

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION

This document describes **Honours Degree programmes in Geography**. For Joint and Combined Honours Degree programmes, please also refer to the equivalent document(s) for the other subject(s). This specification is valid for new entrants from **September 2007**.

The aims of all Honours Degree programmes in Geography are:

- to provide a sound and extensive basis for the study of Geography, by developing relevant knowledge, understanding, geographical and transferable skills;
- to provide a flexible and progressive structure in which students are able to gain knowledge, understanding and appropriate skills relating to distinctive research specialisms;
- to provide students with a range of personal attributes relevant to the world beyond Higher Education, to enable them to engage in lifelong learning, to consider ethics and values, and to contribute to the wider community.

Programmes are delivered in three stages, each of which comprises one year of full-time study during which the student must follow courses to the value of four units (one unit is equivalent to 30 national credits). The curriculum is based on a strong foundation in Stage one, providing a broadly-based introduction on which is built an increasing specialisation in Stages two and three. Stage two provides integrated courses in substantial areas of the discipline, which take students beyond the introductions provided in the first year, and provide a basis for the research-led specialist options in the third year. In Stage three, a wide range of options are offered and students also complete an independent research dissertation. This is seen as the culmination of training in research design, research techniques, analysis, and presentation.

On all programmes students take core courses in research methods and design, which culminate in a specialist field course in both Stage one and Stage two (current field destinations are Spain, Kenya, Southern Ireland and New York).

As all single honours students take a core first year with elements of human and physical geography, there is flexibility to transfer degrees between BA or BSc Geography, BA Human Geography or BSc Physical Geography. However, from Stage two, students following the BA Human Geography or BSc Physical Geography programmes are required to take a particular pathway through the courses on offer. There is no formal difference between the BA and BSc Geography programmes: students are able to choose the title that best fits their programme content and career aspirations after discussion with their personal tutor. Moreover, students enrolled on the BA or BSc Geography will be able to graduate with a degree title of Human Geography or Physical Geography if their portfolio of courses fit the specialist pathways. Advice is provided on appropriate course combinations and pathways depending on a student's interests and possible future career paths.

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This document provides a summary of the main features of the programme(s), and of the outcomes which a student might reasonably be expected to achieve if full advantage is taken of the learning opportunities provided. Further information is contained in the College prospectus, the College Regulations and in various handbooks issued to students upon arrival. Whilst Royal Holloway keeps all its information for prospective applicants and students under review, programmes and the availability of individual courses are necessarily subject to change at any time, and prospective applicants are therefore advised to seek confirmation of any factors which might affect their decision to follow a specific programme. In turn, Royal Holloway will inform applicants and students as soon as is practicable of any substantial changes which might affect their studies.

Learning outcomes

Teaching and learning in the programme are closely informed by the active research of staff, particularly in the general areas of contemporary environmental change and management, long-term environmental change, landscapes and physical processes, geographies of the developing world, contemporary political and economic geographies, and social, cultural and historical geographies. In general terms, the programmes provide opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate the following learning outcomes:

Knowledge and understanding

- the range of different geographical interpretations of the concepts of environment and landscape;
- the concept of spatial variation;
- the constitution and construction of the distinctiveness of particular places;
- the operation of physical systems;
- the significance of spatial and temporal scale for physical processes, human processes and their interactions;
- the significance of historical change in the human and physical worlds;
- difference and inequality within the human world;
- the contribution made by Geography to the development of knowledge;
- the diverse forms of representation of the human and physical worlds;
- the main methodological strategies used in the analysis and interpretation of geographical information;
- the bases for informed concern about the Earth and its people;
- a number of specialised areas in Geography and associated disciplines.

