

**PHASE 2**  
**Newcastle University Programme Specification**

<b>1</b>	<b>Awarding Institution</b>	University of Newcastle upon Tyne
<b>2</b>	<b>Teaching Institution</b>	As above
<b>3</b>	<b>Final Award</b>	MA
<b>4</b>	<b>Programme Title</b>	Human Geography Research
<b>5</b>	<b>Programme Accredited</b>	Not appropriate
<b>6</b>	<b>UCAS</b>	Not appropriate
<b>7</b>	<b>QAA Subject Benchmarking Group(s)</b>	Not appropriate
<b>8</b>	<b>Date of production/revision</b>	
<p><b>9. Programme Aims</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) to meet the aims of the ESRC's postgraduate training guidelines by providing high quality research training at Master's level</li> <li>(ii) to provide learning opportunities to enable graduates to acquire the knowledge and understanding, skills and aptitudes necessary to undertake advanced research in the social sciences in general and in human geography in particular</li> <li>(iii) to contribute to the University's objectives by providing high quality research training to an increasing number of postgraduates (Institutional Plan, 6.7 (ii) and (iii)) and enhancing their key skills and employability (5.7(iv))</li> <li>(iv) to produce graduates who can proceed to careers in research in Universities, the public sector, the voluntary sector or the private sector</li> <li>(v) to provide a qualification which fully meets the learning outcomes at Level 4 in the national qualifications framework.</li> </ul>		

## **10. Intended learning outcomes**

The programme provides opportunities for the students to develop and demonstrate:

### **A General research skills**

#### **A1 Bibliographic and Computing Skills**

- (i) the skills to identify and retrieve relevant materials relating to research, including annals, books, journals, theses, conference proceedings and resources available electronically and on the www
- (ii) the skills to maintain a personal research bibliography and use EndNote
- (iii) IT skills, comprising word processing and other basic computing skills, including spreadsheets and database management, SPSS, Nudist and Powerpoint.
- (iv) evaluation procedure skills: of book reviews, literature reviews and dissertations

#### **A2 Ethical Issues**

- (i) a knowledge and understanding of matters relating to privacy and confidentiality in research
- (ii) an awareness of the political context of research
- (iii) an awareness of professional codes of practice
- (iv) a knowledge and understanding of the power relations inherent in research field work
- (v) an awareness of the ethical responsibilities that a researcher has towards the researched

#### ***Teaching strategy***

Bibliographic and Computing Skills (A1 i-ii) are taught through workshops and practical classes in the Introduction to Information Skills module. A1 (iii) IT skills are taught through a combination of workshops, practical classes, tutorials and lectures in the modules Introduction to Information Skills, Introduction to Quantitative Methods, Introduction to Qualitative Methods and Planning Geographical Research. Evaluation procedure skills are taught through student seminars (Philosophies of Human Geography) and student teamwork exercises (Dissertation Preparation).

Ethical issues (A2 i-v) are taught by lectures and workshops in Thinking about Research and Introduction to Qualitative Methods.

#### ***Learning strategy***

Students learn bibliographical skills (A1 i - ii) by developing an initial (and final) bibliography for their Research Dissertation. IT Skills (A1iii) are learnt through a series of workshops, data practicals, the production of a Powerpoint presentation and completion of the Research Dissertation. Evaluation procedures (A1 iv) are practiced in seminars dedicated to analysis of material pertaining to 'landmark books/debates'

and teamwork exercises and presentations linked to key stages in a MA dissertation.

Students acquire knowledge of ethical issues (A2 i-v) through teamwork exercises and presentations, case studies and independent reading.

