# Programme Specification: Post Graduate Taught

# For Academic Year 2025/26

## 1. Course Summary

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|---|---|
| **Names of programme and award title(s)** | MA in Human Geography and Sustainability Research<br>PGDip in Human Geography and Sustainability Research<br>PGCert in Human Geography and Sustainability Research |
| **Award type** | Taught Masters |
| **Mode of study** | Full-time<br>Part-time |
| **Framework of Higher Education Qualification (FHEQ) level of final award** | Level 7 |
| **Normal length of the programme** | 1 year full-time or 2 years part-time |
| **Maximum period of registration** | The normal length as specified above plus 3 years |
| **Location of study** | Keele Campus |
| **Accreditation (if applicable)** | Economic and Social Research Council |
| **Regulator** | Office for Students (OfS) |
| **Tuition Fees** | **UK students:**<br>Full-time fee for 2025/26 is £11,400<br>Part-time fee for 2025/26 is £6,300 per year*<br>**International students:**<br>Full-time fee for 2025/26 is £17,700 |

***How this information might change:*** *Please read the important information at http://www.keele.ac.uk/student-agreement/. This explains how and why we may need to make changes to the information provided in this document and to help you understand how we will communicate with you if this happens.*

** We reserve the right to increase fees in subsequent years of study by an inflationary amount. Please refer to the accompanying Student Terms & Conditions for full details. Further information on fees can be found at http://www.keele.ac.uk/studentfunding/tuitionfees/*

## 2. Overview of the Programme

The MA in Human Geography and Sustainability Research provides students with advanced-level skills in human geography and sustainability-related research for a career in the public, private and / or voluntary and community sector. This includes positions with national and local government, other public bodies, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), private sector consultancies and research and policy institutes. It also delivers high quality postgraduate training to students wishing to pursue a PhD in human geography or sustainability and environmental studies.

The programme is distinctive in three ways. First, it brings together expertise in Human Geography and Sustainability-related research to provide a truly interdisciplinary approach focused around equipping students with the necessary methodological skills to investigate key societal problems and their resolution. Second, through providing both subject-specific and broader social science training, the MA provides students with a wide-ranging set of research competencies which can be utilised in a range of academic, policy and practice-based settings. Third, in developing research skills and knowledge of human geography, sustainability and the environment, the MA is compliant with the research training requirements for Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) PhD scholarships (Masters + PhD funding or PhD funding only).

One third of the course (60 credits) involves students following a number of subject-specific research training modules in Human Geography and Sustainability, including a focus on contemporary key themes in human geography and sustainability, advanced methods in human geography and sustainability and a 'research traineeship', whereby students will have the opportunity to get 'hands on' real world research experience working with a research mentor on a live research project. Such modules will be delivered by internationally recognised experts from within the School of Life Sciences.

A further 60 credits involves students studying alongside other social science postgraduates at Keele University to develop advanced qualitative and quantitative research and data analysis skills, as well as exploring approaches to research design and the philosophy of the social sciences. The remaining element of the course involves students undertaking an extended independent research project of their choice (60 credits) and which allows students to develop and apply skills generated during the taught component of the programme and to focus on a topic of interest to them.

The programme will be suitable for those considering doctoral (PhD) study or looking to work in the public, private or third sectors, for example, social or market research; social and health care; local and national government; or charitable and community organisations. It will be equally valuable to people already working in these sectors who wish to update or develop their social research skills.

## 3. Aims of the programme

The broad aims of the programme are to:

1. Provide generic and subject-specific training in human geography and sustainability that equips students with the necessary skills to either undertake a higher degree (compliant with ESRC requirements) or who want to acquire rigorous research skills more generally.
2. Equip students with the ability to apply theoretically and conceptually underpinned human geography / sustainability practice and interdisciplinarity.
3. Engage students in evidence-based debates on human geography and sustainability issues.
4. Provide students with career enhancing proficiencies in field skills, approaches, methods and research design and implementation in human geography / sustainability-related studies.

The programme may be studied full-time (1 year) or part-time (commonly 2 years but by agreement up to 5 years). The MA consists of 180 Level 7 credits, made up of 120-credit taught modules and a 60-credit dissertation. If students do not wish to complete the full 180 credits, they may choose to achieve a Postgraduate Certificate (60 credits) or a Postgraduate Diploma (120 credits). A student must complete all taught modules before they may proceed to the dissertation module.

