1. **Programmes covered by the Periodic Review**

*Undergraduate programmes:*
F841 BSc Human and Physical Geography  
F840 BSc Physical Geography  
L722 BSc Human Geography  
LL17 BSc Geography and Economics

*Taught postgraduate programmes:*
MSc Research (Human Geography)

2. **Date of the Periodic Review**

The Periodic Review took place on Wednesday 8 and Thursday 9 December 2004.

3. **Objectives of the Periodic Review**

The objectives of the Periodic Review were to:

- Monitor the quality and standards of the degree programmes under Review;  
- Enable the Department of Geography to evaluate its taught programme provision and in particular to evaluate student achievement of the appropriate academic standards, and the learning opportunities offered to students to support their achievements;  
- To enable an independent Panel to review this self-evaluation through consideration of documentation and discussions with staff and students;  
- Provide a means by which the Department of Geography is able to reflect on the success, development and possible improvement of the taught programmes that they offered;  
- Ask fundamental questions about the rationale, structure and resourcing of the programmes under Review;  
- Consider the educational aims and objectives of the programmes, and success in meeting these;  
- Review teaching, learning and methods of assessment in their contexts;  
- Consider whether the programmes under Review should continue to run for a further period of up to six years.
4. **Conduct of the Periodic Review**

The Periodic Review was conducted by a Panel chaired by the Director of Teaching and Learning of the Faculty of Science and Life Sciences, and also comprising two other internal members of academic staff (neither from the School of Human and Environmental Sciences) and two external academic members specialising in Geography.

The Panel received a range of documentation in advance of the Review, including the Self Evaluation Document prepared by the Department and also relevant programme specifications. During the Review Visit, the Panel considered other documentation and met relevant staff from the Department and from University service departments. Members of the Panel also met with current students studying a selection of the degree programmes under review; and were given a guided tour of the facilities.

5. **Evidence Base**

In addition to the meetings held with academic staff and current students, the Panel considered a wide range of evidence, including examples of student work with staff feedback, copies of programme handbooks, minutes of relevant committees and statistical data. The Panel was able to see External Examiners' reports for the three previous years. Both this report and those produced by the External Examiners commented on the high levels of student achievement.

The Panel was also able to see the evaluation questionnaires produced by students and the minutes of recent meetings of the termly School Staff Student Committee, which indicated that appropriate action was taken in response to issues raised.

6. **External peer contributors to process**

The external members of the Review Panel were present for the duration of the Periodic Review. External members of the Review Panel were appointed by the Joint Faculty Board for Teaching and Learning for Science and Life Sciences, after considering nominations from the School of Human and Environmental Sciences. The role of these External members was to provide subject expertise and to provide an expert judgement of the validity and appropriateness of the programmes under review.

7. **Overview of the main characteristics of the programmes covered by the review**

The Department operates programmes that are clearly structured and well thought out. There is excellent variation in teaching methods and the students appreciated the range of teaching and assessment modes. The programmes are current and match well with national benchmarks, and offer breadth and flexibility. The students clearly enjoy and value the degree programmes offered. The Department clearly devotes care in teaching and supporting
students and in ensuring that staff are available for students to consult. The Department is responsive to the need for change and keeps the curricula under review, illustrated by the re-configuration of Part 2 modules to give more options.

8. **Conclusions on innovation and good practice**

Examples of good practice:

- The operation of the Student-Staff Committee, which includes a student chairing meetings. The Student Chair also has membership of the Undergraduate Board of Studies, an excellent example of transparency and the Department’s intention to take student opinions seriously.
- The availability and operation of the IT facilities in the Department and the School were exemplary, both in facilities and they way they are managed.
- The variety of assessment methods and learning opportunities.
- The level of access for students to and helpfulness of the staff in the Department.
- The progressive reflection on and development of teaching, for example through the introduction of Blackboard, and the revision of Part 2.
- The field classes are clearly very successful generally and helpful in delivering skills.
- The Skills Map, helping students see opportunities for their own development. This is supported by activities such as the role play, and student presentations.

9. **Conclusions on quality and standards**

The Review Panel concluded:

- that the intended learning outcomes of the degree programmes were generally clear and appropriate and were being attained by students.
- that quality and standards were being achieved;
- that the programme specifications were being delivered;
- that Department clearly devotes care in teaching and supporting students and in ensuring that staff are widely available to students to consult;
- the Department is responsive to change and keeps the programmes under regular review;
- that the field classes are clearly very successful generally and helpful in delivering skills; and
- that there is an excellent variety of assessment methods and learning opportunities.

10. **Conclusions on currency and validity of the programmes under Review**

The Panel therefore recommends to the Joint Faculty Board for Teaching and Learning for the Faculties of Life Sciences and of Science that, subject to the programme team addressing the issues shown below, the following degree programmes be re-approved to run for a further six years (or until the periodic review of Economics in the case of BSc Geography and Economics):
Undergraduate programmes:
   F841 BSc Human and Physical Geography
   F840 BSc Physical Geography
   L722 BSc Human Geography
   LL17 BSc Geography and Economics

Taught postgraduate programmes:
   MSc Research (Human Geography)

11. **Recommendations**

The Panel deemed the following to be **Advisable:**

(a) The Department should consider why the number of First Class degrees is below average in Geography, and take appropriate steps to improve students’ performance at this level

The Panel deemed the following to be **Desirable:**

(a) The Department should consider making the dissertation compulsory in the BSc Geography and Economics (Regional Science)

(b) The Department and School should consider how to finance field courses in the new fees regime and how any additional charge for field courses could be sustained in the context of widening participation

12. **Summary of actions taken in response to the Review**

[To be added once the Subject Provider’s Action Plan has been produced and subsequently over-written one year later, to provide details of the Subject Provider’s ‘follow-up’ report]