Skills and other attributes

- planning, designing and executing a piece of rigorous research or enquiry, including the production of a final report;*
- undertaking effective field and laboratory studies (with due regard for safety and risk assessment);*
- working safely in a scientific laboratory, with awareness of standard procedures;*
- preparing effective maps and diagrams using a range of appropriate technologies;*
- employing a variety of technical and laboratory-based methods for the collection and analysis of spatial and environmental information (such as environmental sampling, dating techniques, statistical analysis, GIS);
- collecting, interpreting and combining different types of geographical evidence (such as texts, imagery, maps, digital and laboratory data);
- recognising the moral and ethical issues involved in debates and enquiries;*
- critically judging and evaluating evidence, and assessing the merits of contrasting theories, explanations and policies;*
- problem-solving, decision-making, numeracy, computation, spatial awareness and observation;*
- critically analysing and interpreting data and text, abstracting and synthesising information;*
- developing a reasoned argument, and expressing this verbally in presentations or in writing;*
- information technology (including spreadsheets, databases, word processing, e-mail and the world-wide web);*
- information handling and retrieval (including the use of on-line computer searches); identifying, retrieving, sorting and exchanging information; investigating a wide range of sources;*
- working with groups/teams and recognising and respecting the viewpoints of others;*
- taking responsibility for own learning, and developing habits of reflection on that learning.*
- in addition, these programmes foster the development of a range of personal attributes that are important in the world of work, and that strengthens the graduates' abilities to engage in lifelong learning and contribute to the wider community. These include: personal motivation; the ability to work autonomously and with others; self-awareness and self-management; empathy and insight; intellectual integrity; awareness of responsibility as a local, national and international citizen; interest in lifelong learning; flexibility and adaptability; creativity.*

* transferable skills

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Teaching, learning and assessment

Teaching and learning is mostly by means of lectures, seminars, small-group tutorials, field and laboratory work, designated reading, guided independent study and research, practicals and problem-solving workshops; the latter generally providing a forum for students, with the support of their instructors, to work through problem sets and applications in a smaller and more interactive setting. Particular training in geographical skills is given in the skills and research training 'spine' to the degree programmes; other courses in the programmes also develop and assess these skills in specialist contexts. Students complete a month-long introductory programme in study skills with their personal tutor. Students are expected to meet basic standards in information technology, for which training is provided by the College Computer Centre. Assessment of knowledge, understanding and skills is typically by formal unseen written examination, practical exercises including laboratory work, coursework essays and other exercises, problem-solving workshops, fieldwork exercises and reports, oral and poster presentations and the independent dissertation. Full details of the assessments for individual courses can be obtained from the [Department](#).

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Details of the programme structure(s)

Please note that not all courses run each year. A full list of courses including optional courses for the current academic year can be obtained from the [Department](#).

Single Honours Degree programmes and Combined Honours programmes taught wholly within Geography

Stage one:

Students must take:

- GG1001 Physical Geography I: Atmosphere, Oceans and the Geosphere (½ unit)
- GG1002 Physical Geography II: Biogeography, Ecology and Scales of Change (½ unit)
- GG1003 Human Geography I: Cultures, Economies, History (½ unit)
- GG1004 Human Geography II: Politics, Society, Development & Environment (½ unit)
- GG1011 Geographical Techniques I (1 unit)
- GG1032 Geographical Research & Field Training I (1 unit)

Part time students must take:

Stage one (a):

GG1011 Geographical Techniques I (1 unit)
and GG1001 Physical Geography I: Atmosphere, Oceans and the Geosphere (½ unit) or GG1003 Human Geography I: Cultures, Economies, History (½ unit)
and GG1002 Physical Geography II: Biogeography, Ecology and Scales of Change (½ unit) or GG1004 Human Geography II: Politics, Society, Development & Environment (½ unit)

Stage one (b):

GG1032 Geographical Research & Field Training I (1 unit)
and whichever of the two ½ unit courses which were not taken in the previous year.

Stage two:

Students must take:

GG2001 Geographical Techniques II (½ unit) and GG2003 Geographical Field Training (½ unit)
and either choose options equal to the value of 3 full units from a list of Stage two courses offered by the Department, or choose 2 full units from the Department list and 1 full unit of electives from another department.

Students following BA Human Geography must take 2 of their 3 options as Human Geography courses (GG2052; GG2053; GG2061; GG2071).

Students following BSc Physical Geography must take 2 of their 3 options as Physical Geography courses (GG2013; GG2021; GG2041; GG2043).

Part time students must take:

Stage two (a):

Choose options equal to the value of 2 full units from a list of Stage two courses offered by the Department.

Stage two (b):

GG2001 Geographical Techniques II (½ unit) and GG2003 Geographical Field Training (½ unit) and choose options equal to the value of 1 full unit from a list of Stage two courses offered by the Department.

