

BSc Geography (Physical)
For students entering Part 1 in 2008/9

UCAS code: F840

Awarding Institution:	University of Reading
Teaching Institution:	University of Reading
Relevant QAA subject Benchmarking group(s):	Geography
Faculty:	Science Faculty
Programme length:	3 years
Date of specification:	17/Aug/2010
Programme Director:	Dr Kevin White
Programme Advisor:	Dr Kevin White
Board of Studies:	Geography
Accreditation:	None

Summary of programme aims

The programme aims to provide undergraduate students with both subject-specific knowledge and general skills. It aims:

- to give students a thorough insight into the importance of a geographic perspective on physical processes, including the manner in which these processes operate at global, regional and local scales
- to impart knowledge of the theory and practice of physical geography, together with an ability to integrate different perspectives
- to encourage students to make appropriate use of theories and research findings from the physical sciences in understanding spatial phenomena
- to develop students' skills in applying theoretical concepts, knowledge and philosophies to the understanding of particular environments, spatial differences and to decision-making
- to develop understanding through fieldwork and other forms of experiential learning
- to develop skills in how to interpret, analyse and tackle geographical issues
- to develop interdisciplinary aspects of knowledge
- to promote students' ability to engage in lifelong learning.

Transferable skills

During the course of their studies at Reading, all students will be expected to enhance their academic and personal transferable skills in line with the University's Strategy for Learning and Teaching. In following this programme, students will have had the opportunity to develop such skills, in particular relating to career management, communication, information handling, numeracy, problem-solving, team working and the use of information technology and will have been encouraged to further develop and enhance the full set of skills through a variety of opportunities available outside their curriculum.

By the end of the programme students also should have acquired: critical and analytical skills; a basic competence in empirical research; an ability to place issues in a wider context, to make connections between apparently disparate events and issues, and to handle alternative ways of understanding particular situations; an ability to relate theoretical knowledge and ideas to practical situations; writing, reasoning, verbal and presentation skills, and specific technical skills, such as computing, word-processing and statistics.

Programme content

The profile which follows states which modules are compulsory, together with lists of optional modules from which the student must make a selection in consultation with their programme adviser. Students must take a combination of compulsory and optional modules making a total of 120 credits in each Part of the programme. The number of credits for each module is shown after its title. At Part 1 students may take all their modules in Geography or opt to take modules in other departments. In Part 2 students take a combination of core compulsory and optional modules. Part 3 students write a dissertation (40 credits) and select from a list of Geography modules that are approved each year. The actual list of modules available may vary from year to year according to staffing.

Part 1 (three terms)

Compulsory modules

<i>Module</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Credits</i>	<i>Level</i>
GG1GT	Geographical Techniques	20	C
GG1C	Climatology	10	C

GG1D	Hydrology	10	C
GG1GS	Geomorphology	10	C
GG1SB	Soils and Biogeography	10	C
GG1EI	Environmental Issues	10	C

Optional modules (take 50 credits):

GG1SC	Social and Cultural Geography	10	C
GG1HGE	Geography and the Global Economy	10	C
GG1HPP	People and Places in the Global Economy	10	C
GG1HGT	Human Geography Skills and Concepts	20	C

Approved modules from other departments

Part 2 (three terms)

Compulsory modules

<i>Module</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Credits</i>	<i>Level</i>
GG2FP	Physical Geography Fieldclass	20	I
GG2HP	History and Philosophy of Geography	10	I
GG2TP	Team Projects	10	I
GG2CDS	Career Development Skills	10	I

In addition to 50 credits from Group 1, students must select:

At least 20 from Group 2

At least 30 from Group 4

Remainder from Groups 3, 4, or 5

Group 2

GG2WP	Web Page Development	10	I
GG2M	GIS and Mapping	10	I
GG2P9	Remote Sensing	10	I
GG2P10	Image Processing	10	I

Group 3

GG2CG	Cultural Geography	10	I
GG2H1	Geographies of Development	10	I
GG2H2	Economic Geography	10	I
GG2H4	Urban Geography	10	I
GG2ER	Energy Resources	10	I
GG2SG	Social Geography	10	I

Group 4

GG2P1	Geomorphological Hazards	10	I
GG2P8	Biogeography and Ecosystems	10	I
GG2P3	Human Activity and Environmental Change	10	I
GG2ER	Energy Resources	10	I
GG2P5	Hydrological Processes	10	I

Group 5

Approved modules from other departments, including the Institution-Wide Language programme

Part 3 (three terms)

Compulsory modules

<i>Mod Code</i>	<i>Module Title</i>	<i>Credits</i>	<i>Level</i>
GG3D	Dissertation	40	H

Optional modules:

4 modules (80 credits) chosen from a list of modules approved each year.