## 4. What you will learn

The intended learning outcomes of the programme (what students should know, understand and be able to do at the end of the programme), can be described under the following headings:

- Subject knowledge and understanding
- Subject specific skills
- Key or transferable skills (including employability skills)

### Subject knowledge and understanding

Successful students will be able to develop:

- advanced knowledge of principles of research design and practice in social sciences and human geography and sustainability.
- critical awareness and detailed knowledge of current key issues in human geography and sustainability.
- advanced level of understanding of core social science and human geography and sustainability approaches and how they are applied in various contexts.
- substantial employability and professional competence in the human geography and the sustainability sector.

### Subject specific skills

Successful students will be able to:

- employ a broad range of fieldwork skills including principles of research design and strategy and the formulation of research questions amenable to empirical investigation, as well as risk assessment and health and safety.
- understand and apply a broad range of research methods, alternative epistemological positions, data management practices, data handling, data analysis and statistics skills in a diversity of social science and human geography and sustainability contexts.
- theorise human geography and sustainability practice and relate applied work to conceptual frameworks.
- undertake team working and project management skills including group work planning and coordination of team inputs.
- apply advanced research design skills to a human geography or sustainability study project.
- apply human geography and sustainability knowledge and understanding in a workplace context.
- develop professional level competence in Information Technology, Geographic Information Systems (GIS) data handling, critical thinking, team working and project management.

### Key or transferable skills (including employability skills)

Successful students will be able to:

- develop an opening and questioning approach to ideas, demonstrating curiosity, independence of thought and the ability to appreciate a range of perspectives on the natural and social worlds.
- appreciate the development and value of chosen subjects of study and their contexts, the links between them and awareness of the provisional and dynamic nature of knowledge.
- locate, evaluate and synthesise large amounts of frequently conflicting information, ideas and data.
- creatively solve problems using a range of different approaches and techniques and to determine which techniques are appropriate for the issue at hand.
- appreciate the social, environmental and global implications of the programme of study and other activities, including recognition of any ethical implications.
- communicate clearly and effectively in written and verbal forms for different purposes and to a variety of audiences.
- develop knowledge, skills, self-confidence and self-awareness to pursue future goals.
- develop the ability and motivation to participate responsibly and collaboratively as an active citizen in the communities in which individuals live and work.
- adopt a professional and reflective approach, including qualities of leadership, responsibility, personal integrity, empathy, care and respect for others, accountability and self-regulation.
- generate flexibility to thrive in rapidly changing and uncertain external environments and to update skills and knowledge as circumstances require.

**Keele Graduate attributes**

The Keele Graduate Attributes are the qualities (skills, values and mindsets) which you will have the opportunity to develop during your time at Keele through both the formal curriculum and also through co- and extra-curricular activities (e.g., work experience, and engagement with the wider University community such as acting as ambassadors, volunteering, peer mentoring, student representation, membership and leadership of clubs and societies). Our Graduate Attributes consist of four themes: **academic expertise, professional skills, personal effectiveness, and social and ethical responsibility.** You will have opportunities to engage actively with the range of attributes throughout your time at Keele: through your academic studies, through self-assessing your own strengths, weaknesses, and development needs, and by setting personal development goals. You will have opportunities to discuss your progress in developing graduate attributes with, for example, Academic Mentors, to prepare for your future career and lives beyond Keele.

## 5. How is the programme taught?

Learning and teaching methods used on the programme vary according to the subject matter and level of the module. They include the following:

- The compulsory and elective taught modules are weighted 15 credits (broadly equivalent to 150 hours work; with the exception of the dissertation which is 60 credits).
- Modules are delivered either semester long or over half a semester (two days per week). Before they begin the taught modules, students will be provided with an introduction to studying Human Geography and Sustainability Research at Keele University via an information pack and pre-course reading list.
- During each taught module, students will take part in lectures, tutor-led seminars and discussions, small group exercises, and case studies.
- Each module is accompanied by extensive independent study and throughout the course students are

encouraged and required to undertake independent reading to both supplement and consolidate the classes and to broaden individual knowledge and comprehension of the subject.
- Modules are assessed in a variety of ways including essays, a research proposal, an extended literature review, consultancy / group project reports, a portfolio of work, class tests and a draft ethics application.

Apart from these formal activities, students are also provided with regular opportunities to talk through particular areas of difficulty, and any special learning needs they may have, with their Academic Mentors or module lecturers on a one-to-one basis.

These learning and teaching methods enable students to achieve the learning outcomes of the programme in a variety of ways. For example:

- All students receive initial guidance on how to identify, locate and use materials available in libraries and elsewhere (including electronic sources).
- Guidelines are provided for the production of coursework assignments and dissertations and these are reinforced by seminars and individual supervision, which focus specifically on essay planning and writing, and research methodology.
- Detailed written and, if requested, oral feedback is provided on all course work.
- There is also time set aside during each module and outside of the modules, if preferred, for students to consult individually with teaching staff and receive guidance and feedback on assessment and module performance.