Stage three:

Students must take:

GG3001 Dissertation (1 unit)

and either choose options equal to the value of 3 full units from a list of Stage three courses offered by the Department, or choose 2 full units from the Department list and 1 full unit of electives from another department.

Students following BA Human Geography must select 4 of their 6 options from Human Geography courses (numbered GG305x, GG306x, GG307x or GG308x).

Students following BSc Physical Geography must select 4 of their 6 options from Physical Geography courses numbered (GG301x, GG302x, GG303x or GG304x).

Part time students must take:

Stage three (a):

GG3001 Dissertation (1 unit)

and choose options equal to the value of 1 or 1½ unit from a list of Stage three courses offered by the Department.

Stage three (b):

Choose options equal to the value of 1½ or 2 full units from a list of Stage three courses offered by the Department.

With the agreement of the Academic Co-ordinator, students may choose to substitute up to 1 course unit in Stage two and Stage three for courses from another department.

Combined Honours Degree programmes with Geography as a major element

This degree programme, (BSc Physical Geography with Science communication) is no longer admitting students to stage one or stage two.

Stage three:

Students must take:

GG3001 Dissertation (1 unit)

SC3001 Advanced Media Project (1 unit)

and choose options equal to the value of 2 full units from Physical Geography courses numbered (GG301x, GG302x, GG303x or GG304x).

With the agreement of the Academic Co-ordinator, students may choose to substitute up to 1 course unit in Stage three for courses from another department.

Joint Honours Degree programmes with Geography as an equal element

BSc Physical Geography and Geology; BSc Geography, Politics and International Relations

Stage one:

Students taking BSc Physical Geography and Geology must take:

GG1001 Physical Geography I: Atmosphere, Oceans and the Geosphere (½ unit)

GG1002 Physical Geography II: Biogeography, Ecology and Scales of Change (½ unit)

GG1012 Geographical Techniques (½ unit)

GG1033 Geographical Research & Field Training I (½ unit)

plus specified courses in the other subject.

Students taking BSc Geography, Politics and International Relations must take:

GG1003 Human Geography I: Cultures, Economies, History (½ unit)

GG1004 Human Geography II: Politics, Society, Development & Environment (½ unit)

GG1013 Geographical Techniques (½ unit)

GG1034 Geographical Research & Field Training I (½ unit)

plus specified courses in the other subject.

Stage two:

Students taking BSc Physical Geography and Geology must take options equal to the value of 2 full units from a list of Stage two Physical Geography courses (GG2013; GG2021; GG2041; GG2043) offered by the Department, plus specified courses in the other subject.

Students taking BSc Geography, Politics and International Relations must take:
GG2002 Geographical Techniques II (½ unit) and GG2004 Geographical Field Training (½ unit)
Plus at least one, but no more than 2 full units from a list of Stage two Human Geography courses (GG2052; GG2053; GG2062; GG2071), plus specified courses in the other subject.

Stage three:

Students taking BSc Physical Geography and Geology must take one from:
GG3001 Dissertation (1 unit) or GL3131 Independent research project (1 unit)
and choose options equal to the value of either 1 or 2 full units from a list of Stage three Physical geography courses (GG301*, GG302*, GG393*, GG304*) offered by the Department, plus either 1 or 2 full course units in the other subject, to make a further 3 full units.

Students taking BSc Geography, Politics and International Relations must take:
GG3001 Dissertation (1 unit) or PR3000 PIR Dissertation (1 unit)
Plus at least one, but no more than 2 full units from a list of Stage three Human Geography courses (GG305*; GG306*; GG307*; GG308*), plus specified courses in the other subject.

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Progression and award requirements

The progression and award requirements are essentially the same across all Honours Degree programmes at Royal Holloway. Students must pass units to the value of at least three units on each stage of the programme. On some programmes there may be a requirement to pass specific courses in order to progress to the next stage, or to qualify for a particular degree title (see programme structure above). Students are considered for the award and classified on the basis of a weighted average. This is calculated from marks gained in courses taken in stages two and three, and gives twice the weighting to marks gained in stage three. In order to qualify for the award, students must gain a weighted average of at least 35%.