### ***Assessment strategy***

General research skills are assessed by means of a range of coursework and, ultimately, the Research Dissertation. Assessment for the Introduction to Information Skills Module requires the construction of a bibliography, incorporating bibliographic search strategies and professional design and layout. IT skills are assessed by the bibliographic exercise, data practicals in the Introduction to Quantitative Methods and the delivery of a Powerpoint presentation in Planning Geographical Research. Ethical issues are assessed as part of the 3,000 word critical methodological review in Introduction to Qualitative Methods, and the 3000 word essay set for the module Thinking About Research

## **B Training in Research Methods**

The programme provides the opportunity for students to develop and demonstrate:

### **B1 Principles**

- (i) an ability to define and formulate research problems, questions and hypotheses
- (ii) an understanding of the rationale for research methods, to evaluate and select them
- (iii) an understanding of sampling, sampling error, and biases in results
- (iv) an understanding of, and ability to apply, concepts of generalisability, validity, reliability and replicability

### **B2 Data collection and analysis**

- (i) a knowledge and understanding of the application of selected methods of data collection
- (ii) an understanding of strengths and weaknesses of different types of data and the development of a critical use of sources
- (iii) an understanding of the use of methods and tools to analyse data
- (iv) proficiency in a range of both qualitative and quantitative data analysis

### ***Teaching strategy***

B1 (i) and (ii) will be delivered through the modules Thinking About Research, Dissertation Preparation and Planning Geographical Research. B1 (iii) and (iv) will be delivered through the Introduction to Quantitative and Introduction to Qualitative Methods modules. Teaching for B2 (i - iv) will be delivered principally through the Introduction to Quantitative Methods and Introduction to Qualitative Methods modules. B2 (i-ii) are covered also in Human Geography: Concepts in Action and Planning Geographical Research.

The teaching strategy for B1 (i-iv) is a combination of lectures, workshops, research

seminars and both discipline specific and multi-disciplinary teamwork. The teaching strategy for B2 (i - iv) is a combination of lectures, workshops, teaching and research seminars and data analysis practicals.

***Learning strategy***

For B1 (i - ii) students learn through team-based problem solving exercises, the individual preparation of a research proposal and attendance at research seminars. B1 (iii-iv) is learnt through research seminars, workshops and data practicals. For B2 (i - iv) students learn principally through data practicals and attendance at research seminars. Overall, all B1 and B2 are undertaken in completion of the Research Dissertation

***Assessment strategy***

B1 and B2 are assessed through production and presentation of a Research Proposal, the completion of a series of data practicals, the production of a Critical Methodological Review, a group report and presentation in Thinking About Research and the Research Dissertation.

**C      Subject-related outcomes**

The programme provides the opportunity for students to develop and demonstrate:

C1 understanding of a range of philosophical, epistemological and theoretical social science debates engaged within human geography

C2 understanding of a range of key concepts and theoretical issues in human geography

C3 knowledge of the distinctive contribution of human geography to the social sciences

C4 recognition of the roles and relevance of geography and geographers within the public arena

C5 understanding of a range of quantitative and qualitative methods of collecting (and sources of) data and evidence for geographical enquiry

C6 understanding of a range of quantitative and qualitative methods of analysing and interpreting evidence as part of geographical enquiry

***Teaching strategy***

C1 and C3 are delivered principally in the module Philosophies in Human Geography and Planning Geographical Research and are elements of the combination of discipline and multi-disciplinary student exercises undertaken in Thinking About Research and Dissertation Preparation. C2 and C4 are delivered through the modules Human Geography: Concepts in Action and Planning Geographical Research. Teaching for C5 and C6 takes place in Introduction to Quantitative

Methods, Introduction to Qualitative Methods, Introduction to Information Skills and Planning Geographical Research

***Learning strategy***

In Philosophies in Human Geography, C1 and C3 are learnt through teaching seminars and through participation in research seminars and dissertation workshops in Planning Geographical Research. In Thinking About Research and Dissertation Preparation, C1 and C3 are practiced in team exercises and presentations and in a mixture of disciplinary and multi-disciplinary groups. C2 and C4 are learnt through lectures, teaching seminars and student presentation of an introductory lecture in the module Human Geography: Concepts in Action. Relevant themes are chosen including a teaching block on Human Geography and Praxis (C4). Additionally, C2 and C4 are learnt through participation in research seminars and dissertation workshops in Planning Geographical Research. C5 and C6 are learnt through lectures, data practicals and workshops in Introduction to Quantitative Methods and Introduction to Qualitative Methods including discipline specific workshops and curriculum streams. Introduction to Information Skills includes workshops on data sources and the Individual Research Assistance Programme for Postgraduate Students comprising a one-to-one tutorial with the relevant Liaison Librarian to discuss specialist information needs. Additionally, C5 and C6 are learnt through participation in research seminars and dissertation workshops in Planning Geographical Research.