## 6. Teaching Staff

The programme is delivered across two different faculties (Humanities and Social Sciences and the Faculty of Natural Sciences) and has a diverse body of expertise and qualifications in both social science research (from the School of Social, Political and Global Studies) and human geography and sustainability practice and research (from the School of Life Sciences). Moreover, in terms of subject-specific research, most Human Geography and Environment staff with sustainability-related research interests in the School of Life Sciences will teach on this programme, including the compulsory and optional modules for the programme. Individual staff biographies can be found at: https://www.keele.ac.uk/lifesci/ourpeople/

There is also a strong emphasis on enhancing the student learning experience within the School of Life Sciences, which has developed a national reputation for its learning and teaching activities. Staff actively participate in teaching and learning activities, many staff hold a Postgraduate Certificate qualification in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education and are Fellows of the Higher Education Academy (the professional body for teaching and learning in higher education), and several staff members are actively involved with pedagogic research that seeks to identify ways in which the student learning experience within environment programmes can be enhanced.

The University will attempt to minimise changes to our core teaching teams, however, delivery of the programme depends on having a sufficient number of staff with the relevant expertise to ensure that the programme is taught to the appropriate academic standard.

Staff turnover, for example where key members of staff leave, fall ill or go on research leave, may result in changes to the programme's content. The University will endeavour to ensure that any impact on students is limited if such changes occur.

## 7. What is the structure of the programme?

To achieve the MA qualification, students must successfully complete taught modules to the value of 120 credits and a dissertation worth 60 credits (180 credits are required in total). Students have the flexibility to choose whether to complete the entire programme in one year as a full time student or two years as a part time student (see Tables below). Credits cannot be awarded for the dissertation unless all of the taught modules are successfully completed. Through the part time pathway, students undertake three core modules in Year 1 and four core modules plus the dissertation in Year 2.

Please note that international students who require a Tier 4 visa are not eligible to study part-time.

If students do not wish to take the dissertation module, they may complete their studies after achieving 120 credits from taught modules with a Postgraduate Diploma (PGDip), or after 60 credits with a Postgraduate Certificate (PGCert). Students who wish to finish after gaining less than 60 credits from taught courses may apply to have those credits applied to a different programme at a later date.

Formal teaching on the programme takes place during two semesters. In this respect, the new programme (full time and part time) is currently predicated on a September start given that a number of the modules for the programme focused on generic social science research training form part of a broader ESRC-accredited MRes in Social Science Research (delivered by the School of Social, Political and Global Studies). This commences in the Autumn semester and in line with ESRC studentship application timelines.

**The full time route is set out below:**

| Semester 1 (Autumn) | Semester 2 (Spring) | Semester 3 (Summer) |
|---|---|---|
| GEG-40020 Key themes in Human Geography and Sustainability (15 credits) | GEG-40018 Advanced methods in Human Geography and Sustainability (15 credits) | GEG-40026 Dissertation (*across* Semesters 1-3 - 60 credits in total) |
| GEG-40030 Advanced Traineeships in Geography, Geoscience and Sustainability (15 credits) | SOC-40020 Qualitative and Quantitative Methodologies (30 credits) | |
| SOC-40018 Foundations in Social Research (30 credits) | | |
| Optional module (*either* Semester 1 or Semester 2 - 15 credits) | | |

**The part time route is set out below:**

| Semester 1 (Autumn) - YEAR 1 | Semester 2 (Spring) - YEAR 1 | Semester 3 (Summer) - YEAR 1 |
|---|---|---|
| GEG-40020 Key themes in Human Geography and Sustainability (15 credits) | SOC-40020 Qualitative and Quantitative Methodologies (30 credits) | |
| SOC-40018 Foundations in Social Research (30 credits) | | |
| Optional module (*either* Semester 1 or Semester 2 - 15 credits) | | |
| **Semester 1 (Autumn) - YEAR 2** | **Semester 2 (Spring) - YEAR 2** | **Semester 3 (Summer) - YEAR 2** |
| GEG-40030 Advanced traineeships in Geography, Geoscience and Sustainability (15 credits) | GEG-40018 Advanced methods in Human Geography and Sustainability (15 credits) | GEG-40026 Dissertation (*across* Semesters 1-3 - 60 credits in total) |

| Year | Compulsory | Optional | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Min | Max |
| Level 7 | 165 | 0 | 15 |