Those currently approved include:

GG3AP	Air Pollution, Effects and Control	20	H
GG3CC	Climate Change	20	H
GG3PR	Human Geography of the Polar Regions	20	H
GG311	Social Inequalities and Difference	20	H
GG315	Geographies of Children and Youth	20	H
GG321	Work, Employment and Development	20	H
GG3SU	Sustainability	20	H
GG324	Urban Governance	20	H
GG334	Glacial and Periglacial Geomorphology	20	H
GG340	Biodiversity and Conservation Field Class	20	H
GG342	Environmental Modelling	20	H
GG344	Culture and Development in Africa	20	H
GG361	Aquatic Environments: Problems and Management	20	H
GG362	Water Resources	20	H
EITHER			
GG3FT	Tunisia Fieldclass	20	H
OR			
GG330	Dryland Environments	20	H

Any other approved module from outside Geography.

Progression requirements

To gain a threshold performance at Part 1 a student shall normally be required to achieve an overall average of 40% over 120 credits taken in Part 1, and a mark of at least 30% in individual modules amounting to not less than 100 credits. In order to progress from Part 1 to Part 2, a student shall normally be required to achieve a threshold performance at Part 1 and achieve an average mark of 40% in modules GG1C, GG1D, GG1SB, GG1GS, and GG1EI.

To gain a threshold performance at Part 2 a student shall normally be required to achieve: an overall average of 40% over 120 credits taken in Part 2, and a mark of at least 30% in individual modules amounting to not less than 100 credits. In order to progress from Part 2 to Part 3, a student shall normally be required to achieve a threshold performance at Part 2.

There is a university-wide marking scheme and classification of honours.

Mark Interpretation

70% - 100% First Class

60% - 69% Upper Second Class

50% - 59% Lower Second Class

40% - 49% Third Class

35% - 39% Below Honours Standard

0% - 34% Fail

Summary of teaching and assessment

There are a whole variety of teaching and assessment methods used in the degree programme modules. A typical module would involve lectures and either seminars or practicals. Many of the modules are assessed with some continuous assessment and a written exam. However, a number of modules are totally continuously assessed or totally written exam.

Admission requirements

Entrants to this programme are normally required to have obtained:

Grade C or better in English Language and Mathematics in GCSE/O Level

UCAS Tariff: 300 points, 100 points in Geography.

Total points must include at least 2 A2 passes.

Total points exclude Key Skills and General Studies.

International Baccalaureate: 31 points including 6 in Geography

Irish Highers: BBBB

We welcome deferred-entry applications from those wanting to take a gap year between school and university, and from mature students and students with special needs, for whom we may take a broader view of entry requirements. For those with special needs we are happy, when necessary, to take a flexible approach to field-work and practical work requirements, and to make appropriate arrangements for note taking and examinations.

Admissions Tutor: Dr G Griffiths

Support for students and their learning

University support for students and their learning falls into two categories. 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. Student guidance and welfare support is provided by Personal Tutors, School Senior Tutors, the Students' Union, the Medical Practice and the Student Services Directorate. The Student Services Directorate is housed in the Carrington Building and includes the Careers Advisory Service, the Disability Advisory Service, Accommodation Advisory Team, Student Financial Support, Counselling and Study Advisors. Student Services has a Helpdesk available for enquiries made in person or online (www.risisweb.reading.ac.uk), or by calling the central enquiry number on (0118) 378 5555. Students can get key information and guidance from the team of Helpdesk Advisers, or make an appointment with a specialist adviser; Student Services also offer drop-in sessions on everything from accommodation to finance. The Carrington Building is open between 8:30 and 17:30 Monday to Thursday (17:00 Friday and during vacation periods). Further information can be found in the Student website (www.reading.ac.uk/student).

Career prospects

A Reading geography degree is designed to assist graduate employment in three ways:

Firstly, it provides a basis for employment in fields directly or indirectly related to the content of the degree course, though this often involves a post-graduate qualification. Examples are jobs in teaching (in universities, colleges, schools and field centres), regional and economic planning, computing, transport management, conservation, land evaluation, civil engineering.

Secondly, a Reading geography degree enhances employment prospects because of the rigorous academic training regardless of the subject matter. Again, most other jobs usually involve further (in-service) training. Examples of such careers include insurance, banking, accountancy, civil service, armed forces and commercial management.

Thirdly, employers are attracted by the impressive quantitative/numeracy skills acquired in the degree programme, together with their experiences in computer usage, field projects (at home and abroad) and the planning/execution of the major dissertation research programme. Employers are seeking the flexible, skilled and adaptable geography graduates produced at Reading.

