

BSc (Hons) Physical Geography





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About this handbook

Welcome to the Department of Geography at Northumbria University.

This handbook is designed to provide a guide to your chosen programme of study, BSc (Hons) Physical Geography, at Northumbria. It does not provide all of the information that you will need – there is simply too much to include here whilst retaining some hope that you might read some of it! It accompanies the Faculty Student Handbook and the University Handbook of Student Regulations. These three handbooks will direct you to where most of that information is to be found.

Much of the information that you will need is to be found in comprehensive and definitive form on the Northumbria website. A key page is titled 'MyNorthumbria'. You reach it by clicking on 'MyNorthumbria' on the University home page (www.northumbria.ac.uk). The 'MyNorthumbria' page contains a full menu of further information. When summary accounts of regulations and procedures are provided in this handbook, students must be aware that these are not the regulations, and definitive versions are to be found elsewhere.

The programme team

Students reading Geography as well as Environmental Management, Environmental Health or Geography and Environmental Management will find that a great deal of teaching is shared between staff on different programmes.

Each programme has a programme leader, ultimately responsible for its smooth running and organisation. The programme leader for BSc (Hons) Physical Geography is Dr Nick Rutter and Dr Stuart Dunning.



Your programme leader

The programme leader is the operational manager of the programme. Your programme leader will provide you with details about the course and will answer any programme-related questions you have. Your programme leader is responsible for telling you about the University's assessment policies and procedures (covered in this handbook) so that you know what the ground rules are. Your programme leader is committed to helping you get the most out of your studies and, where appropriate, will liaise with your other tutors to make sure that they are aware of your needs and of how you are progressing in general.

Your guidance tutor

You will be allocated a guidance tutor, a member of academic staff listed below, who has the duty of providing you with advice on academic, procedural, and (where desired and appropriate) personal matters. Where possible, you will retain the same guidance tutor throughout your time at Northumbria. You will be expected to consult with your guidance tutor during induction week, and regularly thereafter, including whenever module or progression results are available, and whenever option choices have to be made. You may in addition ask for a meeting with your guidance tutor at any time.

Open Door Policy

We have an open door policy which means you can call in and talk to a member of staff whenever they are available in their office. However as academic staff teach on many modules/programmes it is advisable to make an appointment if you wish to be sure to see them. Occasionally you may be able to have an immediate appointment but don't be disappointed if asked to return at a mutually convenient time. Please contact staff to cancel if you are unable to make the arranged appointment.

Teaching Team

Here is an outline (in alphabetical order) of who's who, their main roles and backgrounds. Most of the staff below will be in charge of some of the modules that you are taking or will be taking.

Department of Geography	Room	Tel	@northumbria.ac.uk
Dr Ben Brock, PhD (Cambridge) <i>Reader in Remote Sensing Physical Geography</i>	EBA216	227 3225	benjamin.brock
Alistair Bulloch <i>Environmental Health, Health and Safety, Risk Management</i>	EBD209	243 7571	alistair.bulloch
Dr Bruce Carlisle Geography & Environmental Management <i>Remote Sensing, GIS, Environmental Change</i>	EBD206	227 3888	bruce.carlisle
Dr Kathryn Cassidy, BA (London), MA (Birmingham), PhD (Birmingham) <i>Social Geography, Geographies of B/ordering, Migration & Mobilities, Post-Socialist/Soviet Europe</i>	D208	227 4777	kathryn.cassidy
Dr John Clayton Programme Leader for BA Geography <i>Human Geography, Social Geography, Identities and Inequalities</i>	D219	227 4260	john.clayton
Prof Andrew Collins, BSc, PhD (London) <i>Geography of Health, Third World Sustainable Development and Disaster Management</i>	EBD205	227 3754	andrew.collins
Dr David Cooke <i>Environmental Organic Chemistry</i>	EBD206	227 3879	david.cooke
Dr Mike Deary <i>Environmental Health</i>	EBA216	227 3593	michael.deary
Lesley Dunlop <i>Physical Geography, Hydrology and River Channel Change</i>	EBA202A	n/a	lesley.dunlop
Dr Stuart Dunning, PhD (Luton) Programme Leader BSc Geography <i>Disaster Management: Hazard and Risk – Landslides and GIS</i>	EBD214	227 3819	stuart.dunning
Dr Jane Entwistle, BSc, PhD (Aberystwyth) Head of Department of Geography <i>Physical Geography, Soil Scientist: Land Contamination, Geoarchaeology and Environmental Change</i>	EBA206	227 3017	jane.entwistle
Dr Vasile Ersek BSc, PhD <i>Palaeoclimate Reconstruction, Karst, Caves and Geochemistry</i>	EBA212	227 3344	vasile.ersek