***Assessment strategy***

C1, C2, C3, C5 and C6 are jointly assessed in the production and presentation of a research proposal and the research dissertation. Specifically, C1 and C3 are assessed through the completion of an extended 5000 word essay based on extensive reading. Specifically, C2 is assessed through an 'introductory lecture' produced through a group activity and an individually produced 4000 word essay. C4 is not directly assessed. C5 and C6 are assessed through data practicals, a critical methodological review and presentation of a research proposal

**D Key skills**

The programme provides the opportunity for students to develop and demonstrate:

- D1 the skills to disseminate research findings effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences
- D2 the skills of effective written communication and presentation
- D3 the skills to manage research, including writing proposals, planning the research project, and implementation on time
- D4 the skills to work effectively as a member of teams both subject specific and multi-disciplinary

**Teaching strategy**

D1 is taught across a number of modules including Dissertation Preparation, Thinking About Research, Human Geography: Concepts in Action, Philosophies in Human Geography and Planning Geographical Research. D2 is taught through a range of written assessments and presentations across all modules. D3 is a major component of Thinking about Research, Dissertation Preparation and Planning Geographical Research. Teamworking (D4) takes place across a number of modules (subject specific and multi-disciplinary) in a variety of exercises.

**Learning strategy**

Students learn a variety of dissemination skills (D1) through, for example, an introduction to the REGARD database in Introduction to Information Skills, individual and team presentations and document production (subject specific and multi-disciplinary), Powerpoint presentations to external peers (Part Two: Geographical Imaginations in Planning Geographical Research), production of an introductory lecture in Human Geography: Concepts in Action and the 'Pick-A-Text' component of Philosophies in Geography. Many of these activities develop D2 (skills of effective written communication and presentation) over and above the range of written assessments produced and culminating in the Research Dissertation. D3 is developed explicitly through the production of research proposals and the completion of a Research Dissertation inclusive of dissertation workshops and individual meetings with supervisors. D4 is learnt throughout the course in a number of contexts including lectures, teaching seminars, workshops, problem-solving exercises and presentations.

**Assessment strategy**

D1 is assessed through a Powerpoint presentation for Planning Geographical Research and in oral presentations for the Human Geography: Concepts in Action and Dissertation Preparation modules. These latter presentations are team-based and assess D4 in unison with a group-based report delivered in Thinking About Research. D2 (written communication) is assessed through the variety of written coursework submitted across all the modules. D3 is assessed in Dissertation Preparation, Thinking About Research and Planning Geographical Research as students progress through an iterative process of writing their research proposal.

**11 Programme Features, Curriculum and Structure**

This is a one year full-time or two-year part time modular MA programme. It consists of two stages: a taught component and a (supervised) research dissertation. This programme has been designed to meet the new ESRC 1+3 training guidelines. These guidelines emphasize the need for students to acquire key generic and subject-specific skills in the Masters year prior to embarking on a doctoral programme.

In the full-time programme, the student shall pursue a programme of full-time study comprising modules to a credit value of 180 studied over a period of 12 months in Semester 1, Semester 2 and the research semester of a single academic year. A full-time candidate shall study taught modules to a credit value of not more than 70 and not less than 50 in each of the first two semesters, such that the total credit value of the modules studied in Semester 1 and Semester 2 shall be 120. The research semester will comprise the completion of a 60 credit research dissertation.

In the part-time programme, the student shall pursue a programme of part-time study, in two stages, comprising modules to a credit value of 180 studied over a period of 24 months in Semester 1, Semester 2 and the research semester of each of two academic years. Before proceeding from Stage 1 to Stage 2 a part-time student must satisfy the examiners in the assessment specified for each module of that Stage.

