

## Programme specifications: BA / BSc (Honours) Geography

1.	<b>Awarding Institution</b>	<b>University of Newcastle upon Tyne</b>
2	<b>Teaching Institution</b>	<b>University of Newcastle upon Tyne</b>
3	<b>Final Award</b>	<b>BA / BSc Hons</b>
4	<b>Programme title</b>	<b>Geography</b>
5	<b>Programme Accredited by:</b>	n/a
6	<b>UCAS Code</b>	<b>L701, F800</b>
7	<b>QAA Subject Benchmarking Group(s)</b>	<b>Geography</b>
8	<b>Date of production/revision</b>	<b>September 2004</b>

### 9. Main educational aims of the programme

- to enable students to develop their knowledge and understanding of the theoretical and empirical basis of the discipline of geography
- to enable students to appreciate the relevance of geographical perspectives in the analysis of real world problems
- to facilitate the students' development of the intellectual, practical and transferable skills necessary for the acquisition, analysis, interpretation and understanding of geographical information
- to prepare students for a career in a wide range of geographical and non-geographical contexts or for further study
- to promote the development of personal attributes that foster life-long learning, study and enquiry, and an appreciation of the value of education to the wider community

### 10. Programme Intended Learning Outcomes

#### Knowledge and understanding

Students should have an informed and critical awareness of:

- A1 The dynamic and contested nature of geographical thought and practice and the inter-relationships between the discipline and the physical and natural sciences, the social sciences and humanities
- A2 The diversity of global environments and the operation of, and inter-relationships between physical and biological systems over a wide range of spatial and temporal scales
- A3 Patterns and processes of environmental change and their inter-relationships with human activities
- A4 Spatial patterns and relationships in human phenomena at a variety of scales
- A5 The geography of places and their constitution by environmental, economic, social and political processes, and the influence of places on these processes
- A6 The geographies of difference and inequality with particular reference to historical development, ethnicity, class, gender and the changing nature of urban and regional economy and policy

#### *Teaching and learning strategies and methods*

Geographical knowledge and understanding (A1-10) is acquired throughout the curriculum via combinations of lectures, tutorials, staff and student-led seminars, workshops, practicals, fieldwork, guided independent study and teamwork.

A compulsory Stage 1 programme develops the main themes of the degree (A1-10) while an overview of disciplinary thought and practice (A1) is provided by compulsory Stage 2 modules. During Stages 2 and 3 students can follow particular pathways through the degree programme, specialising in physical geography (A2-3, 10), human geography (A4-10) or a combination of both.

#### *Assessment strategy and methods*

Knowledge and understanding (A1-10) is assessed by combinations of examinations (seen and unseen, including computer-aided assessments) and coursework (including essays, individual and group projects, dissertations, practical reports, oral presentations, poster

- A7 Contemporary debates about time-space relationships, globalization and global interconnections
- A8 The role of changes in technology, the nature of work and labour markets in influencing spatial patterns of economic activity
- A9 The theory and application of quantitative, visualization and other spatial techniques across a wide range of geographical contexts
- A10 The contribution of geography to development of environmental, political, economic and cultural agendas, policies and practices

presentations, portfolios and vivas).

Examinations are primarily intended to assess knowledge of core information while written and oral coursework places more emphasis on the development of critical analysis and understanding of the concepts within a wider geographical context. Poster presentations emphasise the collection and presentation of knowledge.

### **Cognitive skills**

Students should be able to:

- B1 Abstract and synthesise information from a variety of sources
- B2 Assess and critically evaluate the merits of contrasting theories, explanations and policies
- B3 Critically analyse and interpret data and text
- B4 Develop reasoned arguments
- B5 Solve problems and make reasoned decisions

### ***Teaching and learning strategies and methods***

Cognitive skills are introduced in Stage 1 modules and developed to advanced levels through Stage 2 and 3 modules. Seminars, projects and group work allow students to discuss and learn to evaluate arguments and evidence while fieldwork, and especially the dissertation, promotes development of problem solving skills.

### ***Assessment strategy and methods***

Cognitive skills are assessed by coursework essays and projects, case studies, reports, vivas and, to a lesser extent, via unseen written examinations. The dissertation provides a means of demonstrating all cognitive skills.

### **Subject-specific / professional skills**

Students should be able to:

- C1 plan, design, execute and report geographical research both individually and as part of a team
- C2 undertake effective laboratory and field work (with due regard for safety and risk assessment)
- C3 employ a variety of technical and laboratory-based methods for the analysis and presentation of spatial and environmental information (e.g. GIS, water chemistry, etc)
- C4 collect, interpret and synthesise different types of quantitative and qualitative geographical data
- C5 recognise the ethical issues involved in geographical debates and enquiries

### ***Teaching and learning strategies and methods***

Subject-specific and professional skills are introduced and developed in dedicated compulsory Stage 1 and 2 modules, and are developed to an advanced level in optional modules and the dissertation. Teaching and learning methods include lectures, seminars, IT and laboratory practicals, fieldwork.

