Programme Specification

A statement of the knowledge, understanding and skills that underpin a taught programme of study leading to an award from The University of Sheffield

1	**Programme Title**	Geography
2	**Programme Code**	GEOU19
3	**JACS Code**	F804
4	**Level of Study**	Integrated Masters' Degree
5a	**Final Qualification**	Master of Science in Geography (MGeogSci)
5b	**QAA FHEQ Level**	Level 7
6	**Intermediate Qualification**	BSc Geography
7	**Teaching Institution** (if not Sheffield)	Not applicable
8	**Faculty**	Social Sciences
9	**Department**	Geography
10	**Other Department involved in teaching the programme**	None
11	**Mode of Attendance**	Full-time
12	**Duration of the Programme**	4 years
13	**Accrediting Professional or Statutory Body**	Not applicable
14	**Date of production/revision**	November 2019, February 2022; September 2023

15. Background to the programme and subject area

Geography is a broadly-based academic discipline covering both human and physical geography that has proved attractive in terms of employability because of the wide range of transferable skills introduced during the course. At Sheffield, students have the opportunity to develop aspects of geographical interest started in school. Students often have an initial preference for either human or physical geography. This programme provides a science-based degree in geography emphasising physical geography with opportunities to study social science-based human geography as well. Students may also study unrestricted modules from outside the department that allows them the flexibility to build a tailored programme. Being science-based this programme includes teaching of quantitative methods of data analysis and field and laboratory skills, as well as more general skills-related modules. Beyond Level 1, teaching is organised to provide a challenging learning environment that reflects the research interests and expertise of staff in the department. In the third year of study, students prepare a written research project (dissertation) based on an independent, supervised research project that accounts for a third of their assessment. Then, in the final year, students study a series of modules that prepare them for, and guide them through, an extended, supervised independent research project, in addition to studying specialised topics outside of their project area. Further details can be obtained from the Geography Department web site at: http://www.shef.ac.uk/geography

16. Programme aims

Our aims for the MGeogSci programme are as follows:

1. To provide a broad understanding of the study of physical geography and of the work of physical geographers.
2. To demonstrate the utility of a geographical understanding of issues and problems at a variety of scales, from global to local.
3. To demonstrate the utility of physical geography in suggesting possible solutions for such problems, and in evaluating solutions and policies proposed elsewhere.
4. To enhance students' abilities to develop skills in the acquisition, evaluation and use of information.
5. To develop students' oral, written, numerical and visual presentation skills.
6. To develop students' abilities in field-based investigations of geographical phenomena.

7. To train students in carrying out personal research projects.
8. To train students in using scientific, laboratory-based research techniques and methods.
9. To develop transferable skill in students within a collaborative context.
10. To enhance the ability of students to present themselves in the labour market or for further training with a broad range of skills and abilities.
11. To provide students with feedback over the achievement of the aforementioned aims through monitoring and assessment.
12. To assess students over a range of knowledge, understanding and skills, and to identify and support academic excellence.
13. To enable students to choose, design and apply advanced empirical methods in the field.
14. To provide students an introduction to research-focused environment and for students to identify real-world problems to which they can apply their research skills.

17. Programme learning outcomes

By the end of the programme, students should have a sound knowledge and critical understanding of:	
K1	The relationships between physical aspects of environment and landscape.
K2	Environments resulting from physical processes operating within the geo-ecosphere.
K3	Environments and landscapes resulting from human modification.
K4	Spatial variation, spatial distributions, the causes of the dynamics of these in physical phenomena and the importance of spatial dimensions in broader debates involving physical environments.
K5	The significance of spatial and temporal scale on physical processes.
K6	Methods of analysis, criticism and evaluation in terms of alternative viewpoints and approaches within the context of substantive sub-fields of physical geography.
K7	The value of a geographical viewpoint on issues and problems in the real world.
K8	Geospatial digital technologies and their varied used in the field and for analysis of geographical processes and elements.
On graduation students achieving the award of MGeogSci will have developed an additional knowledge and understanding of:	
K9	The process of planning and carrying out major research work within physical geography.
K10	Insight into contemporary issues in physical geography.