The taught component of the course comprises 50 compulsory credits (2\*20 credit, 1\*10 credit) taught by the Department of Geography and 70 compulsory credits (2\*20, 3\*10) taught at Faculty (FLESS) level. The research dissertation (60 credits) is supervised within the Department of Geography. This highly integrated mix of Departmental and Faculty teaching, in both discipline-specific and multi-disciplinary contexts, is an innovative feature of the course. A further innovative feature is the joint teaching of Geographical Imaginations (Part One and Two) with the University of Durham Geography Department as elements of two modules, Philosophies in Human Geography and Planning Geographical Research.

### **Curriculum and Structure**

Through high quality research training at Master's level the curriculum provides learning opportunities to enable graduates to acquire the knowledge and understanding, skills and aptitudes necessary to undertake advanced research in the social sciences in general and in human geography in particular. The development of subject-specific and multi-disciplinary knowledge takes place in parallel throughout Semester 1 and 2 across Departmental and FLESS modules which are all compulsory.

In Semester 1 students complete 3\*10 credit FLESS modules (Thinking About Research, Dissertation Preparation and Introduction to Information Skills) and the first half of three 'long and thin' Geography modules (2\*20 credit Philosophies in Human Geography and Human Geography: Concepts in Action and 1\*10 credit module Planning Geographical Research). Total taught credits in Semester 1 equals 55.

In Semester 2, students complete the 'long and thin' Geography modules (25 credits) and study 2\*20 FLESS modules, Introduction to Quantitative Methods and Introduction to Qualitative Methods. Total taught credits in Semester 2 equals 65. The Research Dissertation (60 credits) is completed in the research semester.

The teaching of all learning outcomes begins in Semester 1. The majority of *General Research Skills* (A1) are taught early in Semester 1 in Introduction to Information Skills for continued application and development for the duration of the course. Development of 'early stage' outcomes in *Training in Research Methods* (B1 i-ii, B2 i-ii) begins with Thinking about Research and is intensified as Dissertation Preparation commences mid-Semester 1. Both these modules use discipline and multi-discipline work groups and in combination with the discipline specific modules, Philosophies in Human Geography and Human Geography: Concepts in Action, begin the delivery of *Subject-Related Outcomes* C1 - C4. Throughout all these Semester 1 modules, *Key Skills* (D1-D4) are developed and demonstrated through a variety of teaching and assessment formats. Finally, in Semester 1 Planning Geographical Research comprises predominantly research seminars which exemplify the critical ability to combine the learning outcomes A, B, C and D that encompass the programme aim of high quality research training and the ability to undertake advanced research in the social sciences and in human geography in particular.

In Semester 2, the modules Introduction to Quantitative Methods and Introduction to Qualitative Methods deliver the 'later stage' outcomes in *Training in Research Methods* (B1 iii-iv, B2 iii-iv), *General Research Skill* A2 and the remaining *Subject-Related Outcomes* C5-C6. Other Subject-Related Outcomes, Training Research Methods and Key Skills from Semester 1 continue to be developed and demonstrated in the on-going Departmental modules, Philosophies in Human Geography, Human Geography: Concepts in Action and Planning Geographical Research. In particular, Planning Geographical Research moves to a more intensive format of dissertation workshops and research proposal presentations.

The research semester comprises the completion of a supervised research dissertation. This major piece of geographical enquiry enables the application and progression of learning outcomes A, B, C and D delivered in the taught element of the programme.

## **12 Criteria for Admission**

The normal entry requirement will be a good second class honours degree in geography or a related social science. Geography at A/AS level or equivalent, or evidence of having studied geography during the first degree, is expected.

Applicants for whom English is not a first language must provide evidence of a satisfactory command of English by means of a TOEFL score of 575 or greater, or by an IELTS score of 6.5 or greater.