Dr Peter Glaves Enterprise Fellow <i>Landscape, Policy and Planning and Conflict Management</i>	EBA204	227 3733	peter.glaves
Simon Griffiths, BSc(Hons) DiploA MSc DIC CMCIEH MCIWM Programme Leader for Environmental Health <i>Environmental health, air quality, resilience, housing, public health, risk management.</i>	EBD209	243 7644	simon.griffiths
Dr Emma Hocking, BSc, PhD (Dunelm) <i>Physical Geography, Coasts, Sea-level and Environmental Behaviour</i>	EBA212	243 7838	emma.hocking
Dr Mike Jeffries, BSc, PhD (York) <i>Geophotography, Research Design, Ecology and Conservation</i>	EBD206	227 3755	michael.jeffries
Derek Johnson <i>Geospatial Analysis</i>	EBD219	243 7812	derek.johnson
Dr Samantha Jones <i>Environmental Management, Sustainable Development</i>	EBD210	243 7217	samantha.jones
Dr Helen King, PhD (Dunelm) <i>GIS, Landscape and Environment</i>	EBD210	243 7155	helen.m.king
Richard Kotter <i>Human Geography, Economic and Political Geography</i>	EBD204	227 3262	richard.kotter
Dr Paul Mann BSc, PhD (Newcastle) Anniversary Research Fellow <i>Physical Geography, Arctic Biogeochemistry</i>	EBA216	243 7644	paul.mann
Ms Helen Manns BSc, MSc (Bangor) Student Experience & Enhancement <i>Environmental Management and Policy</i>	EBA206	227 4551	helen.manns
Dr Tony Mellor, BSc, PhD (Hull) <i>Physical Geography, Geology and Soil Science</i>	EBD204	227 3758	antony.mellor
Graham Mowl, BA (Dunelm) Director of Programmes <i>Human Geography, Social Geography, Leisure and Tourism</i>	EBD212	227 3746	graham.mowl
Dr Geoff O'Brien, BA MBA (Dunelm) <i>Environmental Economics and Planning, Business and Sustainable Development</i>	EBD207	227 3747	geoff.obrien
Prof. Phil O'Keefe, BA, PhD (London) <i>Energy and Environment, Development and Sustainability</i>	EBD207	227 3747	phil.okeefe

Dr Matthew Pound PhD (Leeds) <i>Palaeontology, Geology and Climate</i>	EBA216	227 4410	matthew.pound
Dr Nick Rutter, BA PhD (Oxon) Programme Leader BSc Geography and BSc Physical Geography <i>Physical Geography, Snow and Ice Hydrology, Hydrometeorology, Modelling</i>	EBA212	243 4735	nick.rutter
Dr Ulrich Salzmann <i>Paleoecology and Biogeography</i>	EBD214	243 3874	ulrich.salzmann
Dr Jon Swords BA, PhD (Newcastle) <i>Economic Geography, Creative Industries & Visualisation</i>	EBD213	243 7942	jon.swords
Prof Peter Taylor <i>Economic Geography, Creative Industries and Visualisation</i>	EBD207	243 7641	peter2.taylor
Catherine White BA, M Litt. (Newcastle) <i>Human Geography, Geography of Retailing, Geography of Europe</i>	EBD208	227 3811	catherine.white
Prof John Woodward, BSc, MSc, PhD (Leeds) Associate Dean for Research and Enterprise <i>Physical Geography, Glaciology and Geophysical Investigation of Glacial and Fluvial Geomorphology</i>	EBD101	227 3048	john.woodward
Dr Leanne Wake BSc, PhD (Durham) Anniversary Research Fellow <i>Sea Level Change and Cryosphere</i>	EBA216	227 4739	leanne.wake

Programme Administration

Each programme has dedicated programme support who are responsible for the administration of your programme.

Your Programme Support Coordinators are based in room B201, Ellison Building and can be contacted on 0191 227 4722

Academic and administration staff on the list above can be contacted in a number of ways. First, you can find their office, knock and ask to make an appointment to see them in person (most staff should have a note on their doors indicating their availability). Second, you can contact them by telephone by using their extension number listed above. Perhaps the best way of contacting staff though is by sending them an email.

Please do not expect an immediate reply – remember that staff keep normal working hours e.g. 9am–5pm Monday to Friday. Most staff will have an out of office reply if they are on annual leave or engaging with research activity. Please make sure when contacting a member of staff to provide as much information as possible – your degree programme, what year you are in along with the issue you need help with.

Your programme of study – BSc (Hons)

Physical Geography

There is a national requirement that all programmes of study have a publicly available 'Programme Specification'. The Programme Specification provides an account of the 'Learning Outcomes' of a programme of study (broadly – what your discipline considers your capabilities will/should be on completion of the programme) and how these are to be achieved in a structured way by progression through the programme. This section of the handbook is based on the BSc (Hons) Physical Geography Programme Specification. The full and definitive version can be found at: www.northumbria.ac.uk/programmespecs/

Programme aims

An understanding of the physical environment as the result of natural processes and human modification is vital in order to learn from the past, understand the present and influence the future. The Physical Geography programme at Northumbria University takes a critical approach to a range of theoretical and applied topics that underpin an understanding of the physical environment with a strong focus on a practical and applied approach.

The programme specifically aims to:

1. Enable students to develop their knowledge and understanding of the field of physical geography, and appreciate the relevance of a physical geographic perspective in the analysis of real world problems.
2. Foster an understanding of the spatial patterns, processes and interactions in the physical world through the exploration of environmental systems across a range of spatial scales.
3. Enable students to critically assess the ways in which geographical data can be acquired, analysed and interpreted.
4. Develop knowledge and understanding of the history of the Earth over recent geological timescales and the nature and properties of Earth materials.

