

Programme Specification

BSc Geography (Physical)

For students entering Part 1 in September 2026

UCAS Code: F840

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This document sets out key information about your Programme and forms part of your Terms and Conditions with the University of Reading.

Awarding Institution	University of Reading
Teaching Institution	University of Reading
Length of Programme	3 years
Length of Programme with placement/year abroad	BSc Geography (Physical) with Study Year Abroad - 4 years (internal transfer only) BSc Geography (Physical) with Professional Experience - 4 years (UCAS Code: F839)
Accreditation	Accredited by the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG)
QAA Subject Benchmarking Group	Geography

Programme information and content

The programme will provide you with subject-specific knowledge in physical geography and the skills required to apply this knowledge to tackle real-world issues which intersect societies and environments through time. A strong emphasis is placed on experiential learning through fieldwork, practical experimentation, and independent research. Students will use Information Communication Technologies (ICT), geospatial techniques, such as Geographical Information Systems (GIS), and quantitative methods to visualise, interrogate, and analyse spatial and temporal information.

Part 1:	Part 1 introduces you to the discipline of physical geography, including current scholarly debates and theories in geographical research, the origins and intellectual traditions of the discipline, and its application to the interdisciplinary study of Global Challenges. You will also be introduced to geographical techniques and study skills that will develop your capabilities as an independent learner. A diverse range of optional module are available from departments across the University, including the opportunity to learn a language.
Part 2:	Part 2 provides you with opportunities to engage with more specialist areas of physical geography relevant to the interests of academic staff in the department, apply quantitative or geospatial techniques to real-world issues, and to develop your independent research skills through a range of field-based and practical training. Optional modules are designed to give you more detailed subject-specific knowledge and technical skills in

	specific areas of physical geography. You will prepare to undertake an independent research project during the final year of your programme.
Placement/Study abroad year:	You may be permitted to undertake a placement year or a study abroad year between Part 2 and Part 3 of the programme. In such cases you will transfer to a 4-year programme. The placement or study abroad year should not normally be shorter than nine months full-time.
Part 3:	Part 3 gives you the opportunity to specialise by selecting from a wide range of specialist subject modules. You will also apply the skills acquired throughout the programme by conducting an original, independent research project.

Programme Learning Outcomes - BSc Geography (Physical)

During the course of the Programme, you will have the opportunity to develop a range of skills, knowledge and attributes (known as learning outcomes) For this programme, these are:

	Learning outcomes
1	Demonstrate a systemic understanding of fundamental concepts in physical geography, such as processes operating in the atmosphere, hydrosphere, lithosphere, pedosphere, and biosphere.
2	Identify the drivers of change within environments over space and time resulting from the interactions of climate, ecosystems, and landscapes
3	Use geospatial technologies to visualise, interrogate, and analyse spatial information
4	Plan and conduct inclusive fieldwork investigations competently, ethically, and safely
5	Use academic literature to support critical discussions of contemporary global geographical challenges
6	Apply geographical concepts, techniques and expertise to problem solving
7	Demonstrate a critical awareness of the origins and legacy of the discipline and reflect on individual positionality
8	Plan, conduct, and report the outcome of an independent geographical investigation
9	Communicate effectively with a variety of audiences using a range of formats and media
10	Work effectively within a multidisciplinary and multicultural team, demonstrating behaviours that support equality, diversity, and inclusion

You will be expected to engage in learning activities to achieve these Programme learning outcomes. Assessment of your modules will reflect these learning outcomes and test how far you have met the requirements for your degree.

To pass the Programme, you will be required to meet the progression or accreditation and award criteria set out below.

In addition to the learning outcomes stated above if you are on a placement or study abroad programme you will have the opportunity to develop the following learning outcome:

Additional Learning outcomes	
Study Abroad	
By the end of the Study Abroad Programme, students will have adapted to international study contexts in order to achieve the required academic outcomes determined by the host institution.	
Placement	
By the end of the Placement Year Programme, students will have explored and developed their professional experience, skills and knowledge, contributing significantly towards their continuous learning and career prospects as graduates.	

Module information

Each part comprises 120 credits, allocated across a range of compulsory and optional modules as shown below. Compulsory modules are listed.

Part 1 Modules:

Module	Name	Credits	Level
GV1FC	Geography and Environmental Science Field Class	20	4
GV1GC	Global Challenges: a Planet in Crisis	20	4
GV1LAR	Landscapes and Natural Resources	20	4
GV1RES	Restless Planet	20	4
GV1SKL	Skills in Geography and Environmental Science	20	4

Remaining credits will be made up of optional modules available in the Department of Geography and Environmental Science or modules from an approved list.

Students registered on the 4 year with Placement Year programme will take a non-credit bearing Preparing for Placement module (GV1PP). Students who are considering transferring to a 4 year with Placement Year programme will also have the option to attend.

Part 2 Modules:

Module	Name	Credits	Level
GV2EPH	Earth Processes and Hazards	20	5
GV2FLD	Field Class	20	5
GV2STP	Skills Training and Project Design	20	5

Remaining credits will be made up of optional modules available in the Department of Geography and Environmental Science or modules from an approved list.

