

MSc Research/PGDip/PGCert in Human Geography For students entering in 2008

Awarding Institution:	The University of Reading
Teaching Institution:	The University of Reading Faculty of Science
Programme length:	12 or 24 months
Date of specification:	06/2008
Programme Coordinator:	Dr Sophia Bowlby
Board of Studies:	MSc Research (Human Geography): Dr Bowlby, Dr Benwell, Dr Evans, Dr Lloyd Evans, Professor Morse, Dr Musson, Professor Potter, Dr Tyrrell
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

		Credits	Level
GSM009	General Research and Transferable Skills	10	M
	Research Methods Course		
GSM001	Module 1: Principles of Research Design 1	10	M
GSM002	Module 2: Principles of Research Design 2	10	M
GSM003	Module 3: Data Collection and Analysis 1: Statistics for Educational and Social Research	10	M
GSM004	Module 4: Data Collection and Analysis 2: Interview and Observation	10	M
GSM005	Module 5: Data Collection and Analysis 3: Questionnaires and Surveys	10	M
GSM006	Module 6: Data Collection and Analysis 4: Analysis of Language- and Text-based Data	10	M
GSM007	Module 7: Data Collection and Analysis 5 Using Electronic and Other Sources	10	M
GGMGRP	Geographical Research	40	M
	Autumn Term: <i>Geographical Traditions</i>		
	Spring Term: <i>Researching Geographical Environments</i>		
	Summer Term: <i>The Practise of Research in Geography: additional sources and skills</i>		
	Research Seminars		
GGMDHG	Dissertation	60	M
	TOTAL	180	

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: The majority of the *Generic and Transferable Skills* course and *RMP 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 the Autumn and Spring Term of the *Geographical Research* course which covers 30 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 RMP Modules 4, 5, 6, & 7 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 the Summer Term of *Geographical Research* 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.

Progression requirements

N/A

Summary of teaching and assessment

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

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

For Masters Degrees

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 *and have no mark below 40 in modules* GSM001-GSM007; GGMGRP and GGMDHG. 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 not exceed 55 credits.

Students who gain an average mark of 70 or more overall including a mark of 60 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 50 or more for the dissertation and have no mark below 40 will be eligible for a Merit.

For PG Diplomas

To pass the Postgraduate Diploma students must gain an average mark of 50 or more *and have no mark below 40 in modules* GSM001-GSM007 and GGMGRP. 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 not exceed 55 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 eligible for a Merit.

For PG Certificates

To pass the Postgraduate Certificate students must gain an average mark of 50 or more *and have no mark below 40 in modules* GSM001-GSM007. In addition the total credit value of all modules marked below 40 must not exceed 10 credits.

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.
- School 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 a 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

A. Knowledge and understanding of: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><i>1. Research methods and skills in both the social sciences in general and human geography in particular</i><i>2. The principles of research design and strategy, including their ethical and legal implications.</i><i>3. The theoretical, political and ethical implications of different research approaches</i>	Teaching/learning methods and strategies <ol style="list-style-type: none">Modules on general & transferable skills (GSM009); research methods and skills (GSM001-GSM007; GSM008) & human geographical research (GGMGRP); reading and participation in seminar discussions Assessment <ol style="list-style-type: none">Portfolio assessment,Written essaysExamsFinal dissertation (GGMDHG)
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Skills and other attributes

B. Intellectual skills – able to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><i>1. Present an argument using research data.</i><i>2. Present and/or verify qualitative and quantitative arguments.</i><i>3. Critically assess the social science literature on a particular topic.</i><i>4. Identify interesting and feasible research questions & problems</i>	Teaching/learning methods and strategies <ol style="list-style-type: none">Modules on general & transferable skills (GSM009); research methods and skills (GSM001-GSM007, GSM008); & human geographical research (GGMGRP)Final dissertation. (GGMDHG) Assessment <ol style="list-style-type: none">Oral reports and seminar discussionsWritten essaysFinal dissertation.
C. Practical skills – able to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><i>1. Design a programme of research</i><i>2. Select and use research methods appropriate to different problems.</i><i>3. Undertake practical work in the field.</i><i>4. Select and use appropriate methods for analysing data.</i><i>5. Use computers for recording and analysing data.</i>	Teaching/learning methods and strategies <ol style="list-style-type: none">Modules on general & transferable skills (GSM009); research methods and skills (GSM001-GSM007, GSM008); & human geographical skills (GGMGRP); Carrying out dissertation research with the support of a supervisor. Assessment <ol style="list-style-type: none">Practical workshop sessionsFinal 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 (GSM009); research methods and skills (GSM001-GSM007;GSM008); & human geographical research (GGMGRP)

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.