### ***Assessment strategy and methods***

Subject-specific and professional skills are assessed by means of essays, oral and poster presentations, fieldwork and laboratory reports and written and computer-aided examinations. All skills (C1-5) are assessed in Stage 3 by means of the dissertation.

**Key (transferable) skills**

Students should be able to:

- D1 learn in familiar and unfamiliar situations, both independently and in groups
- D2 communicate effectively (in writing, verbally and through graphical presentations)
- D3 apply numerical and computational skills to geographical information
- D4 use information technology effectively (including use of spreadsheet, database and word processing programmes; Internet and e-mail)
- D5 identify, retrieve, sort and exchange geographical information using a wide range of sources (including on-line computer searches)
- D6 work as part of a team and to recognise and respect the viewpoints of others
- D7 manage their time and organise their work effectively

***Teaching and learning strategies and methods***

An introduction to all (D1-7) key skills is taught formally in Stage 1 and developed further throughout the programme in a range of class, practical and fieldwork-based sessions. Communication skills (D2) are developed in written coursework and exams, projects, oral and poster presentations and via the dissertation. Specific modules support numerate skill development (D3) and the retrieval and use of information sources (D4-5). Self-management (D7) is promoted through a strict coursework and assessment timetable. The dissertation provides an opportunity for the development of a range of key skills, (D1-5, 7), particularly the ability to work independently (D1), while fieldwork provides opportunities to learn in unfamiliar situations (D1) and develop teamworking skills (D6).

***Assessment strategy and methods***

Key skills are assessed by a combination of examination and coursework assignments, including essays, project and practical reports, portfolios, oral and poster presentations and computer-aided assessments. A wide range of key skills are typically assessed within the dissertation.

**11. Programme Curriculum, Structure and Features:**

The programme is studied over three years full-time and is undertaken in three stages (one for each year of study). Each stage is arranged in two 12-week semesters. The programme is divided into study units called modules with credit values of 10, 20, 30 or 40 credits. Each 10 credits of module weight represents approximately 100 hours of student learning, activity and assessment including up to a maximum of 36 hours teaching. Each stage has an equivalent of 120 credits.

Stage 1 of the programme aims to provide a foundation in skills and methods appropriate to the study of Geography, as well an introduction to the themes of study developed in Stages 2 and 3; physical geography and environmental science, the geography of social, cultural and international development, the geography of urban and regional development and geography as spatial analysis. All students follow a compulsory module programme at Stage 1. Compulsory modules at Stage 2 focus on the different philosophical traditions of geography and develop advanced techniques and research skills so as to provide the basis for independent dissertation study in the third year. During stages 2 and 3 students are free to construct their degree from a wide range of optional modules in order to provide a focused programme of study that is both coherent as a geography degree and tailored to individual interests, abilities, and future employment. Students are progressively engaged with cutting edge theory and research and optional modules at Stage 3 directly reflect staff research activity. Further development of work-based skills is encouraged by optional modules in student tutoring and learning from work.

The structure of the degree is given below.

### **Degree Structure for BA and BSc (Honours) Geography.**

*(NB There are no core modules)*

#### **Stage 1**

<i>Compulsory</i>			<i>Optional</i>		
Code	Module and credit value		Code	Module and credit value	
GEO104	Urban & Regional Development	20			
GEO105	Environmental Issues	20			
GEO106	World Development?	20			
GEO196	Geographical Study Skills	20			
GEO197	Introduction to Geographical Practice	20			
GEO199	Quantitative Analysis in Geography	20			

#### **Stage 2**

<i>Compulsory</i>			<i>Optional</i>		
Code	Module and credit value		Code	Module and credit value	
GEO222	Introduction to Geographical Thought	20	GEO203	Geomorphological Techniques	20
GEO296	Geographical Research Methods	20	GEO209	Regional Development and Policy	20
			GEO230	Land, Water and Development	20
			GEO236	Globalisation, Economy and Culture	20
			GEO237	Physical Geography Fieldcourse (Stage 2)	20
			GEO238	Cities and Social Change	20
			GEO242	Aquatic Pollution	20
			GEO297	Economic & Social Change Field Course	20