Students registered on the 4 year with Placement Year programme, or who have opted to take a shorter Summer Placement between Parts 2 and 3 (GV2PLA), will take a non-credit bearing Preparing for Placement module (GV2PP). Students who are considering transferring to a 4 year with Placement Year programme will also have the option to attend.

Modules during a placement year or study year (if applicable):

Students undertaking a placement/study abroad year as part of a four year degree programme will take 120 credits in either Professional Placement or Study Abroad. The placement or study abroad year should not normally be shorter than nine months full-time.

If you take a year-long placement or study abroad, Part 3 as described below may be subject to variation.

Part 3 Modules:

Module	Name	Credits	Level
GV3GED	Geography & Environmental Science Dissertation	40	6

Remaining credits will be made up of optional modules available in the Department of Geography and Environmental Science or modules from an approved list.

Placement opportunities

Placements:

You may be provided with the opportunity to undertake a credit-bearing placement as part of your Programme. This will form all or part of an optional module. You will be required to find and secure a placement opportunity, with the support of the University

Study Abroad:

You may be provided with the opportunity to undertake a Study Abroad placement during your Programme. This is subject to you meeting academic conditions detailed in the Programme Handbook, including obtaining the relevant permissions from your School, and the availability of a suitable Study Abroad placement. If you undertake a Study Abroad placement, further arrangements will be discussed and agreed with you.

Optional modules:

The optional modules available can vary from year to year. An indicative list of the range of optional modules for your programme can be found online in the Course Catalogue. Details of optional modules for each part, including any additional costs associated with the optional modules, will be made available to you prior to the beginning of the Part in which they are to be taken and you will be given an opportunity to express interest in the optional

modules that you would like to take. Entry to optional modules will be at the discretion of the University and subject to availability and may be subject to pre-requisites, such as completion of another module. Although the University tries to ensure you are able to take the optional modules in which you have expressed interest this cannot be guaranteed.

Teaching and learning delivery:

Inclusive experiential learning is at the heart of the teaching and learning in Physical Geography. A strong emphasis is placed on fieldwork, practical experimentation, geospatial techniques and quantitative research methods. As a Physical Geography student, you will engage with field-based learning throughout your degree, including residential field classes, external visits, and field trips. These opportunities for fieldwork will consolidate your learning obtained via a diverse range of teaching methods including interactive lectures and practical classes.

During your degree you will engage with contemporary global issues that cut across social and environmental justice agendas within the context of sustainable development. You will typically acquire knowledge of key concepts and processes through pre-class reading and viewing pre-recorded screencasts so that you can apply this knowledge within interactive lectures or practical sessions. You will then consolidate this knowledge and strengthen your understanding of contemporary geographical issues through further guided independent study, including engagement with academic literature.

You will learn transferable skills for study and continuing professional development through practical exercises and peer support. Employability skills are built and embedded throughout the programme through engagement with employers, activities that reflect the tasks undertaken by professionals, authentic assessment, and the support and encouragement to undertake a professional placement in industry. You also have the opportunity to study abroad at one of our overseas partner universities.

You will undertake projects to address key contemporary social and environmental challenges first as a member of a group, supported by staff, but with increasing degrees of independence as you progress through the programme. You will receive training on how to support equality, diversity, and inclusion while working in multidisciplinary and multicultural teams alongside subject specific disciplinary skills. You will learn how to conduct scientific investigations competently, ethically, and safely by first following and then later creating laboratory protocols, research ethics submissions, and risk assessments.

The research and enquiry skills you acquire by participating in team projects during Part 1 and Part 2 will prepare you to undertake an independent research project, supervised by a member of staff, in the final year. Both group work and independent research projects are supported by meetings with staff to support planning and provide verbal feedback.

Elements of your programme will be delivered via digital technology.

The scheduled teaching and learning activity hours and amount of technology enhanced learning activity for your programme will depend upon your module combination. In addition, you will undertake some self-scheduled teaching and learning activities, designed by and/or involving staff, which give some flexibility for you to choose when to complete

them. You will also be expected to undertake guided independent study. Information about module study hours including contact hours and the amount of independent study which a student is normally expected to undertake for a module is indicated in the relevant module description.

Accreditation details

This programme has been accredited by the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG). Accredited degree programmes contain a solid academic foundation in geographical knowledge and skills, and prepare graduates to address the needs of the world beyond higher education. The accreditation criteria require evidence that graduates from accredited programmes meet defined sets of learning outcomes, including subject knowledge, technical ability and transferable skills.

Assessment

A diverse range of assignment types are adopted to assess the progress and attainment of BSc Physical Geography students. These assignment types include the assessment of knowledge by answering both closed and open-ended questions, the authoring of essays and consultancy style reports, undertaking practical exercises, and communicating the findings of geographical investigations to a range of specialist and lay audiences using a range of multimedia. Further information is contained in the individual module descriptions.