Opportunities for study abroad or for placements

As part of the Part 3 programme, students can spend one term, either term 7 or term 8, studying at a European University under the ERASMUS exchange scheme. Study undertaken abroad substitutes for study in Reading.

There are Physical Geography links with the university of Aarhus (Denmark) and University Centre on Svalbad (Norway).

The Erasmus programmes are co-ordinated by Dr S. Lloyd-Evans.

Programme Outcomes

The programme provides opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate knowledge and understanding, skills, qualities and other attributes in the following areas:

Knowledge and Understanding

A. Knowledge and understanding of:

1. Processes, concepts and techniques in physical geography
2. The nature of change and the significance of spatial relationships within human and physical environments
3. Fundamental concepts of physical geography, such as processes operating in the atmosphere, hydrosphere, lithosphere, pedosphere and biosphere
4. Geographic perspectives on physical processes and their interaction at global, regional and local scales.
5. The main methodological strategies used in the analysis of geographical information.
6. The application of geographical concepts, techniques and expertise to problem solving.

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

Most of the knowledge required for the basic topics is discussed in formal lectures supported by smaller group discussions and practicals

At Part 2 knowledge is also gained through a 1-week fieldclass and practical work.

In Part 3 the specialised option modules include writing detailed assessments of set topics, making oral presentations and joining in group discussion.

Assessment

Most knowledge is tested through a combination of coursework and unseen formal examinations. Oral presentations also contribute.

Skills and other attributes

B. Intellectual skills - *able to*:

1. Think logically
2. Develop a reasoned argument
3. Organise tasks into a structured form
4. Abstract and synthesise information
5. Critically judge and evaluate evidence
6. Assess the merits of contrasting theories, explanations and policies
7. Transfer appropriate techniques and knowledge from one subject area to another
8. Organise and reflect upon their own learning
9. Recognise the moral and ethical issues involved in academic and policy debates.

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

The need to think logically and analytically permeates the compulsory modules in the course. Skills 2-7 are developed in essay writing, and continuously assessed project work and the dissertation. 8 is developed throughout the entire programme. 9 is developed both in discussion groups, readings and written work.

The more specialist topics provide many opportunities to apply and develop these skills through the analysis of a range of problems in a wide variety of contexts.

Assessment

1-6 are covered extensively in the core modules; 7-9 are given wide scope in the optional modules.

C. Practical skills - *able to*:

1. Present a chain of reasoning
2. Apply theoretical concepts and knowledge to the understanding of particular environments and spatial differences and to decision-making
3. Analyse geographic problems using a variety of techniques and principles
4. Evaluate policies from a geographic standpoint
5. Communicate both orally and in writing critical analysis of geographic and environmental issues

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

Modules concentrate on formal geographic reasoning. Problem solving forms an important part of class work especially in Parts 2 and 3.

In geography the ability to use all these skills is developed through essay writing, practicals, field work and small group discussions.

The assessed work in the specialised options

6. Plan, organise and write a report on an independent project
7. Plan and undertake field surveys
8. Analyse data gathered from the field and be aware of its limitations

involves writing detailed assessments of set topics.

Assessment

All skills are tested through a combination of coursework, including both problem solving and essays, and through unseen examinations. 6 is assessed directly by means of the large number of essays prepared in Parts 1, 2 and 3. It is also assessed in Part 2 projects and the Dissertation.

D. Transferable skills - able to:

1. Use IT (word-processing, spreadsheets databases, email and www)
2. Apply skills of numeracy, graphicity and computation to data analysis
3. Communicate ideas in a logical way in both writing and speech
4. Give oral presentations
5. Contribute to group discussions of a geographic problem
6. Use library resources both on- and off-line
7. Manage time
8. Plan career strategy.

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

The use of IT is initiated in the Part 1 IT and Statistic module and further developed in the Part 2 Geographical Techniques module. Word processing is required throughout the degree programme

Seminars in Parts 2 and 3 involve group discussions and oral presentations. Part 2 work includes preparation of group projects

Library and internet resources have to be used continuously in the preparation of essays and project work

The highly structured system of deadlines for assessed work requires good time management

Career planning is taught through a Part 2 Career Management Skills course with lectures and self paced computer-based assignments. Also, one-to-one meetings with career staff can be arranged.

Assessment

IT skills are assessed directly at Part 1. Most skills are tested indirectly through the preparation of course and project work.

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 process or external sources, such as professional bodies, requires a change to be made. In such circumstances, a revised specification will be issued.