5. Promote a wide range of practical and intellectual skills necessary to undertake novel and applied research.
6. Providing option choices in second and final year but not at the expense of core subject material delivered throughout the programme.
7. Develop practical, subject specific and intellectual skills in order to equip students with the necessary tools for geographical investigation.
8. Facilitate career development through the acquisition of graduate transferable skills, both subject specific expertise and employability-enhancing generic skills.

Programme learning outcomes

On completion of the programme you will have achieved a number of learning outcomes, specified in terms of 'performance capabilities' identified under four key headings: Knowledge and understanding; Intellectual skills; Practical skills; Transferable/key skills:

Knowledge and understanding

Students will be able to:

1. Critically review the dynamic nature of spatial patterns, processes and changes associated with physical geography phenomena, particularly those relating to glacial, periglacial, fluvial, pedological, meteorological, climatic and Quaternary environmental systems.
2. Evaluate the significance of spatial and temporal scale on Earth surface processes (physical, chemical and biological).
3. Apply and critically evaluate the role of numerical modelling in addressing the interaction of processes in the physical environment.
4. Critically assess the ways in which geographical data can be acquired, analysed and interpreted.
5. Evaluate the diverse manners of representation of the physical world.
6. Critically review the history of the Earth over recent geological timescales and the nature and properties of Earth materials.
7. Critically appraise the fundamental principles of physics and chemistry behind a range of stressors that impact on the environment.
8. Integrate key methodological design techniques and critically assess outputs in the context of geographical decision making, planning and policy development.

Intellectual skills

Students will be able to:

1. Critically interpret, judge and evaluate evidence, text and data.
2. Research and assess the merits of contrasting theories, paradigms, explanations and policies.
3. Take responsibility for your own learning and develop habits of reflection upon that learning.
4. Demonstrate your analytical and problem-solving abilities within appropriate geographical contexts.
5. Make informed decisions through abstraction and synthesis of appropriate geographical information, develop reasoned argument and challenge assumptions.

Practical skills

Students will be able to:

1. Plan, design, execute and communicate a sustained piece of independent academic research.
2. Demonstrate competence in a range of field data collection techniques, including sampling design, accurate observation and recording, monitoring and mapping (including surveying: levelling and principles of theodolite use) of physical phenomenon, data analysis and interpretation.
3. Demonstrate competence in a range of laboratory skills in the analysis of natural materials.
4. Execute safe working practice in field and laboratory environments.
5. Show awareness of moral and ethical aspects of field and laboratory investigations and sensitivity to the environment and stakeholders.
6. Demonstrate effective use of IT for data collection, sourcing, recording, analysis, summary and presentation.
7. Demonstrate effective application of Geographical Information Systems and appropriate use of advanced vector and raster data analysis tools.
8. Show appropriate use of different literature and data sources, including correct citation and referencing.

Transferable/key skills

Students will be able to:

1. Identify and research novel problems/questions, showing initiative, self-direction and creativity.
2. Prepare, process, interpret and communicate ideas, data and judgements effectively to a variety of audiences in written, verbal and graphical forms, using appropriate techniques and packages.
3. Interpret and use numerical and non-numerical sources of information..
4. Synthesise and critically interpret data through the effective application of information technology and Geographical Information Systems.
5. Work confidently and independently towards self-managed goals. Present as an active and engaged learner, able to reflect critically on experience, strengths, weaknesses.
6. Work positively within a team, showing an awareness of ethics, morality and social justice in their relationships with colleagues and peers.
7. Demonstrate problem-solving skills.
8. Demonstrate personal attributes of autonomy, flexibility, creativity and adaptability in applying knowledge and executing practical skills.

YEAR 1

Sem 1

GE0216 Environmental Science (10)

Sem 2

GE0092 Geography Fieldwork (10)

Year long modules

- GE0152 Tutorial (20)
- GE0313 Dynamic Earth (20) BE1398
- Landscape Surveying (20) GE0135
- Intro to Physical Geog (20) GE0328
- Skills for Geog (20)

YEAR 2

Sem 1

GE0326 Meteorology: Measurement and Modelling (10)

Sem 2

GE0097 Research Design (10)

Year long modules

- GE0317 BSc Geography Theory & Practice (20)
- GE0136 Surface Processes (20)
- GE0138 Earth Observation and GIS (20)
- GE0143 Cold and Palaeoenvironments (20)
- Additional (20) option

YEAR 3

Sem 1

DISSERTATION (10)

Sem 2

DISSERTATION (20)

Core Module:

- GE0315 GIS Applications (20)
- OPTION (70)

LEVEL 5

Choose one of core options:

- (GE0139) Soils and the Environment (20 credits)
- (GE0218) Pollution monitoring and control (20 credits)

LEVEL 6*

OPTION MODULES:

- (GE0105) Water Management (10 credits)
- (GE0158) Applied Remote Sensing (20 credits)
- (GE0249) Air Quality Monitoring (10 credits)
- (GE0251) Geography and Environmental Management Work Placement (20 credits)
- (GE0272) Modelling the Physical Environment (10 credits)

- (GE0296) Palaeoecology of biogeography (10 credits)
- (GE0305) Coastal Environments (10 credits)
- (GE0315) GIS Applications (20 credits)
- (GE0318) Land Degradation and Remediation (10 credits)
- (GE0327) Mountain and Polar Environments (20 credits)
- (GE0329) Environmental Engineering

The following yearlong options can be taken between Level 4 and Level 5 or between Level 5 and Level 6:

- (GE0284) Study Abroad Year (120 credits)
- (EE0500) Placement year in Industry (120 credits)

*Please note that not all modules are available every year.

