

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION

Awarding body/institution:	Queen Mary, University of London
Teaching institution (if different from above):	
Name of the final award and Programme title:	MSc in Physical Geography by Research (F8S1)
Duration of Study/Period of Registration	12 months FT/24 months PT
UCAS code:	n/a
QAA Benchmark Group	n/a
Academic Department/s involved in programme delivery	Geography

If accredited by a professional/statutory body, please give the name, date of last accreditation visit, approximate date of next visit and details of exemptions that will be given to QMUL graduates.	n/a
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Criteria for admission to the programme
Normally an upper second class honours degree or higher in degree in Geography, Earth or Environmental Sciences or a cognate discipline (or equivalent international qualification) together with two supportive academic references. Candidates may be asked to provide examples of written work and/or be interviewed.

Aims of the programme

The programme provides students with an opportunity to investigate, in detail and to research standards, a topic of interest to them within physical geography or environmental science more generally. It also provides training in key research methods and techniques used within physical geography and environmental science, and the opportunity to explore the main research approaches used within physical geography/environmental science and the debates on these approaches.

Learning outcomes for the programme

Teaching and learning are closely informed by the active research of staff who teach on the programme. The programme provides opportunities for students to achieve and demonstrate the following learning outcomes.

Knowledge and Understanding:

On completion of the programme the student will be able to:

- Identify the range of research approaches used within physical geography and environmental science.
- Demonstrate how different approaches can be employed to answer research questions within physical geography and environmental science.
- Articulate and investigate testable research questions in physical geography and environmental science.

Skills:

On completion of the programme the student will be able to:

- Demonstrate skills in the design, implementation and management of a research project.
- Utilise appropriate laboratory analytical and/or field investigation techniques.
- Deploy appropriate numerical and statistical methods for data analysis.
- Undertake fieldwork and/or laboratory work (including computer laboratory) independently for research standards.
- Present research findings in written, oral and poster formats.

Personal attributes and social skills

In addition, the programme fosters the development of a range of personal attributes important beyond academia: for employment, for future personal intellectual development and in order to contribute to the wider community. These include heightened motivation, dedication, the ability to work autonomously and with others, critical self-awareness and self-management, empathy and insight, intellectual integrity, initiative and personal responsibility, interest in life-long learning, flexibility, adaptability and creativity.

Teaching, learning and assessment strategies

This programme is taught by members of academic staff in the Department Geography. The Department of Geography is committed to developing, maintaining and supporting excellence in teaching and learning, to innovation in teaching practice, and to fostering independent learning and critical thinking in our students, whilst providing appropriate levels of support to students in their learning.

The programme is delivered through three taught core modules and an independent research project (also core). All modules are assessed via coursework. The taught modules are delivered via lectures, seminars, one-one supervision, and attendance at research presentations by outside speakers and staff within the Department. The project is supervised on a one-one basis by a member of the physical geography lecturing staff.

Students have access to a wide range of learning resources within the College. These include: the College Library, the University of London Library at Senate House and the first rate resources of other libraries with London collections (e.g. the British Library); a range of IT resources including networked PCs (with full internet and email privileges), and electronic learning resources (e.g. electronic academic journals); the Graduate School in the Social Sciences and Humanities, including the facilities of the 'Lock Keeper's Cottage' in the Campus's 'Arts Quarter' bordering the Regent's Canal (seminar room, a common room with kitchen facilities and three work rooms with additional computing resources).

All students are allocated a supervisor with whom they will meet on a regular, one-to-one basis throughout the programme. Supervisors will have some expertise in the student's proposed area of dissertation research and may be drawn from across the Department.

Programme structure(s) and requirements, levels and modules

The programme has a small taught component consisting of three modules, which collectively make up one third of the programme. The majority of the programme is based around researching and presenting as a dissertation, a piece of independent research (120 credits) which will be supervised by one of the physical geography lecturing staff. The dissertation will be graded by two examiners (one external) both as a written piece of work but also via an oral examination. The three taught components are as follows:

Physical Geography Research and Practice (30 credits)

This module will introduce students to wider debates within physical geography, in particular concerning the most effective ways to conduct research into different environmental problems. The module will also provide training in undertaking and presenting research projects.

Project-specific Research Training (15 credits)

The rationale for this module is that, to complete any independent research project to a high standard, it is important that students are competent in the use of the research tools that they need. Training in subject-specific methods and techniques will be provided via one-one supervision, with the supervisor being the same person who supervises the student's independent research project. The exact suite of skills taught will depend on the particular research project the student is researching.

Data Analysis (15 credits)

Students of Physical Geography and Environmental Science require a range of numerical, statistical and modelling skills to undertake higher-level analysis of environmental datasets. This module provides specific training and experience in specific approaches to data analysis relevant to individual students or groups of students. This will include one-to-one or small group workshops on specific statistical methods, but the precise content of the teaching will be specific to the needs of the cohort in each year.