**Stage 3***Compulsory*

Code	Module and credit value	
Geo399	Dissertation	40

*Optional*

Code	Module and credit value	
GEO328	River Conservation and Management	20
GEO337	Physical Geography Fieldcourse (Stage 3)	20
GEO343	Racial Identities	20
GEO345	River Pollution	20
GEO351	Territorial Politics	20
GEO352	Socialism and Post Socialism	10
GEO355	Ice Age Earth	20
GEO356	Cold Climate Geomorphology	20
GEO357	Quaternary Palaeoclimatology	20
GEO358	Health Inequalities	20
GEO359	Tourism and the Post-colonial	20
GEO360	Erasmus Student Exchange	30
GEO394	Virtual Geographies	10
POL372	Water Politics and Policy	20
POL334	Africa and the Politics of Development	20

## 12. Criteria for Admission:

### Admissions Policy

The main criteria for admission is that the student should be capable of achieving the learning outcomes of the degree. This is assessed from evidence of previous examination successes. All students who are offered a place will be invited to an Open Day

#### GCSEs required

Mathematics

#### A-Level Subjects and Grades

##### School/college leavers

Generally 3 A levels required for entry at ABB (excluding General Studies).

Under the new post 16 arrangements in England:

6 credit vocational A level accepted as one of the three A levels.

Applicants with 12 credit vocational A levels will be considered on their merits

2 As levels will be accepted instead of one of the A levels

Skills qualifications will not be included in offers

##### Scottish Highers

ABBB

##### BTEC

Each case is considered on its merits.

##### Students without conventional qualifications

Each case is considered on its merits. Appropriate overseas qualifications will be considered, as well as A levels, while relevant work experience is also useful.

## 13. Support for Students and their Learning:

### Induction

All new and returning students are inducted into their respective stages during the registration and induction week. The induction programme is most intensive for new students and includes introductions to the University, Department, the personal tutor system, computing and health and safety, study skills and study in geography, the Robinson Library and the student's Geography Society. Meetings with personal tutors (as tutorial groups) give students the opportunity to draw their tutor's attention to special learning needs. In addition, all new students participate in a 2-day residential trip to Ford Castle Field Study Centre, Northumberland within during the first two weeks of term (this trip is also open to Joint Hons students who elect to participate). This trip is accompanied by members of staff and includes academic fieldwork exercises, social events and teambuilding games.

Induction for returning students takes the form of informal lectures outlining Stage aims and learning outcomes, teaching and learning methods, assessment methods, coursework start and hand-in deadlines for all Stage assessment, tutorial arrangements, module change procedures, procedures for informing staff of personal and academic problems and any changes to the programme, academic staff and departmental procedures. Stage 2 students also attend a session hosted by the Careers Service which draws attention to relevant events and services, and introduces the Stage 2 Careers tutorial programme.

In addition to Stage induction programmes, all modules induct their students using a combination of lecture-based introductory material and written guides outlining the module structure, content, assessment, reading and teaching arrangements. From 2001-02 several modules are adopting the University's web-based teaching and learning support system (Blackboard); Stage 1 and 2 students are inducted into this system through the compulsory Geo197 and Geo296 modules.

**Study skills support**

Two Stage 1 modules, Geographical Study Skills and Introduction to Geographical Practice, develop student study skills and provide a foundation for independent learning. Lectures and workshop classes are supported by small group sessions and tutorials with individual staff members where students can discuss their skills in finding information, reading statistics, time management, essay writing and referencing. Study skills are further developed by the compulsory Stage 2 Geographical Research Methods module.

**Academic support**

Academic support, including advice on module selection and academic performance, is available from personal tutors while all staff encourage students to make appointments to discuss their work directly or via e-mail. During the second semester of years 1 and 2 meetings are held to introduce module options to be offered in the coming year. In Stages 2 and 3 students are assigned a personal mentor to guide the development and execution of their dissertation research.

**Careers advice**

Careers advice is an integral part of the Stage 2 tutorial programme, while students have access to the careers centre and are encouraged to use it during both the second and third year. Students are also encouraged to attend employer sessions at the University.

**Pastoral support**

The Stage 1 Geographical Study Skills module is administered via the personal tutorial system and ensures weekly tutorial activities during the first year of study. During Stages 2 and 3 tutors meet with their tutees four times per year; meetings focus on module choices, academic performance (including discussion of mark feedback), preparation for exams and reflection on personal development and career aspirations. at least is carried out by staff from both departments who meet with all their students three times a year. In addition academic staff encourage students to talk through their problems whether personal or academic.

**Support for Special Needs**

The University and the department is committed to developing an environment in which students with disabilities can pursue their intellectual and personal development with appropriate central and departmental support services. It is the policy of the University that all applicants for programmes of study are considered first and foremost on grounds of academic and individual merit and, in respect of applicants who are disabled, every possible effort is made to overcome any factors which might prevent them from undertaking a programme of study or research for which they have been approved under normal admissions arrangements. This policy is made clear to potential applicants in the university Prospectuses and reinforced in the documents "Newcastle and You" which are given to all students at registration.

