SCHOOL OF GEOGRAPHY
AND THE ENVIRONMENT

UNIVERSITY OF
OXFORD

MPhil GEOGRAPHY & THE ENVIRONMENT

COURSE HANDBOOK 2015/16

This handbook applies to students starting the MPhil in Geography and the Environment during the academic year 2015-16.

The information in this handbook may be different for students starting in other years.

The Examination Regulations relating to this course are available at http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/examregs/. If there is a conflict between information in this handbook and the Examination Regulations then you should follow the Examination Regulations.

If you have any concerns please contact Dr Lorraine Wild (Academic Administrator) Lorraine.wild@ouce.ox.ac.uk.

Disclaimer

The information in this handbook is accurate as at 1st October 2015 however it may be necessary for changes to be made in certain circumstances, as explained at www.graduate.ox.ac.uk/coursechanges. If such changes are made the department will publish a new version of this handbook together with a list of the changes and students will be informed.

MPhil in Geography and the Environment

2015: version 2.0

For the latest version of this handbook please see:

http://www.geog.ox.ac.uk/graduate/programmes/mphil.html

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Course Introduction

Students studying for the Master of Philosophy (MPhil) in Geography and the Environment follow the course of study for ONE of the following: MSc in Biodiversity, Conservation and Management, MSc in Environmental Change and Management, MSc in Nature, Society and Environmental Governance or the MSc in Water Science, Policy and Management. Details of these taught components of the MPhil are specified in the relevant MSc course handbook, which you should therefore consult in conjunction with the present document. The purpose of this handbook is to lay out the aims of the MPhil course and how the degree of MPhil differs from an MSc degree. Crucially, this document includes important information about the structure of assessment, submitting coursework, thesis guidelines, attending examinations and entry to our DPhil programme should this be something you wish to consider. You should read through the handbook carefully and ensure that you understand your obligations throughout the course. We will provide you with more detailed material for particular parts of the course as appropriate during the two years you are here.

Most of all we would like to thank you for choosing to come to Oxford to study for the MPhil in Geography and the Environment. We hope that your two years in Oxford will be a formative and memorable time. Your respective MSc teams will help you get the most from the taught part of the course and help you find an appropriate supervisor for your thesis.

1.2 School of Geography and the Environment

The School of Geography and the Environment (SoGE) and its associated research institutes based in the Oxford University Centre for the Environment (OUCE) building are internationally recognised for their excellence in environmental research and scholarship. The School (previously known simply as the School of Geography) was the first geography school to be established in the UK, over 100 years ago by Halford Mackinder. It was established through a co-operative effort involving the Royal Geographical Society and Oxford University. From these deep roots the School has grown and prospered. The ethos of the School of Geography and the Environment is to promote research that is bold, innovative and challenging while remaining committed to the highest standards of scholarship.

Today, the School of Geography and the Environment is one of the leading centres of scholarship for environmental and social change. The SoGE is committed to training a new generation of graduate students in the core research fields of the environmental science and human geography and in the new and exciting interdisciplinary research frontiers that exist between and across these disciplines.

The SoGE is home to the internationally recognised Environmental Change Institute (ECI), and other vibrant research centres, such as the Smith School of Enterprise and the Environment (SSEE), Transport Studies Unit (TSU), Oxford Centre for Tropical Forests (OCTF) and the Oxford Centre for Water Research (OCWR), along with cross-departmental research groups, such as the Climate Systems and Policy, African Environments Programme (AEP) and the Global Environmental Change and Food Systems (GECAFS) international project office. The creative combination of theory and practice within the School provides a relevant and fertile training ground for our postgraduates. Our

research programmes span the globe, with researchers working in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, and North America, along with a strong record in European studies and, of course, the UK.

The SoGE currently offers two thesis-based higher research degrees (DPhil and MPhil) and four MSc courses. These are:

MSc Biodiversity, Conservation and Management

MSc Environmental Change and Management

MSc Nature, Society and Environmental Governance

MSc Water Science, Policy and Management

The MPhil in Geography and the Environment is a two-year version of these programmes aimed at students who wish to have a substantial research component to their studies. In the first year, candidates take the coursework and examinations associated with one of the four MSc courses in the School of Geography and the Environment and in the second year, students devote most of their time to researching and writing a thesis of 30,000 words.

1.3. Oxford Learning Environment

1.3.1. Learning Approach

During your time at Oxford you will experience a wide range of different formats and styles of teaching; from small group discussions to field visits, and from traditional lectures to public talks by some of the world's leading academics. In keeping with Oxford's tradition of academic freedom, the exact nature of the learning experience within any particular seminar or lecture is left to the discretion of the lecturer which, we hope, produces a useful variety of learning experiences. The typical teaching approach is a seminar supplemented with discussion and exercises.

In the International Graduate School, we place strong emphasis on both peer group and individual learning. Your peer group consists of exceptionally talented scholars from around the world, many of whom have practical experience or extensive knowledge of issues and topics that are covered during the MSc course. We strongly recommend that you form strong academic bonds with your peers and we encourage this with small group projects, reading groups and discussions.

There is an obligation on you as an individual to schedule time to engage with assigned readings, to work hard at identifying gaps in your knowledge and training, and to develop your own spheres of interest within the subject area. Oxford's exceptional learning facilities provide unrivalled opportunities for individual learning, not to mention the array of international researchers and scholars who present their work at external lectures around the university. We urge you to take full advantage of all of these opportunities in order to get the most out of your time at Oxford.