Modules available are provided in option talks early in Semester 1.

Programme structure and progression

Each level (or year) of the programme is made up of modules of study spread across two 15-week semesters. Modules are usually worth 10 or 20 credits so that at the end of each year, you should accumulate 120 credits in total. Failure to do so will normally result in a non-honours/ordinary degree, or lesser award. The programme is designed to provide a sound foundation of geographical knowledge at levels 4 and 5 and a broad range of choice and specialisms at level 6. The programme therefore consists of a mixture of compulsory core modules and option modules. Option choices for the following year are made in the middle of Semester Two when you can look at module descriptors online to enable you to make an informed choice. You are also encouraged to discuss your option choices with your guidance tutor, programme leader and appropriate module tutors if you require further information. It should be noted that exceptional circumstances sometimes

necessitate the withdrawal of option modules from the programme. Should this happen you will be advised of this situation as far in advance as possible to enable you to consider alternative option choices.

Level 4 (Year 1): provides you with a broad foundation in Physical Geography. Basic principles and concepts in physical geography are taught at level 4. In addition the specialist modules of Landscape Surveying and Environmental Science provide a key skill set and knowledge base for modules in your second year. Basic research skills and methods are also taught in the Skills and Fieldwork modules. More generic study skills are taught and developed throughout the year on the Personal Tutorial module. Emphasis is generally placed on the development of practical experience and application, and you will develop a range of transferable skills including literacy, numeracy, IT, Geographical Information Systems (GIS) team work and the ability to communicate effectively, all of which are of value to society and prospective employers. These skills are also fostered in part through the fieldwork programme.

Level 5 (Year 2): builds upon the foundations laid down in Year 1. You begin to develop experience in research methods and project design which will lead into the final year dissertation. The BSc field week abroad allows you to apply knowledge and theoretical concepts from the core courses in the field by designing and implementing independent group research projects. The distinctive, academic core of the BSc Physical Geography degree is made up of five key systematic areas of physical geography: measuring and monitoring the physical environment; modelling and mapping the physical environment; Cold and palaeoenvironments; and Geohazards & environmental pollution. You can also choose one option stream from either soils and the environment or pollution monitoring and control. At this level the programme aims to provide more specialist knowledge in the core areas of physical geography and encourages students to take greater responsibility for their learning.

Level 6 (Year 3): builds on the systematic material covered in Year 2 and is focused almost entirely on specialist options in physical geography (70 out of 120 credits). Geographical Information Systems applications and other option modules are specialist options developing largely from the core physical geography modules at level 5. All options relate to the active research interests of staff and thereby reflect trends and developments in the broader context of the discipline. In addition, you will select a dissertation topic (30 credits) in any aspect of geography relevant to your degree programme. This consists of an independent research project that you chose, supervised by a member of staff.

There will be an opportunity to take part in a year abroad exchange programme with Frostburg University, MD, US (www.frostburg.edu/dept/geog/) between either your first and second year or your second and third year. Further details will be made available to you during the course of the year. If you think you might be interested please speak to your programme leader.

Programme delivery: learning and teaching strategy

The programme is delivered over two 15-week semesters per level (or academic year) during which formal class contact takes place during the first 12 weeks of each semester only; the remaining weeks (13–15) are reserved for examinations. Programme delivery involves a variety of formats depending on the nature of the subject material covered by the various modules of study and your learning outcomes. The department prides itself in the diversity of modes of course delivery, the main examples of which include:

Lectures – these usually involve large student groups in a lecture theatre or large classroom. Although this is a largely passive learning activity, in which you will probably listen and take notes, some lectures are interactive with questions and group activities. Handouts are usually provided to direct student learning via follow-up questions or reading. Most lectures are about one hour in length. If they are longer than this, a break will usually be provided.

Seminars – these involve smaller, more informal student groups where emphasis is placed on the presentation and sharing of ideas, often through student-led discussion. Seminars are sometimes used to follow up ideas raised in lectures in more detail. In most cases, seminars require you to undertake preparatory work beforehand. Most seminars are about one hour in length.

Tutorials – these involve either very small group or individual meetings with your guidance tutor. They are used as a support framework for learning and, if necessary, to help you deal with any personal difficulties you may have. Group tutorials are about one hour in length, although individual tutorials are usually considerably shorter than this.

Laboratory practicals – these involve working in a science laboratory environment and cover a range of activities including, for example, analysis of soil, water and sediments. Working in a laboratory environment requires you to be fully aware of appropriate health and safety regulations. Laboratory practicals are usually two to three hours in length, although a break is usually provided.

IT workshops – these usually involve working in a computer laboratory and cover a range of activities, including word processing and use of spreadsheets, and more specialist tasks such as statistical analysis, processing of remotely sensed data and spatial analysis using Geographical Information Systems (GIS). Workshops can be from one to three hours in length, although a break is usually provided in the longer sessions.