The University has a Disability Unit that offers advice, guidance and support for students with disabilities and specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia. The unit is headed by the Disability Officer and has a Dyslexia Adviser, a Co-ordinator for Deaf Students and a Technical Support Adviser. The unit has a technical resources room with specialist equipment for the use of students and for assessment purposes. The Disability Unit also provides advice and guidance to all university staff to promote effective disability awareness and support for students. Central government provides funds for disabled students through the Disabled Students' Allowance to assist students who, because of their disability incur extra costs. Advice and help on all aspects of claiming Disabled Students Allowance can be obtained from the Unit. For further information on all aspects of the Unit's work please contact the Disability Officer, Sandra Chilton in Room 202 Robinson Library (telephone x 7610 or email Sandra.Chilton@ncl.ac.uk).

**Learning resources***(a) Library services*

Students have access to excellent University Library facilities (The Robinson Library) including CD ROMS and on-line services. E-journal access includes most of the key geographical and associated journals.

*(b) Computing*

Students have ready access to the Brae computer cluster (a University Computing Service facility), located on Floor 3 of Daysh, which is extensively used for formal teaching and independent learning. These computers (and other networked IT clusters on the campus) provide access to a wide range of software and individual user files, the campus intranet (which includes the recently-introduced Blackboard service), the Internet / WWW and the Library on-line resources

*(c) Discipline-specific resources provided by the Department*

- laboratory space and equipment supporting a wide range of analytical facilities (including grain size, water and sediment geochemistry and microfossil analysis) appropriate to physical geography modules and dissertation study, including a dedicated teaching room, two sample preparation rooms and a microscope room (with a dedicated computer and image processing and analysis software). Laboratory facilities are supported by a full-time technician.
- physical geography fieldwork equipment appropriate for sediment coring, sampling and analysis, field survey (including levels, theodolites and GPS sets), hydrological analysis and water sampling and assessment. Two inflatable boats (with appropriate safety equipment) facilitate extraction of lake sediment and water samples. Additional field survey equipment may be obtained on loan from the Department of Geomatics.
- a digital camera, digital video camera and portable tape recorders for on-site recording.
- a well-stocked map library with assistance available from a full-time cartographer. The map library also maintains a catalogue of aerial photographs and past undergraduate dissertations for reference.

## **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 outcome standards**

1. Student questionnaires issued to finalists and Stage 1 and 2 students (annual)
2. Module questionnaires (annual)
3. Annual Teaching Away Day
4. Degree programme review
5. Peer observation of teaching
6. Internal Subject Review
7. External examiner reports
8. Annual review of progression rates, degree classes achieved and graduate employment statistics

### **Committees with responsibility for monitoring and evaluating quality and standards**

1. Board of Studies
2. Teaching and Learning Committee
3. Staff student committee
4. Graduate and Employers Forum
5. Faculty Teaching and Learning Committee
6. University Teaching Committee
7. Examination Boards

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

1. Staff Student Committee
2. Student representation on Board of Studies and Department Teaching and Learning Committee
3. Student evaluation questionnaires (Stage and module)
4. Tutorial System.

## **15. Regulation of Assessment**

### **Assessment Rules and Honours classification**

- The minimum pass mark is 40% for each module.



- Most modules are assessed by a combination of unseen written examination and coursework, although some are 100% examination and some 100% coursework.
- Information on assessment is available in the degree programme handbooks and in the module outlines which are available on the Geography web-site.
- All stage 1 and stage 2 modules must be passed before students can proceed. There are two resit opportunities.
- Degree classification is based on the weighted average of results for stages 2 and 3, with stage 3 results accounting for 66% and stage 2 for 33%.
- Honours marks are based on the following University scale:

<b>Mark</b>	<b>Degree Class</b>
70%+	First
60-69%	Upper Second
50-59%	Lower Second
40-49%	Third
<40%	Fail

#### **Role of External examiners**

The external examiners are distinguished members of the academic community appointed by Faculty Teaching and Learning Committee and their role is to:

- Approve assessment
- Review samples of examination scripts and coursework to check standards and assessment procedures.
- Attend the Examination Board meetings
- Report back to the University

### **16. Indicators of Quality and Standards:**

- Good outcome from University Internal Subject Review with action points duly followed up
- Geography obtained a 5 rating in 2001 Research Assessment Exercise
- Geography degree graduates have high employability statistics.

### **17. Other Sources of Information**

This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and of the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve if she/he takes full advantage of the learning opportunities provided. The accuracy of the information contained is reviewed by the University and may be checked by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.

Additional information relating to the course is provided in:

- The University Prospectus
- The Geography Prospectus, brochure and web-site ([www.ncl.ac.uk/geography](http://www.ncl.ac.uk/geography))
- The University and Degree Programme Regulations
- The Degree Programme Handbook
- The University Subject Review Report (for 2003-2004)