### *Alternative entry qualifications and non-standard entrants*

Applicants who hold non-standard qualifications, and/or have relevant experience, will be encouraged to apply and considered on an individual basis.



#### *Admissions policy*

Upon receipt of a completed application form, UK-based applicants will be expected to visit the Department of Geography for an Open Day and Interview. Normally, offers of places to suitably qualified candidates will take place following interview and conditional upon the applicant having achieved the normal entry requirement and the receipt of two references. Any funding awards made on a competitive basis will be awarded taking in to account existing (or expected) qualifications, references and interview performance.

Normally, applicants not based in the UK will have the requirement to attend an Open Day and Interview waived.

### **13. Support for students and their learning**

#### *Induction*

There will be an induction meeting at inter-Faculty level for the students from all the MA/MSc programmes where the Postgraduate Sub-Dean, Director of the Postgraduate Research Training Programme and all the module leaders of the generic modules to be delivered at inter-Faculty level will be present. This will complement the Department of Geography Induction, and serve to introduce the students to the inter-Faculty part of their programmes and also to each other and to the idea of a multi-disciplinary learning environment.

The Department of Geography provides a formal induction session to all new postgraduates covering the organisation of postgraduate affairs, the research groupings in the Department, research facilities in the Department and University and the rights and responsibilities of postgraduates. The induction meeting will be led by the Director of Postgraduate Studies in conjunction with the MA Degree Programme Director.

#### *Study skills support*

Support is provided through a range of sources including Personal Tutor, Research Dissertation Supervisor, FLESS Liaison Librarian and Computing Services.

#### *Academic support*

The Director of the Postgraduate Research Training Programme will have overall responsibility for ensuring coherence and continuity in the inter-Faculty delivered modules and also for their administration and management. All students will have access to the Director and all the module leaders for advice and discussion of academic issues arising.

The MA Degree Programme Director will be responsible for the administration and management of the course. This responsibility will include ensuring coherence and

continuity within the Departmental delivered modules and between Departmental and inter-Faculty modules. The Degree Programme Director will be available to all students for advice and discussion of any academic issues arising. All Departmental module leaders will be available for advice and discussion of academic issues arising.

Under the tutor system, each student will be allocated a specific member of staff for academic advice and guidance. Formal meetings will be held termly and students will have personal and email access to a Tutor at any time if required. All postgraduates are provided with the Postgraduate Handbook on entry in to the Department which provides information and guidance on a range of academic issues.

Each student will be assigned a Research Dissertation Supervisor to provide personal supervision and guidance on production of the Research Dissertation.

#### *Pastoral support*

Under the tutor system, each student will be allocated a specific member of staff for pastoral advice and guidance. Formal meetings will be held termly and students will have personal and email access to a Tutor at any time if required. All postgraduates are provided with the Postgraduate Handbook on entry in to the Department which provides information and guidance on a range of pastoral issues.

The MA Degree Programme Director will be available to all students for advice and discussion of any pastoral issues arising.

The Director of the Postgraduate Research Training Programme and the module leaders will be available to discuss pastoral issues arising from the inter-Faculty delivered modules. The overall responsibility for pastoral issues, however, will lie with the MA Degree Programme Director.

The LESS Postgraduate Training Room provides an ideal environment for the teaching of the inter-Faculty delivered modules. The room has comfortable chairs and kitchen facilities for refreshments and can be used by the students for social, as well as self-organised academic, events.

#### *Support for special needs*

The LESS Postgraduate Training Room is accessible for wheel-chair bound students, and there is a purpose-built toilet adjoining the room.

#### *Learning resources*

MA students are provided with the same facilities as doctoral students. Each is allocated desk space and has full access to a networked, dedicated postgraduate cluster. Further University clusters are available including the Brae cluster within the Geography building. Photocopying facilities are provided for all postgraduates.

The LESS Postgraduate Training Room has space for up to seventy students to

engage in group discussion and teamwork exercises. There are also overhead and Powerpoint facilities available. Within Geography, a well-equipped Conference Room is available and, within CURDS, a Seminar Room and several meeting rooms are available for teaching.