A Certificate of Higher Education may be awarded to a student who has completed the first year of the course, having passed at least three units.

A Diploma of Higher Education may be awarded to a student who has completed the first and second year of the course, having passed at least three units at each stage.

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Student support and guidance

- Personal Advisers: All students are allocated a personal adviser who meets with them regularly through the programme. The adviser's role is to advise on academic, pastoral and welfare issues. Students meet with their personal advisers during the first term in tutorial groups of 5–8, and with other members of staff for further tutorial support on the Stage one lecture courses.
- The Academic Co-ordinator, Departmental Educational Support Officer, course leaders, seminar leaders and departmental administrators provide a back-up system of academic, pastoral and welfare advice.
- Month-long departmental induction programme for orientation and introduction to study skills.
- All staff available and accessible through dedicated office hours system.
- Representation on the Student-Staff Committee.
- Detailed student handbook and course resources.
- Comprehensive on-line reference source for all undergraduate issues

- Dedicated Departmental Reading Room, with collection of articles and books supporting teaching and learning.
- Extensive supporting materials and learning resources in College libraries and Computer Centre.
- Dedicated Departmental computing suite and teaching laboratories.
- College Careers Service and Departmental Careers Service liaison officer.
- Access to all College and University support services, including Student Counselling Service, Health Centre and the Education Support Office for students with special needs.

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Admission requirements

The Department's standard conditional offer is available on the [Course Catalogue](#) web page. However, the Department also has considerable flexibility in its admissions and offers policy and strongly encourages applications from non-standard applicants. Students whose first language is not English may also be asked for a qualification in English Language at an appropriate level. It may also be helpful to contact the [Admissions Office](#) for specific guidance on the entrance requirements for particular programmes.

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Further learning and career opportunities

As well as providing a firm foundation for postgraduate study and research, and geographically-related careers, the programmes will provide students with skills that are transferable to a wide variety of employment opportunities. Graduates from Geography degree programmes have successfully progressed into a wide range of professions, while some have continued onto Postgraduate studies. For further details please refer to the [Careers Service](#).

In addition to the services offered by the College Careers Service, the Department has established a strong alumni programme, and hosts a series of evening discussions with former students, who provide advice on gaining relevant employment. The Department offers three Master's programmes: MA Cultural Geography (Research), MA/MSc Practising Sustainable Development, MSc Quaternary Science, plus a joint Masters programme, MSc Sustainability and Management with the Department of Management.

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Indicators of quality and standards

Royal Holloway's position as one of the UK's leading research-intensive institutions was confirmed by the results of the most recent Research Assessment Exercise (RAE 2008) conducted by the Higher Education Funding Council (HEFCE). The new scoring system for the RAE 2008 measures research quality in four categories, with the top score of 4* indicating quality that is world-leading and of the highest standards in terms of originality, significance and rigour. 60% of the College's research profile is rated as world-leading or internationally excellent outperforming the national average of 50%. The College is ranked 16th in the UK for research of 4* standard and 18th for 3* and 4* research. The Geography Department was ranked joint 9th in the top 10 universities in the country in terms of proportion of 3* and 4* research, with 65% of the Department's research profile being rated as 3* or 4*.

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List of programmes

All programmes are taught by staff at Royal Holloway, University of London, and lead to awards of the University of London. Programmes in Geography are not subject to accreditation by a professional body. The QAA subject benchmark statement in Geography describes the general features which one might expect from Honours Degree programmes in the subject, and can therefore be used as a point of reference when reading this document (see www.qaa.ac.uk). UCAS codes are given in parentheses (see www.ucas.ac.uk).

Single Honours Degree programmes and Combined Honours programmes taught wholly within Geography

BA Geography (L700)

Available Full Time or Part Time

BSc Geography (F800)
BA Human Geography (L701)
BSc Physical Geography (F840)

Available Full Time or Part Time

Combined Honours Degree programmes with Geography as a major component

BSc Physical Geography with Science Communication (F8P4)*

Joint Honours Degree programmes with Geography as an equal component

BSc Physical Geography and Geology (FF68)
BSC Geography, Politics & International Relations (FL82)

Exit Awards

Certificate of Higher Education in Geography

Diploma of Higher Education in Geography

* Not available to new entrants.

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