## Module Lists

### *Level 7*

Together the five compulsory modules (105 credits) plus one optional module (15 credits), plus dissertation (60 credits) constitute 180 credits in total. The compulsory modules are foundational modules both theoretically and methodologically. They introduce students to the principles and practice of social science research more generally and human geography and sustainability research more specifically. The modules draw on the internationally recognised research expertise of staff within the School of Life Sciences and the School of Social, Political and Global Studies. As such, the compulsory modules introduce students to the research skills and critical analysis necessary for the successful completion of a Master's programme.

| Compulsory modules | Module Code | Credits | Period |
|---|---|---|---|
| Key themes in Human Geography and Sustainability | GEG40020 | 15 | Semester 1 |
| Foundations in Social Science Research | SOC40018 | 30 | Semester 1 |
| Advanced traineeships in Geography, Geoscience and Sustainability | GEG40030 | 15 | Semester 1-2 |
| Dissertation | GEG40026 | 60 | Semester 1-3 |
| Advanced methods in Human Geography and Sustainability | GEG40018 | 15 | Semester 2 |
| Qualitative and Quantitative Methodologies in Social Science | SOC40020 | 30 | Semester 2 |

| Optional modules | Module Code | Credits | Period |
|---|---|---|---|
| Green IT | ESC-40047 | 15 | Semester 1 |
| Development and Climate Justice (Masters) | GEG-40034 | 15 | Semester 1 |
| Climate Change Science | ESC-40060 | 15 | Semester 2 |
| Advanced GIS and Remote Sensing | ESC-40109 | 15 | Semester 2 |

### Level 7 Module Rules

***Dissertation Module*:**

- The 60 credit dissertation is mandatory for the award of MA.
- Credits for the dissertation can only be awarded once 120 credits of taught modules (compulsory + optional) are passed.

Students on the MA programme have a choice of one optional 15 credit module (4 available) from within the School of Life Sciences, and focused around an advanced human geography / sustainability-related theme (ESC-40047 Green IT; GEG-40034 Development and Climate Justice; ESC-40019 Advanced GIS and Remote Sensing and ESC-40060 Climate Change Science). The exact optional module which students are directed towards cannot be prescriptive as we do not know which module they will choose.

Those following the PG Diploma or PG Certificate are not able to choose any optional modules.

Students may not take a Level 7 version of a Level 6 module for which they were previously registered at Keele University.

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## Learning Outcomes

The table below sets out what students learn in the programme and the modules in which that learning takes place. Details of how learning outcomes are assessed through these modules can be found in module specifications.

### *Level 7*

All students will have all their Intended Learning Outcomes of the programme addressed in compulsory modules as mapped here. In addition, elective modules, if taken and dependent on content) will further reinforce students' achievement of some or all of those Intended Learning Outcomes. As optional modules taken will vary by student preference, they are not included here.

| Subject Knowledge and Understanding | |
|---|---|
| **Learning Outcome** | **Module in which this is delivered** |
| Advanced knowledge of principles of research design and practice in social sciences and human geography and sustainability | Advanced methods in Human Geography and Sustainability - GEG40018<br>Advanced methods in Human Geography and Sustainability<br><br>Foundations in Social Science Research |
| Critical awareness and detailed knowledge of current key issues in human geography and sustainability | Key themes in Human Geography and Sustainability - GEG40020<br>Key themes in Human Geography and Sustainability |
| Advanced level of understanding of core social science and human geography and sustainability approaches and how they are applied in various contexts | Key themes in Human Geography and Sustainability - GEG40020<br>Key themes in Human Geography and Sustainability<br><br>Advanced methods in Human Geography and Sustainability |
| Substantial employability and professional competence in the human geography and sustainability sector | Advanced traineeships in Geography, Geoscience and Sustainability - GEG40030<br>Advanced traineeships in Geography, Geoscience and Sustainability |