The remainder of the programme is made up of an independent research project.

Independent Research Project (120 credits)

The remainder of the programme (120 credits) will consist of researching, and presenting as a dissertation, a piece of independent research, which will be supervised by one of the physical geography lecturing staff.

The pass mark for each unit of assessment, each module and for the dissertation is 50%. A mark of 70% or above is a distinction. Candidates must pass ALL modules to be awarded the MSc. One failed module may be condoned at the discretion of the MSc Geography Examination Board if the failure is considered of a marginal nature (a mark of between 30% and 49%).

A candidate for the Masters degree who achieves an average mark of 70% over all elements of the programme, and a mark of at least 65% in the dissertation, may be recommended for the award of the degree with Distinction. A candidate for the Master's Degree who achieves an average of 65% or above over the whole programme of study may be recommended for the award of the degree with Merit.

Quality assurance mechanism (please include details of: SSLC meetings, student feedback mechanisms, personal tutor arrangements, programme induction, programme review and monitoring.)

Programme Review and Management will be undertaken as and when necessary under the direction of the MA/MSc Director, the Teaching and Learning Committee and the Departmental Quality Enhancement Committee. A module and programme evaluation system is also undertaken whereby students can feedback their experiences and report any problems. In addition, an opportunity for students to meet with the programme's external examiner at the end of the degree to discuss their experiences is provided. Programme convenors are also required to fill in an annual review of their programme taking both student evaluations and achievements into account. These feed back to the Teaching and Learning Committee.

Programme convenor arrangements are overseen by the MA/MSc director. The Programme convenor is responsible for the overall running of the MSc. They will hold one-to-one individual meetings with students during induction week to assist in selecting modules, and allocating a supervisor. The Programme Convenor is the first person for students to consult in relation to queries about the structure of the programme. They also act as a point of liaison between the student and other members of staff and between the students and the College (in relation to registration etc). The Programme Convenor is the first person to be consulted if illness or other problems result in difficulties in meeting coursework deadlines. If the problem escalates then the MA/MSc Director will be consulted. All complaints about the programme are raised first with the Programme Convenor. If these cannot be resolved the issue will be raised with the MA/MSc Director who may contact the Head of Department or the College Academic registrar. A guide for masters students is provided as a hard copy during the induction day and it is also available online.

Comprehensive **programme induction** is delivered via an induction day in the Department of Geography that is provided for all incoming students during induction week (the week before formal teaching commences). This is used as an opportunity to acquaint new students with the format of the programme and expectations of them. Students also receive a library induction. All students meet with the programme Convenor during this week to talk about module selection and how to manage the enrolment process. Students with special educational needs have the opportunity to talk to their adviser about how the College can best support them, and to agree with the students how to communicate those needs to appropriate members of staff.

The student mentor scheme involves new MSc students being assigned a postgraduate mentor from the Graduate School. This will be a fellow student who can help with information and advice about the department and the experience of being a postgraduate.

Graduate School Committee provides a formal means of communication and discussion between the Department and its postgraduate students. The committee consists of postgraduate student representatives together with some members of staff (including the Director of Graduate Studies, the MA/MSc Director and programme convenors). There are elections for postgraduate members at the start of each academic year. It is designed to respond to the needs of students and meets regularly throughout the year. Matters raised in this committee are reported to the rest of the Department's staff (via the Teaching and Learning Committee, the Departmental Quality Enhancement Committee or the Departmental Meeting) so that they can take action as appropriate.

Employers Links
Please provide details of any links with employers e.g.

- Details of advisory panels that include current or potential employers;
- Organisations that regularly employ graduates from this programme and the roles that graduates undertake.
- Student prizes donated by organisations that may offer employment to graduates from this programme.

If there are no links with employers consider the learning outcomes and transferable skills and explain how these might be used to inform employers about the qualities and skills a graduate from this programme might be expected to have.

Masters qualifications are increasingly required by employers as the number of graduates increases. Successful completion of this MSc programme will equip the student with a range of subject-specific and transferable skills that will enhance employability with environmental consultants and statutory bodies such as the Environment Agency. In addition, the opportunity to develop links with partner organisations as part of the research project will create work experience opportunities and provide insights into the structure and operation of these organisations. be familiar with and work confidently and critically with, a range of different sources and materials for studying geographical processes across different scales.

We would expect a successful graduate from the MSc Physical Geography by Research programme to have:

- a good knowledge of research approaches in physical geography and environmental science
- an advanced level understanding of the key geographical research skills including: project design, project planning, project management, and analytical and interpretive skills
- be a confident oral and written academic communicator
- be a confident independent learner, thinker and worker

Person Completing Programme Specification	Dr Alastair Owens (Director of Studies)
Person responsible for management of programme	Dr Simon Carr (Programme Convenor)
Date programme specification agreed by Department or teaching and learning committee	16 November 2009
Date of approval by Faculty Board/SMD Education Board	
Date of update/amendment	08 July 2010