proposed research topic and establish the extent of published knowledge in the field, understand and summarise that knowledge and be able to report formally, both orally and in writing.
- prepare students to undertake a higher degree by research in a specialist area .

## Programme Outcomes

### *Knowledge and Understanding*

<p><b>A. Knowledge and understanding of:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Research methods and skills in both the social sciences in general and human geography in particular</i></li> <li>2. <i>The principles of research design and strategy, including their ethical and legal implications.</i></li> <li>3. <i>The theoretical, political and ethical implications of different research approaches</i></li> </ol>	→	<p><b>Teaching/learning methods and strategies</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Modules on general &amp; transferable skills (EDMES2); research methods and skills (ESMES1; EDMRMC); &amp; human geographical research (GGMGRP)</li> </ol> <p><i>Assessment</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Portfolio assessment,</li> <li>2. Seminar presentations</li> <li>3. Written essays</li> <li>4. Exams</li> <li>5. Final dissertation (GGMDHG)</li> </ol>
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### *Skills and other attributes*

<p><b>B. Intellectual skills – able to:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Present an argument using research data.</i></li> <li>2. <i>Present and/or verify qualitative and quantitative arguments.</i></li> <li>3. <i>Critically assess the social science literature on a particular topic.</i></li> <li>4. <i>Identify interesting and feasible research questions &amp; problems</i></li> </ol>	→	<p><b>Teaching/learning methods and strategies</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Modules on general &amp; transferable skills (EDMES2); research methods and skills (EDMES1;EDMRMC); &amp; human geographical research (GGMGRP – G1, G3)</li> <li>2. Final dissertation. (GGMDHG)</li> </ol> <p><i>Assessment</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Oral reports and seminar discussions</li> <li>2. Written essays</li> <li>3. Final dissertation.</li> </ol>
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**C. Practical skills – able to:**

1. *Design a programme of research*
2. *Select and use research methods appropriate to different problems.*
3. *Undertake practical work in the field.*
4. *Select and use appropriate methods for analysing data.*
5. *Use computers for recording and analysing data.*

**Teaching/learning methods and strategies**

1. Modules on general and transferable skills (EDMES2); research methods and skills (EDMES1; EDMRMC); and human geography skills (GGMGRP – G3)
2. Carrying out dissertation research with the support of a supervisor.

*Assessment*

1. Practical workshop sessions
2. Final dissertation (GGMDHG)

**D. Transferable skills – able to:**

1. *Undertake individual research through planning to completion.*
2. *Write formal reports.*
3. *Disseminate the outcomes of research to a range of audiences using appropriate communication skills.*

**Teaching/learning methods and strategies**

1. Modules on general and transferable skills (EDMES2); research methods and skills (EDMES1;EDMRMC); & human geographical research (GGMGRP – G1, G2, G3)

*Assessment*

1. Seminar presentations and discussions
2. Coursework essays and reports
3. Final dissertation (GGMDHG)

**Please note - This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if he/she takes full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided. More detailed information on the learning outcomes, content and teaching, learning and assessment methods of each module can be found in the module description and in the programme handbook. The University reserves the right to modify this specification in unforeseen circumstances, or where the process of academic development and feedback from students, quality assurance processes or external sources, such as professional bodies, requires a change to be made. In such circumstances, a revised specification will be issued.**