| Subject Specific Skills | |
|---|---|
| **Learning Outcome** | **Module in which this is delivered** |
| Employ a broad range of fieldwork skills including principles of research design and strategy and the formulation of research questions amenable to empirical investigation, as well as risk assessment, and health and safety | Foundations in Social Science Research - SOC40018<br>Foundations in Social Science Research<br><br>Advanced methods in Human Geography and Sustainability |
| Understand and apply a broad range of research methods, alternative epistemological positions, data management practices, data handling, data analysis and statistics skills in a diversity of social science and human geography and sustainability contexts | Qualitative and Quantitative Methodologies in Social Science - SOC40020<br>Qualitative and Quantitative Methodologies in Social Science |
| Ability to theorise human geography and sustainability practice and relate applied work to conceptual frameworks | Key themes in Human Geography and Sustainability - GEG40020<br>Key themes in Human Geography and Sustainability |
| Team working and project management skills including group work planning and coordination of team inputs | Key themes in Human Geography and Sustainability - GEG40020<br>Key themes in Human Geography and Sustainability<br><br>Advanced traineeships in Geography, Geoscience and Sustainability |
| Apply advanced research design skills to a human geography or sustainability study project | Dissertation - GEG40026<br>Dissertation |
| Apply human geography and sustainability knowledge and understanding in a workplace context | Advanced traineeships in Geography, Geoscience and Sustainability - GEG40030<br>Advanced traineeships in Geography, Geoscience and Sustainability |
| Professional level competence in Information Technology, Geographic Information Systems (GIS) data handling, critical thinking, team working and project management | Advanced traineeships in Geography, Geoscience and Sustainability - GEG40030<br>Advanced traineeships in Geography, Geoscience and Sustainability<br><br>Approaches to Research Design and Process |

| Key or Transferable Skills (graduate attributes) | |
|---|---|
| **Learning Outcome** | **Module in which this is delivered** |
| Opening and questioning approach to ideas, demonstrating curiosity, independence of thought and the ability to appreciate a range of perspectives on the natural and social worlds | Foundations in Social Science Research - SOC40018<br>Foundations in Social Science Research Methods |
| Appreciation of the development and value of chosen subjects of study and their contexts, the links between them, and awareness of the provisional and dynamic nature of knowledge | Key themes in Human Geography and Sustainability - GEG40020<br>Key themes in Human Geography and Sustainability |
| Ability to locate, evaluate and synthesise large amounts of frequently conflicting information, ideas and data | Dissertation - GEG40026<br>Dissertation<br><br>Qualitative and Quantitative Methodologies in Social Science |
| Ability to creatively solve problems using a range of different approaches and techniques, and to determine which techniques are appropriate for the issue at hand | Foundations in Social Science Research - SOC40018<br>Foundations in Social Science Research Methods |
| Appreciation of the social, environmental and global implications of the programme of study and other activities, including recognition of any ethical implications | Key themes in Human Geography and Sustainability - GEG40020<br>Key themes in Human Geography and Sustainability<br><br>Advanced methods in Human Geography and Sustainability |
| Ability to communicate clearly and effectively in written and verbal forms for different purposes and to a variety of audiences | Advanced traineeships in Geography, Geoscience and Sustainability - GEG40030<br>All modules, but including<br>Advanced traineeships in Geography, Geoscience and Sustainability |
| Development of knowledge, skills, self-confidence and self-awareness to pursue future goals | Key themes in Human Geography and Sustainability - GEG40020<br>Key themes in Human Geography and Sustainability<br><br>Advanced methods in Human Geography and Sustainability |
| Ability and motivation to participate responsibly and collaboratively as an active citizen in the communities in which individuals live and work | Advanced traineeships in Geography, Geoscience and Sustainability - GEG40030<br>Advanced traineeships in Geography, Geoscience and Sustainability |
| Professional and reflective approach, including qualities of leadership, responsibility, personal integrity, empathy, care and respect for others, accountability and self-regulation | Foundations in Social Science Research - SOC40018<br>All modules |
| Flexibility to thrive in rapidly changing and uncertain external environments and to update skills and knowledge as circumstances require | Foundations in Social Science Research - SOC40018<br>Advanced methods in Human Geography and Sustainability<br><br>Advanced traineeships in Human Geography and Sustainability<br>Foundations in Social Science Research Methods |

## 8. Final and intermediate awards

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Master's Degree** | 180 credits | You will require at least 150 credits at Level 7 |
| **Postgraduate Diploma** | 120 credits | You will require at least 90 credits at Level 7 |
| **Postgraduate Certificate** | 60 credits | You will require at least 40 credits at Level 7 |

***Exit Routes***

**PG Cert:**

Students who wish to gain the Postgraduate Certificate qualification must successfully complete modules for a total of **60** credits in the following configuration:

- Compulsory modules: i) Key themes in Human Geography and Sustainability; ii) Advanced methods in Human Geography and Sustainability; iii) Philosophy of the Social Sciences; and iv) Approaches to Research Design and Process. (**60** credits in total).

**PG Dip:**

Students who wish to gain the Postgraduate Diploma qualification must successfully complete modules for a total of **120** credits in the following configuration:

- All seven compulsory modules, and
- an additional **15** credits from a taught elective module

**MA:**

Students wishing to gain the MA in Human Geography and Sustainability Research must successfully complete modules for a total of **180** credits (105 credits compulsory modules; 15 credits elective modules; 60 credit dissertation module).