Progression

Part 1

To achieve a threshold performance at Part 1, a student will normally be required to:

- (i) Obtain an overall weighted average of 40% over 120 credits taken in Part 1;
- (ii) Obtain a mark of at least 40% in individual modules amounting to not less than 80 credits taken in Part 1; and
- (iii) Obtain marks of at least 30% in modules amounting to 120 credits. (A Fail in a Pass/Fail module will be treated as not meeting the minimum threshold requirement for progression or classification. Pass/fail modules are excluded from weighted average calculations but must be passed to avoid failure of the Part or degree.)

In order to progress from Part 1 to Part 2, a student must achieve a threshold performance.

The achievement of a threshold performance at Part 1 qualifies a student for a Certificate of Higher Education if they leave the University before completing the subsequent Part.

Students are able to transfer from a Joint or Major/Minor Honours programme to a Single Honours programme in one of their joint subject areas at the end of Part 1, subject to:

- Meeting the University Threshold Standard at the end of Part 1; and
- Achieving marks of at least 40% in at least 40 credits of modules (e.g., 2 x 20 credit modules) in the subject to which they wish to transfer; and

- Meeting any programme-specific progression rules for the Part 1 Single Honours Programme to which they wish to transfer.

NB Students taking a Major/Minor programme may only transfer to a Single Honours programme in the Major subject and must meet the above requirements.

Students should seek advice about the titles of programmes they may be eligible to transfer to.

Students who transfer from a Joint or Major/Minor Honours programme to a Single Honours programme may not have taken all of the Part 1 modules listed in the Single Honours Programme Specification. The modules which they have taken will be shown on their Diploma Supplement.

Part 2

To achieve a threshold performance at Part 2, a student shall normally be required to:

- (i) Obtain a weighted average of 40% over 120 credits taken in Part 2; and
- (ii) Obtain marks of at least 40% in individual modules amounting to at least 80 credits taken in Part 2; and
- (iii) Obtain marks of at least 30% in individual modules amounting to at least 120 credits. (A Fail in a Pass/Fail module will be treated as not meeting the minimum threshold requirement for progression or classification. Pass/fail modules are excluded from weighted average calculations but must be passed to avoid failure of the Part or degree.)

In order to progress from Part 2 to Part 3, a student must achieve a threshold performance.

The achievement of a threshold performance at Part 2 qualifies a student for a Diploma of Higher Education if they leave the University before completing the subsequent Part.

Professional/placement year

Students are required to pass the professional placement year/study abroad year in order to progress on the programme which incorporates the professional placement year/study abroad year. Students who fail the professional placement year/study abroad year transfer to the non-placement year version of the programme.

Classification

Bachelors' degrees

The University's honours classification scheme is based on the following:

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

The weighting of the Parts/Years in the calculation of the degree classification is:

Three year programmes:

Part 2: one-third

Part 3: two-thirds

Four year programmes, including study abroad

Part 2: one-third

Study abroad: Year abroad not included in the classification

Part 3: two-thirds

Details of the classification method is given in detail in the [Assessment Handbook](#) under:

- Section 17: Awards (Bachelor's), or
- Section 18: Awards (Integrated Master's programmes). Students who do not progress to Part 4 of the Integrated Master's will normally be subject to the method detailed under Section 17: Awards (Bachelor's)

Please note that there may be a specific version of the above for your year of entry.

Additional costs of the programme

Our compulsory Part 1 and Part 2 field trips are free of charge, with all accommodation, travel and activity entry costs covered by the School (where relevant). The Part 2 residential field class is run on a Bed and Breakfast basis. You will therefore need to budget in advance to purchase your own lunch, dinner and to cover any evening activities you may choose to do during the week.

For all field classes you will be expected to be equipped with suitable outdoor clothing (waterproof jacket and trousers) and footwear. Information relating to the specific requirements for each trip location will be available in the module description.

Depending on your module choices, you may select a non-compulsory Part 3 field class, which will require a financial contribution of approximately £1100 to cover travel and accommodation costs. The final cost will be dependent on the destination and costs calculated at the time of booking, which will be linked to inflation rates.

All compulsory resources including textbooks and electronic resources are freely available via the library where there are extensive collections to support your curriculum. Reading lists and module-specific requirements for any other classroom and external activities are listed on the individual module descriptions. Our Digital Technology Services ensure that critical software is available via University computer rooms and where possible via our Cloud paging platform AppsAnywhere. There may be bursaries and other financial support

available to help students in financial difficulty, however eligibility will be dependent on individual circumstances.

Costs are indicative and may vary according to optional modules chosen and are subject to inflation and other price fluctuations. Estimates were calculated in 2025.

For further information about your Programme please refer to the Programme Handbook and the relevant module descriptions, which are available at <http://www.reading.ac.uk/module/>. The Programme Handbook and the relevant module descriptions do not form part of your Terms and Conditions with the University of Reading.

BSc Geography (Physical) for students entering Part 1 in session 2026/27

3 September 2025

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