Fieldwork – this is perhaps one of the most enjoyable of student learning experiences and involves participation in both local and residential trips. Local trips usually last for a half or full day, whilst residential trips may last up to one week. Most of the work on field trips revolves around student-centred research projects. Field trips are not optional extras. They form a substantial part of several core modules. If you do not attend a field trip you will probably not be able to pass that module. If you have valid extenuating circumstances for not attending a field trip (such as medical reasons), you **MUST** contact your programme leader and/or the field trip leader as soon as possible.

Residential fieldwork (provisional dates):

Level 4: Alnwick fieldtrip

8-9 Oct 2015(residential) Lab week teaching week 17 (non-residential), Skills Project week March 2015 (dates to be confirmed)
First Year Fieldwork – Lakes/Tummel - After Exams

(residential dates to be confirmed)

Level 5: Tenerife - Start of Semester 2 (dates to be confirmed)

Directed learning – this usually takes the form of follow-up questions from classes, together with a diet of prescribed reading. It may also include preparatory work for seminars, tutorials and assignments.

Independent learning – this takes the form of undirected study, usually through reading. Most class handouts contain reference lists that should be followed up at the earliest possible opportunity after the class, while the material is fresh in the mind. As a guide, you should spend about 4.5 hours per week of independent study for each module on top of the timetabled class contact time, in order to reach your full potential.

eLearning Portal (Blackboard) – all modules and programmes have their own web-based Blackboard sites which can be accessed by all enrolled students through the internet either on campus or elsewhere. All modules should have a full set of documentation available through Blackboard, including module guides, assessment details, module reviews from previous years, reading lists, and lecture outlines or PowerPoint slides if available. It is advisable to log on to your module Blackboard sites regularly as staff will often be adding new information throughout the duration of the course.

In addition to academic scholarship and learning, the department places great emphasis on **transferable or key skills** that are of value to prospective employers and to society in general. These skills include the ability to communicate, both orally and in writing; the ability to work as part of a team; the ability to solve complex problems and take appropriate decisions; the ability to work effectively using a variety of IT packages; the ability to undertake independent research and to think critically; and the ability to process

and interpret numeric information. Rather than developing these skills in isolation of the academic subject content, the department attempts to foster your development by integrating them into its modules of study, thus providing a strong academic context to their delivery. Awareness of key skills development is promoted largely through the guidance tutorial system.

Learning, teaching and assessment

Approaches to study and work ethos

The department's main wish is that by the end of the course, you will be able to achieve your full potential by taking a professional attitude to scholarship and learning. We hope that you will aim high and take pride when you achieve good marks in your assessments. By the same token we hope that you will learn from your mistakes and take a constructive approach to your improvement and progress. It is particularly important to get into this mode of thought early in level 4 where there is sometimes a tendency for students to underachieve. One of the main reasons for underachievement is that level 4 does not 'count' towards the degree classification. Consequently, some students become complacent and only aim for a basic 40% pass, often relying heavily on their experience from previous school or college courses. There are three main concerns here: first, if you aim for 40%, you may well get less than 40% and thus fail, and second, a 40% pass is not a very strong foundation from which to progress to second year. Therefore, underachievement at first year often leads to underachievement at levels 5 and 6 that determine degree classification.

For each single semester module studied, the notional student workload is 100 hours. Consequently, the full semester quota of six modules equates to a total workload of 600 hours, or 40 hours per

week (600 divided by 15 weeks). On average, you will have approximately 15 hours of timetabled class contact per week. The department therefore anticipates that, in order to reach your full potential, you will spend the remaining 25 hours per week on directed and independent learning which equates to approximately four hours per week for each module. It is recognised that you will need to spend more time than this on your studies, particularly when assignments are due for submission and in preparation for examinations. It is equally recognised that on other occasions, you will spend less time than this on your studies due to commitments outside the University.

In some cases, you may need to undertake paid work in order to support yourself at University. If this is the case, you should attempt to find a balance between your studies and outside work activities. You are advised that classes could be timetabled at any time between 9am and 6pm on weekdays and until the timetable is finalised you should keep these times free for study. It should be noted, however, that Wednesday afternoons are usually kept free of teaching. It is important that you get into a fairly routine weekly work pattern as early as possible in each semester. This will enable you to identify blocks of free time that could be used for study, sport or other activities. The guidance tutor system is designed to help you in level 4 with time management issues early in your academic career.

Timetables are produced centrally within the University and become available to you at the start of Semester One. The Semester Two timetable usually becomes available to you in January. Timetables are difficult to interpret to begin with because some classes, particularly seminars and tutorials, do not run every week. Consequently, it is worth spending some time interpreting your timetable until the weekly routine becomes clear. You are advised to cross check timetable with module guides. If in doubt ask if a lecture

is cancelled. You will be informed by text message or by email. Please check before you travel.

As students on all programmes undertake field and laboratory work, they are advised that the department has a **Health and Safety Policy**, a copy of which is given to all students at the beginning of their course. You are asked to read the policy carefully and sign the **Code of Practice Declaration** at the back of the booklet. This must be returned to the Programme Team (located in B201, Ellison Building) before you are allowed to participate in field and laboratory activities. If you are likely to be absent from classes, you should phone the Absence Report line on 0191 243 7910 or email ee.attendancet@northumbria.ac.uk. You should also contact your guidance tutor for advice and support. Unauthorised absence from taught components of the programme may lead to contact from these people fairly quickly, and ultimately to expulsion from the University and the termination of fee and maintenance payments by the Local Education Authority.