## 9. How is the Programme Assessed?

The wide variety of assessment methods used on this programme at Keele reflects the broad range of knowledge and skills that are developed as students progress through the degree programme. Teaching staff will pay particular attention to specifying clear assessment criteria and providing timely, regular and constructive feedback that helps students to clarify things they did not understand and to help students to improve their performance. The following list is representative of the variety of assessment methods used on the programme:

- **Oral presentation**s assessing students' subject knowledge and understanding. They also test their ability to work effectively as members of a team, to communicate what they know orally and visually, and to reflect on these processes as part of their own personal development.
- **Essays** demonstrating students' ability to articulate ideas clearly using argument and reasoning skills and with close reference to the contexts and critical concepts covered in the modules. Essays also develop and demonstrate research and presentation skills (including appropriate scholarly referencing).
- **Dissertations** which enable students to explore in depth an area of particular interest through a substantial piece of focused research and writing, and test their ability to formulate and answer research questions.
- **Research projects and reports** testing student knowledge of different research methodologies and the limits and provisional nature of knowledge. They also enable students to demonstrate their ability to formulate research questions and to answer them using appropriate methods. Such projects also require students to gain experience in working effectively in a group environment.
- **Extended literature reviews** of other scholars' work, which test students' ability to identify and summarise the key points of a text and to evaluate the quality of arguments and the evidence used to support them. In the case of work based on empirical research, reviews also assess students' knowledge of research methodologies and their ability to make critical judgements about the appropriateness of different strategies for collecting and analysing data.
- **Mock applications** involving students developing different types of applications of relevance to the research process, including ethics applications.

Marks are awarded for summative assessments designed to assess students achievement of learning outcomes. will also be assessed formatively to enable you to monitor your own progress and to assist staff in identifying and addressing any specific learning needs. Feedback, including guidance on how you can improve the quality of your work, is also provided on all summative assessments within three working weeks of submission, unless there are compelling circumstances that make this impossible, and more informally in the course of tutorial and seminar discussions.

## 10. Accreditation

Keele University is a member of the Geography and Environment pathway of the ESRC North West Social Science Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP). Consequently, there is a need for Keele to have suitable provision of training which meets the postgraduate training requirements of the *ESRC*. This programme is currently accredited by the ESRC in this respect.

In addition, the Royal Geographic Society / Institute of British Geographers (RGS/IBG) have published guidance for the accreditation of master's programmes in Geography. Consequently the intention is to seek accreditation for the programme from the RGS/IBG in due course and the programme specification has been written with such requirements in mind.

## 11. University Regulations

The University Regulations form the framework for learning, teaching and assessment and other aspects of the student experience. Further information about the University Regulations can be found at: http://www.keele.ac.uk/student-agreement/

If this programme has any exemptions, variations or additions to the University Regulations these will be detailed in an Annex at the end of this document titled 'Programme-specific regulations'.

## 12. What are the typical admission requirements for the Programme?

Applicants should have an honours degree in Geography, Environmental Science or Sustainability, or a related discipline, or hold an equivalent qualification. The minimum degree category for entry is 2:2 (or international equivalent). Students who can evidence alternative professional qualifications and/or relevant experience/training will also be considered.

Applicants from a country where English is not the first language are required to show evidence of English language competence, either an IELTS score of at least 6.5 (with no subtest lower than 5.5), or by holding a previous degree which has been taught and examined in English, unless the specific entry for the course indicates otherwise.

A comparative IELTS score to other English Language qualifications is available on the Keele International web pages.

**Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)** is considered on a case-by-case basis and those interested should contact the Programme Director. The University's guidelines on this can be found here: https://www.keele.ac.uk/qa/programmesandmodules/recognitionofpriorlearning/

## 13. How are students supported on the programme?

**Academic Mentors:** Within the School all students are allocated an Academic Mentor for the duration of their studies as part of the University's Academic Mentor system. The role of the Academic Mentor is to meet formally with their mentees at least once per semester to discuss progress and performance, to discuss professional development and profiling, and to offer support and advice. In addition, to an Academic Mentor allocated to the student, students are encouraged to seek support from any of the environment programmes teaching and administrative staff. Students can make arrangements to see their Academic Mentor or other staff at any time and an open door policy is operated by the majority of the teaching staff so students can easily get in contact with staff either personally or via email or phone. There are very strong communication links between students and staff and a friendly and supportive environment throughout the team.

**Use of e-learning/the Keele Learning Environment (KLE) / Microsoft Teams:** All modules are supported by learning materials that are accessible to students via the KLE / Microsoft Teams. The School supports the University's policy on module support on the KLE / Microsoft Teams.