Skills and other attributes:	
S1	An ability to plan, design and execute a piece of rigorous research, including the production of a final report, and demonstrate a critical understanding of the appropriate methodology.
S2	An awareness of, and an ability to apply, a substantial range of analytical, interpretative and observational strategies in physical geography.
S3	Skills in the handling and analysis of geographical material by a variety of methods including quantitative and qualitative analyses.
S4	Skill in discussion, oral presentation, and task achievement within a collaborative context.
S5	An ability to collect, interpret and combine different types of geographical evidence, including using technical and laboratory-based methods.
S6	Familiarity with bibliographic and research skills, including such IT skills as word-processing, e-mail and use of the internet.
S7	An ability to abstract and synthesise information.
S8	Other transferable skills, important for employability, including information gathering, the development of individual resourcefulness, analytical thinking, an ability to identify problems and ways of resolving them, a critical appreciation of original material, the ability to construct and sustain logical arguments on the basis of such material, and the ability to present such arguments clearly in both oral and written forms.

S9	An ability to critically relate their own work to a breadth of existing knowledge across subject areas related to their Level 4 extended independent research project.
S10	Undertake effective fieldwork.
On graduation students achieving the award of MGeogSci will have developed an additional knowledge and understanding of:	
S11	An ability to plan, implement and critically assess a substantial piece of independent original research.
S12	An ability to critically relate their own work to a breadth of existing knowledge across subject areas related to their Level 4 dissertation.

18. Teaching, learning and assessment

Development of the learning outcomes is promoted through the following teaching and learning methods:

Knowledge and understanding is primarily acquired through lectures at Level 1 and 2, tutorials, seminars, workshops and overseas field classes at Level 2 and through specialist options (taught in a variety of ways including lectures, practical work, seminars and field work) at Levels 3 and 4.

Skills and other attributes are primarily developed through tutorials, practical work, problem-solving, field investigation, and the production of a research project at level 3 and extended project at level 4. Lectures are mainly used to introduce particular tasks and to define concepts, with the emphasis then placed on active learning by the student under guided conditions. Supervision of student learning is carried out in small groups (sometimes also involving student teamwork), with personal supervision offered for the research projects. Amongst the learning environments thus used are laboratory practicals (both in an environmental laboratory and in computational laboratory situations), self-access workbooks, and workshop sessions. Specific units on geographical skills are features of the programme throughout both the first and second levels. There are also specific units teaching the principles behind planning and undertaking original research at level 4.

Opportunities to demonstrate achievement of the learning outcomes are provided through the following assessment methods:

Testing of core knowledge base (K1-K7) depends fundamentally on unseen written examinations and coursework relating to core units in Levels 1 and 2. More advanced knowledge in Levels 3 and 4 is assessed by a combination of unseen written examinations, coursework, written reports of independent research projects and other set assignments such as essays that are designed to test subject knowledge, increasing autonomy in student learning, and the development of transferable skills (K1-K10, S3, S5-S8).

Assessment of skills and other attributes rests primarily upon non-invigilated methods such as submitted laboratory and cartographic exercises, projects, fieldwork reports (S10) and the research project. Certain assessments also require reflection and critique of techniques used. Skills are introduced and implemented progressively across all four levels, with assessment similarly adopting varying forms at each stage. For example, at Level 1, the students are introduced to laboratory procedures, whilst at Level 2 they have to plan and design a proposed piece of research, under guidance, based on field work experiences in Research Design for Geography and Environmental Science. At Level 3, students execute their proposed research under staff guidance. The final year extended research project represents the culmination of this aspect of the programme requiring key skills (S1, S3, S5, S6, S8, S9, S11 and S12).

19. Reference points

The learning outcomes have been developed to reflect the following points of reference:

The department's Learning and Teaching Statement

The research interests of departmental staff and the research strategy of the Department of Geography

University Vision and Strategic Plan
https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/vision

QAA Geography Benchmark Statement Dec 2014:
http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/SBS-geography-14.pdf

20. Programme structure and regulations

The programme is offered in full-time study mode only. All students take modules to the value of 120 credits in each year of study.

At Level 1, students must take 40 credits of methods teaching and 60 credits of physical geography, conceptual and environmental modules. Students may then take credits in either human geography or outside the department to bring their total up to 120 credits.