Assessment

The department takes pride in the diversity of modes of assessment used across its modules of study. The assessment strategy for each module is determined by the team of staff who deliver the module and is designed to test the learning outcomes for that module as comprehensively as possible. Over the three years of the degree course students will experience a very wide range of assessment formats including: seen and unseen examination papers, essays, data response questions, projects, oral presentations, posters, portfolios, reflexive journals and a final year dissertation. On most of the department's programmes, the balance of coursework assignments to examinations is approximately 60:40. For individual modules, the pattern of assessment varies from 100% coursework to 100% examination.

How individual modules are assessed is provided on module descriptors, and in material provided by the module tutors in week 1. The number of pieces of coursework for 10 and 20 credit modules vary due to the differing nature of the material being taught. There is also a noticeable change from level 4 through to level 6.

Refer to information provided by module tutors for full details of the work involved and submission dates.

Returned work and feedback

In the Department of Geography and Environment we believe in the value of timely and effective feedback in order to enhance your learning. Marked work with an attached feedback sheet is usually returned to you via the Student Support Team in the 'Hub Office' within 20 working days (not including vacation times). At busy times of the year when a lot of assessments are due in at the same time (e.g. at the end of Semester One) this timescale for returning work to you may not be achievable but the member of staff concerned should let you know when you can expect to receive feedback on your work. Some work may also be returned to you in class as part of an interactive feedback session (e.g. Human Geography Semester One exam) or in some instances you may be asked to collect your marked work from a member of staff.

If you require more feedback on your work you should never be afraid to arrange a meeting with the member of staff who has marked it who will usually be happy to go through the work with you in more detail.

Deadlines

It is strongly recommended that at the start of each semester you produce a schedule of assignment submission dates for all modules so you can plan your workload over the semester. Coursework assignments are set early in each semester and include a guidance sheet which specifies the aims of the

assignment, the characteristics of a good answer and, if appropriate, a word limit. Please see a copy of the department's policy on word limits on the programme eLearning Portal site. Please note that students should provide a word count with each assignment – this should be exclusive of tables, figures and bibliography.

Late Approvals (LAs) and Personal Extenuating Circumstances (PECs)

If you have a valid reason for not being able to submit a piece of coursework on time, you will need to contact the Student Support Team (located in B201 Ellison Building) to request a late approval. There can be various reasons for not meeting a deadline, most commonly due to illness. IT problems are not valid reasons for missing a deadline ("my printer ran out of ink", "my computer got a virus" and "my memory stick broke" are NOT valid reasons). In most cases the Student Support Team will be able to arrange a later deadline and complete a Late Approval form. For some situations a Late Approval will not be appropriate/possible. In this case, the student may need to complete a PEC form

– see your Student Guide, Student Support Team or Programme Leader for further guidance on the PEC procedure.

When it gets close to PEC deadlines expect an email from the Student Support Team.

Books and equipment

At the start of each module and at classes during a module, staff will recommend books and journals for reading. Module descriptors state a few key texts. Students are not expected to buy all of the books recommended, and should in any case await the advice of module tutors whose recommendations may change from year to year. All recommended literature should be available from the library or electronically on the web. Newcastle upon Tyne is well provided with bookshops.

The largest bookshops in the City are Blackwell (at the Haymarket) and Waterstones (at the Monument).

Students will need an electronic calculator with basic trigonometric and statistical functions (such as the calculation of standard deviations). Students will have access to the University computer systems for statistical analysis, graphics and word-processing and a USB memory stick or portable hard drive can be used for storing files. Students will need suitable warm and waterproof clothing and footwear for fieldwork, and a laboratory coat and goggles for laboratory practical work. Lab coat and goggles can be provided to new students – details will be provided by your programme leader.

Backing up your work

The Late Approvals section stated that IT problems were not valid reasons for getting an extension to coursework deadlines. There are widely available computing facilities for you to use – they will not all break down at the same time! And loss or corruption of data files is avoidable by keeping two or more copies of all your work. The University provides you with the student U drive space, a memory stick and PCs with CD rewriters. You may well have your own PC/laptop, an external hard drive, or a web data storage service. Always, ALWAYS keep at least two copies of everything.

Timetable overview

At the first class for each module you should receive information on exact times, locations and activities for each week of the semester. The Tutorial module is not included on your timetable provided electronically – each tutorial group meets for one hour each week.

Note that there are more lectures than this in your first week these are just the very first lecture in each of your Semester One modules. Full personal timetables are

available on MyNorthumbria.

Please cross check with information provided in the first week for each module. Your timetable will not be the same each week so plan ahead.