**Health and Safety:** All students admitted to the programme are expected to read the School of Life Sciences Safety Handbook. Students are required to sign an agreement that they have read this Handbook, and that they will abide by the rules and regulations governing the efficient working, safety and welfare of all members both within the University and in the field undertaking their research projects. The latest version of this Handbook can be found on the Life Science Noticeboard on the KLE.

**Students with disabilities:** Students with disabilities or medical problems who are admitted onto geography degree programmes will meet with a member of the University's Disability Services department (and, where appropriate, the Programme Director and the School Disability Officer) at the very start of the course in order to discuss any special requirements. Procedures will then be implemented according to the nature of the student's disability or medical problem. These procedures can range, for example, from allowing extra examination time for students diagnosed as dyslexic, to allocating additional staff or demonstrators to field classes to help students with mobility problems.

**English for Academic Purposes:** Please note all new international students entering the university will sit a

diagnostic language assessment. Using this assessment, the Language Centre may allocate you to an English language module which will become compulsory. *NB:* students can take an EAP module only with the approval of the English Language Programme Director and are not able to take any other Language modules in the same academic year.

**Careers:** In addition, to the University's central Careers service there is a specific environment programmes careers tutor. Students are encouraged to seek the careers tutor for any help with deciding on postgraduate programmes and funding opportunities, discussing career options, discussing option choices in relation to specific career routes, and for help and assistance in applying for jobs and placements. Within the Keele Learning Environment there is a dedicated page to careers including several subject specific careers sites.

**Keele Postgraduate Association (KPA):** The Keele Postgraduate Association specialises in representing the interests of postgraduate students. It provides support on academic issues and for engagement in extracurricular activities through a KPA bursary, whereby students can apply for between £50-£500 to engage in activities outside of their course which will help their personal and academic development.

## 14. Learning Resources

The programme is taught through a combination of contact time, independent study, and web-based learning resources. Self-study materials comprise both traditional text based resources and a range of electronic multi-media resources that will be accessed through the Keele Learning Environment (KLE). This latter resource is also used to enhance student support during the period of the course and provides a forum for the exchange of ideas and discussion. There are also regular research seminars presented by Keele or external staff that take place throughout the academic year and to which postgraduate students are invited. These provide a useful complement to the taught sessions and, for those students considering research degrees, provide an insight into academic research in practice.

The School of Life Sciences has its own building (the William Smith Building) that contains well-equipped laboratories and lecture theatres that are used throughout geography degree programmes. This concentration of teaching into one building wherever possible enables students to identify with a specific base within the University. The foyer provides pleasant surroundings for students to meet and socialise with their peers. The Office is currently open during the week from 8.45am to 5.00pm to answer student queries. Teaching on specific modules takes place elsewhere in the University when there is a need for more specialised teaching facilities allowing the geography degree programmes to benefit from a wide range of cutting-edge teaching facilities and analytical instrumentation based elsewhere within the University. Students also have access to computing facilities within the School of Life Sciences for individual work.

Keele University Library also has many resources available, both on campus and online. Further information about the library can be found at: http://www.keele.ac.uk/library. Students can access the various materials available on-line using the recommended username and password. Details on these are available from the Library website: http://www.keele.ac.uk/library/support/access.

For information about IT Services please consult the IT Services website: http://www.keele.ac.uk/it/. IT Services is located in the library building and is responsible for the computing infrastructure in the university and for the support of all staff and students undertaking academic computing tasks. There are a large number of 'open access' PCs available for students. All student PCs use a standard platform, which includes software such as Microsoft Office, web browsers, and other standard applications students may need. Printing facilities are available in the library building. Students must ensure that they have read form CC.03, which is the Conditions of use of the Computer Facilities. Opening Hours: in order to check if the computer facilities and the Help Desk are open, students should telephone: 01782 733636 or 733838. Further information can be found at: http://www.keele.ac.uk/it/

## 15. Other Learning Opportunities

It is possible for students to register on a single module (modular programme of study) for Continuing Professional Development or other purposes. Students may choose to attend the module without completing the assessment and may exit with zero credits and a certificate of attendance after the module's teaching has been completed. Students should contact the postgraduate administrator in the School of Life Sciences (lifesciences@keele.ac.uk) for further information.

There is an active research community within the School of Life Sciences and postgraduate students are invited to participate in the wide range of seminars and other research activities, such as workshops and academic conferences held at Keele. A research seminar programme is organised each year, where members of staff - as well as those from outside of the University - present their latest work.

There are also other lectures and research seminars organised in other Schools and Research Institutes within the University that may be of interest to students. Students will be informed of these via their Keele email address.