At Level 2, a student must take 40 credits of research methods and design (including a field class) and then chose 40 credits from topical knowledge-based modules and the remaining 40 credits can be taken outside the department or other physical geography modules.

At Level 3, there is one compulsory module - a research project. The 40 credit project is a piece of independent research into a geographical research topic under the supervision of a member of staff. This involves the analysis (and often collection) of relevant data and the production of a written dissertation describing the work undertaken and any conclusions reached in an appropriate academic style. The remaining 80 credits may be taken from the range of optional 20 credit modules available within geography or through a combination of up to 60 credits within the department and a maximum of 20 credits outside the department.

At Level 4, there are 90 credits of core modules centred on a major research project (75 credits) together with a 15 credit Research Design module. The project may be field, laboratory or computer based. The remaining 30 credits can be taken from an approved list of modules with a maximum of 15 credits from elsewhere in the University (subject to approval).

Students may elect to concentrate entirely on physical geography after their first year or follow a varied combination including elements of human geography and/or outside subject.

Detailed information about the structure of programmes, regulations concerning assessment and progression and descriptions of individual modules are published in the University Calendar available on-line at http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/calendar/.

21. Student development over the course of study

Progression is indicated for the end of each level, so that by the end of Level 1, students should have:

1. An understanding of geographic processes operating at a variety of scales from global to local.
2. Achieved a common level of familiarity with certain basic concepts and facts in physical geography.
3. Been trained in the handling of quantitative geographical information.
4. Developed students' skills in the acquisition of information, both through desk and laboratory-based work and through field investigation.
5. Developed skills in written and oral presentations and in the visual representation of geographical information.

At the end of Level 2, students should have:

1. Developed an understanding of physical geography through the examination of processes operating within the real world.
2. Developed awareness of the connection of geography within the environmental sciences and demonstrated geography's contributions to these larger endeavours.
3. Developed skills in the acquisition of information, both through desk and laboratory-based work, and through field investigation.
4. Further developed their skill in the handling and analysis of geographical material by a variety of methods including quantitative analysis and laboratory analysis.
5. Been trained in the execution of geographical research projects.
6. Been introduced to new skills involved in geographical research.

At the end of Level 3, students should have:

1. Carried out a personal research project under supervision.
2. Enhanced their understanding of the value of a geographical viewpoint on issues and problems in the real world.
3. Acquired an in-depth knowledge of certain areas of physical geography.

4. Increased their ability to analyse, criticise and evaluate alternative viewpoints and strategies within the context of substantive sub-fields of physical geography.
5. Developed their skills in discussion, oral presentation, and task achievement within a collaborative context.

At the end of Level 4, students should have:

1. Carried out a major, separate, research project making up half of the year's work under supervision.
2. Acquired an in-depth knowledge of the area of physical geography which was the subject of their project.
3. Increased their ability to analyse, criticise and evaluate alternative viewpoints and strategies within the context of substantive sub-fields of physical geography, and developed an understanding of how their own work fits within existing knowledge, and current advances.
4. Developed their skills in discussion, oral presentation, and task achievement within a research context.

Throughout the programme, the development of student progression increases from an awareness of the subject matter at Level 1 through to a deeper understanding of the material covered by Levels 3 and 4. Coherence, a balance between breadth and depth of study, staged progression over the period of study, and flexibility and choice are supported by a combination of compulsory and optional modules. At all levels, advice is available through our personal tutor scheme to help students choose coherent programmes of individual study.

22. Criteria for admission to the programme

Detailed information regarding admission to the programme is available in the University's On-Line Prospectus at http://www.shef.ac.uk/prospective/

23. Additional information

All students are expected to attend a local residential field class in Level 1 and a residential field class in Level 2. These are provided free as part of the degree programme and costs are covered by degree fees. Costs for optional Level 3 field classes are also covered by degree fees however, these modules require a minimum number of students to run – this information is provided to students as part of the module selection process for continuing students.

This specification represents a concise statement about the main features of the programme and should be considered alongside other sources of information provided by the teaching department(s) and the University. In addition to programme specific information, further information about studying at The University of Sheffield can be accessed via our Student Services web site at www.shef.ac.uk/ssid