External Examiners

In its latest Quality Code for Higher Education published in October 2011, the Quality Assurance Agency requested details of external examiners be published in our documentation. Listed below is an outline of external examiners currently in place: Professor Martyn Tranter
Bristol University

Calendar and important dates

Semester 1	Semester 2
Week 1–8: Summer vacation	Week 27: 18 Jan First week of teaching
Week 9: 14 Sep Induction Week*	Week 28: 25 Jan
Week 10: 21 Sep First week of teaching	Week 29: 01 Feb
Week 11: 28 Sep	Week 30: 08 Feb
Week 12: 05 Oct Alnwick 8-9 Oct Level 4 field study	Week 31: 15 Feb
Week 13: 12 Oct	Week 32: 22 Feb
Week 14: 19 Oct	Week 33: 29 Feb
Week 15: 26 Oct	Week 34: 07 Mar
Week 16: 02 Nov	Week 35: 14 Mar
Week 17: 9 Nov Dissertation Presentations/L4 Project Week	Weeks 36, 37 & 38: 21 March to 8 April Spring Break
Week 18: 16 Nov	Week 39 : 11 April
Week 19: 23 Nov	Week 40: 18 April
Week 20: 30 Nov	Week 41: 25 April
Week 21: 7 Dec	Week 42: 02 May Assessment/exam
Week 22, 23, 24: 14 Dec – 03 Jan Student self-directed time Winter break	Week 43: 09 May Assessment/ exam or field trip
Week 25 and 26: 04 Jan to 15 Jan Assessment week	Week 44: 16 May Assessment/exam
	Summer Vacation 23 May
	Mid July Informed of any resits and provided information for coursework reassessment
	LATE August Reassessment period for exams**

See timetable for scheduled classes

See timetable for scheduled classes

*Induction sessions are for all year groups so please keep this week commencing 14th of September 2015 free.

**If you fail any modules during your year you will be required to take resits. You are informed of this by letter. This is especially important for working out the timing of any holidays over the summer.

Assessment processes explained

Why are assessments necessary?

Assessment makes an essential contribution to your education. It acts to motivate you to focus and reflect on your learning and to apply and synthesise your knowledge. It also permits you to gauge your progress and act to address any weaknesses. Assessment methods are therefore an integral part of the learning process. From the University's perspective, it enables your tutors to monitor your progress, measure your attainment, maintain standards on the programme, and determine your final degree classification.

How can you be sure that the assessments are appropriate and relevant?

The mix of assessments across each programme is carefully selected to enable students to demonstrate a range of skills and knowledge which become progressively more challenging level-by-level. Assessment techniques are chosen to fit the subject discipline and reflect the expectations of employers and accreditation bodies. Each assessment task is aligned with module and programme learning outcomes and contributes in part to the development of discipline-specific knowledge and understanding, academic, practical or transferable skills.

How can you be sure that the assessments which are set are fair?

Individual assessment tasks are written by Module Leaders and are subject to peer-review by other staff in the Department before they are agreed and distributed to students. In addition, External Examiners, who are colleagues from other Universities and (for professionally accredited programmes) from industry, are appointed to ensure that the standards at Northumbria are appropriate, and a key role is to review the assessment questions and marking schemes.

How do we inform you about the criteria we use to judge your work ?

Generic grade descriptors by level of study are supplied within your handbook. These reflect the increasing demands and expectations of standards as students progress through their programme. In addition, you are supplied with specific assessment criteria at the module level as part of your coursework specifications.

How do we undertake marking?

Marking involves staff allocating marks according to defined marking criteria that have been approved in advance. Assessments may be marked by a single staff member or a team of markers (depending on the size of the module). These are invariably the staff who delivered the module and their expertise in the subject discipline is assured. If the work is marked by a team, initial meetings and sample marking is undertaken to establish common expectations in relation to the marking criteria to minimise variations across markers.

How do you know that marking is fair?

Once all the marking has been completed for an assessment, a sample of the work is selected for 'moderation'. The sample size is

proportional to the number of scripts and is selected from the whole range of marks. Student work is anonymous during the marking and moderation process and your name will only be revealed once all the marks have been agreed following the sample check. Prior to the Examination Board, the External Examiner also verifies the appropriateness of the marks awarded within the sample, and it is only at the Exam Board stage that the marks are fully approved. If there are disparities between markers during the moderation process, then additional work may be sampled and third markers may be called upon to resolve any differences. By the end of the whole process the Exam Board must report that it is satisfied that the marks that have been awarded are a true reflection of the quality of the work.

Why does it take four weeks to mark your work?

Although 20 working days (four weeks) may seem to you like a long time for work to be marked and returned to you, it is important that we allocate sufficient time for staff to carefully consider the work, so that the mark allocated fairly reflects the quality of your submission. Tutors' marking workloads have to be considered in relation to the other academic duties they have to perform. We estimate that, on average, each assessment takes approximately 20-30 minutes to mark and provide feedback. In addition, once marked, all assessments have to be moderated (see above) to ensure fairness and consistency.

What level of feedback should you expect?

Feedback is a vital part of your learning process and will occur throughout your engagement with academic staff. Informal levels of feedback will often occur in lectures, seminars, lab work and project activities, and through the use of in-class activities and questioning. More formal feedback occurs during the assessment process and usually involves staff writing comments on scripts that are returned to students. Whilst there will invariably be differences in the styles that individual staff members adopt to provide feedback, their comments should serve three main purposes: (1) to explain the mark awarded; (2) to identify strengths within the work; and (3) to indicate areas that could be improved on for future work.

What should you do with the feedback you receive?