## 16. Additional Costs

| Activity | Estimated Cost |
|---|---|
| Fieldwork | £0-c.£500 |

The only additional costs associated with this programme relate to undertaking fieldwork as part of completing the dissertation / independent research project. Such costs will be relative to the nature of the project and are therefore variable. An estimate is provided in the table above.

These costs have been forecast by the University as accurately as possible but may be subject to change as a result of factors outside of our control (for example, increase in costs for external services). Forecast costs are reviewed on an annual basis to ensure they remain representative. Where additional costs are in direct control of the University we will ensure increases do not exceed 5%.

As to be expected there will be additional costs for inter-library loans and potential overdue library fines, print and graduation. We do not anticipate any further costs for this programme.

## 17. Quality management and enhancement

The quality and standards of learning in this programme are subject to a continuous process of monitoring, review and enhancement.

- The School Education Committee is responsible for reviewing and monitoring quality management and enhancement procedures and activities across the School.
- Individual modules and the programme as a whole are reviewed and enhanced every year in the annual programme review which takes place at the end of the academic year.
- The programmes are run in accordance with the University's Quality Assurance procedures and are subject to periodic reviews under the Revalidation process.

Student evaluation of, and feedback on, the quality of learning on every module takes place every year using a variety of different methods:

- The results of student evaluations of all modules are reported to module leaders and reviewed by the Programme Committee as part of annual programme review.
- Findings related to the programme from the annual Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES), and from regular surveys of the student experience conducted by the University, are subjected to careful analysis and a planned response at programme and School level.
- Feedback received from representatives of students on the programme is considered and acted on at regular meetings of the Student Staff Voice Committee.

The University appoints senior members of academic staff from other universities to act as external examiners on all programmes. They are responsible for:

- Approving examination questions
- Confirming all marks which contribute to a student's degree
- Reviewing and giving advice on the structure and content of the programme and assessment procedures

Information about current external examiner(s) can be found here:
http://www.keele.ac.uk/qa/externalexaminers/currentexternalexaminers/

## 18. The principles of programme design

The programme described in this document has been drawn up with reference to, and in accordance with the guidance set out in, the following documents:

The programme described in this document has been drawn up with reference to, and in accordance with the guidance set out in, the following documents:

a. Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) (2018) *The revised UK Quality Code for Higher Education. March 2018*. Available online at: http://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code

b. Keele University Regulations and Guidance for Students and Staff. Available online at:
http://www.keele.ac.uk/regulations

c. Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) (2015) *ESRC Postgraduate Training and Development Guidelines Second Edition 2015.* Available online at: http://esrc.ukri.org/files/skills-and-careers/doctoral-training/postgraduate-training-and-development-guidelines-2015/

d. The Royal Geographic Society / Institute of British Geographers (RGS/IBG) (2020) *Master's Programme Accreditation Handbook (July 2020).* Available online at: www.rgs.org/research/programme-accreditation/apply-for-accreditation/downloads/rgs-ibg-geography-programme-accreditation-handbook.pdf/

This programme was designed to complement the University's Learning and Teaching and Assessment strategies and the requirements of the ESRC for training and development of postgraduate researchers (2015-2023). In particular, the University's focus on internationalisation and interdisciplinary study in the undergraduate programme is expanded, through this programme, to postgraduate study. It is in keeping with the University's commitment to a flexible postgraduate curriculum and to developing innovative taught postgraduate programmes that draw on internationally recognised research expertise. It was also designed in a way that meets and closely reflects the requirements of the Quality Assurance Agency's Subject Benchmark Statement for Geography and Framework for Higher Education Qualifications. More recently (July 2020), the RGS/IBG have published new guidance for the accreditation of master's programmes in Geography. Consequently the programme strongly reflects key requirements set out in this document, including the development of geographical knowledge and understanding; the application of knowledge to solve geographical problems; a comprehensive understanding of the diversity of geographical skills, techniques and practical applications, concepts and theories; and transferable skills necessary for employment.

# Version History

## This document

**Date Approved:** 01 October 2025

### *What's Changed*

Changes due to 15 credit modules being replaced by 30 credit modules

## Previous documents

| Version No | Year | Owner | Date Approved | Summary of and rationale for changes |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2025/26 | SIMON PEMBERTON | 12 June 2025 | |
| 1 | 2024/25 | SIMON PEMBERTON | 10 June 2024 | |
| 1 | 2023/24 | SIMON PEMBERTON | 17 April 2023 | |
| 1 | 2022/23 | SIMON PEMBERTON | 19 August 2022 | |
| 1 | 2021/22 | SIMON PEMBERTON | 11 March 2021 | |