The Robinson Library provides an extensive range of appropriate books and journals and CURDS has its own specialist information and library holdings.

#### **14. Methods for evaluating and improving the quality and standards of teaching and learning:**

*Mechanisms for review and evaluation of teaching, learning, assessment, the curriculum and output standards*

- Student opinion is gathered by means of student questionnaires which are issued on completion of the programme .
- Module questionnaires will be issued to all students on completion of each module. Summaries of the module and programme questionnaires will be considered at both the MA Human Geography Research Board of Studies and the Inter-Faculty Board of Studies, although the latter will be particularly concerned with evaluations arising from the generic component of the linked Masters programmes.
- Feedback from past graduates
- External examiner reports ( A report following consideration of the comments external examiner appointed to oversee the faculty generic modules will be forwarded annually to the MA Human Geography Research Board of Studies)
- Taught Programme Review
- Internal Subject Review
- Feedback from ESRC validators
- Consideration of annual programme monitoring statistics

*Mechanisms for gaining student feedback on the quality of teaching and their learning experience*

- Staff Student Consultative Committee
- Student representation on Boards of Studies
- Student evaluation questionnaires

*Committees Responsible for Monitoring and Evaluating Quality and Standards*

There will be separate but linked forums at Inter-faculty and Department level for evaluating and improving the quality and standards of teaching and learning.

#### ***Inter –Faculty Level***

- A separate Board of Studies will monitor and evaluate quality and standards of the generic modules on the MA programme which are delivered in common across the faculty. This Board will be chaired by the Postgraduate Sub- Dean, and its members will include the Director of the Postgraduate Training Programme, DPD's of all the linked Masters programmes, module leaders of the five generic modules, and all teachers on these modules delivered at an inter-faculty level. Overall responsibility for assuring quality and standards of the MA programme will lie with the MA Human Geography Research Board of Studies.
- A Board of Examiners will also exist to consider issues related to examinations and marks for the five modules delivered at an inter-faculty level to all linked Masters programmes. The Board will be chaired by the Postgraduate Sub-Dean, and its members will include the Director of the Postgraduate Training Programme, the module leaders of the 5 generic modules, and the DPD's of all the linked Master's programmes. An external examiner will also be appointed for the 5 modules delivered at an inter-faculty level, who will also report on the standard of, and coherence between, the generically- taught modules.
- This Board of Examiners will meet before the meeting of the MA Human Geography Research Board of Examiners who will consider the marks from the inter-faculty Board alongside the marks from the subject- specific modules. Overall responsibility for the award of the degree will lie with the MA Human Geography Research Board of Examiners.

#### Departmental Committees.

- An MA Human Geography Research Board of Studies including representatives from the Inter-Faculty Board of Studies, the Degree Programme Director, Director of Postgraduate Studies, Head of Department, module leaders, and an elected student member
- An MA Human Geography Research Examination Board which will include one representative from the generic Board of examiners and an External Examiner appointed to oversee the MA Human Geography Research.
- Department of Geography Staff Student Consultative Committee including a MA student representative
- Department of Geography Teaching and Learning Committee
- Department of Geography representation (staff and students) on Faculty Postgraduate Committee

### **15. Regulation of Assessment**

- (i) Assessment rules and degree classification are set out in the degree regulations attached.

(ii) Role of the external examiners

An external examiner is being appointed to oversee the generic modules that are being delivered to all of the linked Masters programmes. The role of this external examiner is to moderate these modules. He/she will attend the June Board of Examiners and will be concerned with maintenance and comparability of standards of this aspect of the MA programme.

A MA Human Geography Research external examiner is being appointed to oversee the degree and its constituent modules, and provide guidance on content and standards.

(iii) Board of Examiners

An inter- Faculty Board will be held in June. It will be chaired by the Postgraduate Sub-Dean, and its members will include the Director of the Postgraduate Training Programme, the module leaders of the 5 generic modules, and the DPD's of all the linked Master's programmes. This board will report back to the MA Human Geography Research Board of Examiners.