It is imperative that you collect all your assessment scripts so that you benefit from the feedback comments provided by the tutors. Your feedback provides you with the key opportunity to use assessment to improve your learning. Hence, if you have any problems understanding the feedback on your work, you should arrange a meeting with the staff member to clarify their comments.

It is important to review the comments you have received on all your work to identify any consistent issues that have arisen across several pieces of assessment.

This will help you formulate an action plan to deal with recurring weaknesses affecting your attainment. The Skills Plus programme managed by the University Library is an extremely valuable resource for students who require general advice such as 'Writing Assignments', 'Preparing for Exams' or 'Thinking Critically'.

Library

The libraries at City Campus and Coach Lane provide access to a wide range of print and electronic resources including over half a million print books, over 700,000 eBooks and more than 50,000 electronic journals. More details can be found on the University Library website:

<http://library.northumbria.ac.uk/home>

City Campus Library (number 14 on City Campus map) is housed near the Student Union building (number 30 on City Campus map).

Coach Lane Library is situated on the East Side of the Campus, in F Block (number 16 on Coach Lane Campus map).

City Campus library is open 24/7 during term time and from 9am to midnight during vacation times. Coach Lane library is open 7am until midnight (Monday to Friday), 9am until midnight (Saturday and Sunday). Opening hours are prominently displayed in the foyers of the library buildings, any changes are advertised on the Library website and on social media. Opening hours vary during bank holidays and are subject to change, so please check before you travel.

You will need to keep your smartcard with you to gain access to and leave the libraries. Your Smartcard is a universal card which not only gives access to the Libraries and other University buildings, but it also allows you to print, copy, scan, borrow books and make cashless payments.

The Library Catalogue can be accessed on and off-campus through the University Library website and the dedicated catalogue computers on each floor of both Libraries. The catalogue can be used to search for books and eBooks located in the University Library. It is quick and easy to use and will give you the information you need to locate the material on the shelves or read online. eBooks can be read on and off-campus, anytime, anywhere. NORA can be used to search for, and retrieve, up-to-date scholarly materials including articles, reports and statistics that are relevant to your studies. You can browse through all the online resources relating to your subject in one place including databases, journals and websites.

Students are entitled to borrow up to 15 items at any one time. Items can be issued using the self-issue machines on the ground floor of City and Coach Lane Libraries. You can renew your library books online through the MyLibrary section of MyNorthumbria or via the Library Catalogue.

Northumbria students can use other libraries such as the Robinson Library at Newcastle University and Newcastle City Library using the SCONUL access scheme. For more information see the Library SCONUL information page: <http://library.northumbria.ac.uk/sconul-holiday>

The Northumbria Skills Programme is a comprehensive skills programme designed to develop the key skills you need to succeed at university and beyond provided by the Library. It runs throughout the year and provides classroom style skills sessions on many topics including academic writing skills, giving accomplished presentations, and referencing your work correctly, as well as regular drop in surgeries. Some sessions are bookable; simply consult the timetable on the Northumbria Skills Programme website: <http://library.northumbria.ac.uk/skillsdev-nsp>

Skills Plus is the Library's collection of online learning materials, with a focus on digital literacy and study skills that can be accessed on and off-campus. Using these resources is an excellent way to develop your skills through a range of online tutorials with quizzes, video demonstrations and printable help guides. <http://nuweb2.northumbria.ac.uk/library/skillsplus/topics.html?13-0>

If you need help or advice, on or off campus, you can contact Ask4Help. The Ask4Help service provides you with help and support to access a range of University services including Library, Disability Support, Student Finance and Careers. The quickest way to find answers to some of the most popular questions asked by students is to look at Ask4help online. You can also contact us by phone and speak to a member of our dedicated enquiry team or email us your questions.

www.northumbria.ac.uk/ask4help

ask4help@northumbria.ac.uk

0191 227 4646

Northumbria Students' Union (NSU)

Northumbria Students' Union (NSU) is here to make sure you have the best experience possible. NSU is one of the largest and most exciting Unions in the country and that's all because of YOU. We represent you, the student, on all levels, on the issues students are concerned about; receiving a great academic experience, being very employable when you graduate, being safe on campus and in the city and having a fantastic time while a student.

NSU is run by students for students. You can have your say in what NSU does and how it is run, by contacting your [Sabbatical Officers](#) or by coming along to [Student Council](#)

MEMBERSHIP: As a student of Northumbria University you are automatically a member of the Students' Union. We also sell NUS Extra Card from the Students' Union at both [Coach Lane](#) and [City Campus](#) giving you discounts in shops and online, but you don't need one to use any of our services.

DIVERSE: Your Students' Union is a place which brings together students from all walks of life, all parts of the country and the world and many different cultures. NSU provides lots of opportunities for you to [Get Involved](#), make lasting friendships, increase employability and have FUN!

INDEPENDENT: NSU is independent of the University, with its own staff, services and decision-making structure. Run by students for students, providing the best services and opportunities for students we push for change from the University to deliver for students. Find out more at our [You Said, SU Did](#) page. If you need advice about academic appeals or other issues, we can help. Check out the [Advice Page](#).

VALUE: Your NSU offers the best value for money, and everything you spend goes straight back into the Students' Union to fund all the activities that we run for you.

If you would like more information check out the website www.mynsu.co.uk or come and see us at our [offices](#) in City, Coach Lane and London.