

MSc in Research (Human Geography)

Awarding Institution:	The University of Reading
Teaching Institution:	The University of Reading
Faculty of Science	Programme length: 12 or 24 months
For students entering in 2003	Date of specification: 6/2002
Programme Coordinator:	Dr Sophia Bowlby
Board of Studies:	MSc Research (Human Geography): Dr Bowlby, Dr Cater, Dr Lloyd Evans, Dr McGregor, Dr Merriman, Dr Morse, Dr Raco, Dr Silk, Dr Spencer
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
- 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
EDMES2	General Research and Transferable Skills	10	M
EDMES1	Essentials of Research Methods (Web-based)	20	M
EDMRMC	Research Methods Course	60	M
	Module 1: Getting started in Social Science Research: Relating existing research to your enquiry Module 2: The Design and Conduct of Social Research Module 3: Qualitative Research Methods of Data Collection and Analysis Module 4: Quantitative Research Methods of Data Collection and Analysis Module 5: Complementary perspectives on data collection and analysis/Producing a thesis Module 6: Practical Philosophies of Social Research		
GGMGRP	Geographical Research	30	M
	Module G1. Geographical Traditions Module G2. Researching geographical environments Module G3. The practise of research in geography: additional sources and skills Research Seminars		
GGMDHG	Dissertation	60	M

Part-time/Modular arrangements

The programme may be taken over 12 months full-time or 24 months part-time. The *Research Methods Course* takes place on Thursday afternoon and early evening throughout the three terms. This course is modular and the modules run in alternating slots from year to year thus giving part-time students the option of taking all the modules over two years in the afternoon or evening slot. The afternoon slot runs from 3.00. The *Human Geography modules* take place on Wednesdays or Thursday mornings, the staff/student seminars at Thursday lunchtime and module workshops on Saturday mornings. Part-time students are expected to take the first Geography module and the *General Research and Transferable Skills Course* in their first year and the two remaining geography modules in their second year.

Assessment and Progression requirements

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

Mark	Interpretation
70 – 100%	Distinction
60 – 69%	Merit
50 – 59%	Good standard (Pass)
Failing categories:	
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 progress to do the Dissertation. Candidates not presenting a Dissertation may be awarded a **Postgraduate Diploma** if their performance in the taught modules is satisfactory (see below).

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

A. Knowledge and understanding of: 1. <i>Research methods and skills in both the social sciences in general and human geography in particular</i> 2. <i>The principles of research design and strategy, including their ethical and legal implications.</i> 3. <i>The theoretical, political and ethical implications of different research approaches</i>	Teaching/learning methods and strategies 1. Modules on general & transferable skills (EDMES2); research methods and skills (ESMES1; EDMRMC); & human geographical research (GGMGRP) <i>Assessment</i> 1. Portfolio assessment, 2. Seminar presentations 3. Written essays 4. Exams 5. Final dissertation (GGMDHG)
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Skills and other attributes

B. Intellectual skills – able to: 1. <i>Present an argument using research data.</i> 2. <i>Present and/or verify qualitative and quantitative arguments.</i> 3. <i>Critically assess the social science literature on a particular topic.</i> 4. <i>Identify interesting and feasible research questions & problems</i>	Teaching/learning methods and strategies 1. Modules on general & transferable skills (EDMES2); research methods and skills (EDMES1; EDMRMC); & human geographical research (GGMGRP – G1, G3) 2. Final dissertation. (GGMDHG) <i>Assessment</i> 1. Oral reports and seminar discussions 2. Written essays 3. Final dissertation.
C. Practical skills – able to: 1. <i>Design a programme of research</i> 2. <i>Select and use research methods appropriate to different problems.</i> 3. <i>Undertake practical work in the field.</i> 4. <i>Select and use appropriate methods for analysing data.</i> 5. <i>Use computers for recording and analysing data.</i>	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. <i>Assessment</i> 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 expect 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 module and programme handbooks.