Staff members are available to advise students on reading, literature, and topics. The Course Director of the MSc on which you are enrolled will have regular office hours when you can seek

guidance or sound out ideas. Your Colleges will provide a personal adviser who can give additional support.

1.3.2. Academic Conduct

You are expected to attend the classes, workshops, seminars and field trips as specified in the course handbooks. It is also important that you attend sessions involving external professionals, whose contributions to the course are voluntary and based on good will. Arriving late for a class or workshop or leaving before it has ended without the agreement of the lecturer is considered disrespectful and unprofessional.

1.3.3. Expectations of Study

Students should note the University guidelines on graduate students undertaking paid work:
http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/edc/policiesandguidance/policyonpaidwork/

1.3.4. Residency Requirements

MPhil students are required to keep statutory residence and pursue their course of study at Oxford for not less than six terms after admission. To meet the University's residence requirements, students must be in Oxford for at least 42 nights each term. They may be granted leave of absence for not more than two terms and be dispensed from residence for the same period if it is desirable in the interests of their work that they should be allowed to pursue their studies at some other place (this refers to fieldwork and study at another institution).

To be granted leave of absence you need to complete the Application for dispensation from statutory residence form (GSO.8) available from this link:

http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/graduate/progression.

Once completed this should be signed by the Director of Graduate Studies.

2. COURSE INFORMATION

Master of Philosophy in Geography and the Environment
FHEQ level 7
Duration of course: 24 months

2.1. Aims/Objectives

Students registered for the MPhil in Geography and the Environment first undertake a course of teaching associated with one of the one-year taught MSc programmes in the School; either the Biodiversity, Conservation and Management (BCM), Environmental Change and Management (ECM), Nature, Society and Environmental Governance (NSEG) or Water Science, Policy and Management

(WSPM). The MPhil course description presented here relates only to the second year of study, which is dedicated for the most part to the development of a research thesis. For information concerning the aims, objectives, learning outcomes etc. for the first year of study please see the programme specifications for the relevant MSc programme.

For the second year of study the educational aims of the MPhil are to:

- Critically engage in an extended piece of independent research;
- Allow full engagement in the intellectual life of the School;
- Build proficiency in key themes, theory, and research skills;
- Link learnt proficiencies to established and emerging issues in the relevant MSc programme; and,
- Prepare students for further DPhil research as appropriate.

2.2. Intended Learning Outcomes

Students will develop a knowledge and understanding of:
- Key research skills and practical methods;
- Techniques for critical assessment of a wide range of research-level literature;
- Constructing and designing a significant piece of research which may include field-based data collection;
- Critical analysis and presentation of original data; and,
- Construction and development of a research-level thesis.

2.3. Course Components

The MPhil programme comprises:

- core MSc modules which are assessed by written examination;
- three elective modules (two in year one, one in year two), which are each assessed by a summative essay;
- a piece of original research which is assessed through a thesis; and,
- workshops, study tours and field trips throughout the first year.

2.4. Course Structure

Below is an outline time-table for the course. Core modules are taught in the first two terms, the examinations take place in the third term, electives are held in terms one to five, and thesis preparation starts from the third term. For full details, please visit your MSc Course Handbook.

MPhil in Geography and the Environment			
1st Term	Core Modules	Electives	
2nd Term			
3rd Term	Exams		Research Thesis
4th Term		Electives	
5th Term			
6th Term			

2.5. Course Workload

The Oxford educational approach combines class-based teaching with individual reading and study. Much of the value of an Oxford University degree lies in the student's own initiative and effort in exploring literature and ideas. Students hoping to excel at Oxford will need to demonstrate significant reading and understanding beyond the taught material.

Our course design is guided by a work-load model that estimates 3 hours reading associated with each class and 20% of any week available for extended reading, individual project study, workshops and attending seminars elsewhere. This results in 12–14 hours of class time (formal contact hours) per week, for the first year.

2.6. Core Modules and Elective Modules

Please see your separate MSc Course Handbook for details on the classes offered by each course.

2.7. Thesis

In addition to the core and elective modules, you will undertake an independent and original research thesis. The thesis is an integral and formal part of the course and for many students it is an end in itself, permitting graduation with the MPhil degree after two years of study. For some, completing a good dissertation is also essential for progression onto the DPhil programme at the School.

The thesis gives you the opportunity to design and execute your own research. The choice of research topic is up to you, but it normally relates to one or more of the core or elective modules, or to the research interests of one of the SoGE staff.

A supervisor will be appointed to guide you during this work, the bulk of which will be carried out after the exams are over in the first year, and the final work must then be handed in on the first weekday of September, **namely Friday 1st September 2017**, at the end of the second year.

It is expected that the best theses will be of publication quality, and all submissions should show originality and/or competent and creative scholarship. Indeed, it is possible to submit the work in the form of two journal papers ready for submission. This should be discussed with your thesis supervisor.

All theses will be judged on the degree to which they fulfil the criteria of a comprehensive and coherent treatment of a suitable research question in an analytical and critical manner. On successful completion of all of the necessary components of the MPhil Programme - assessed essays, examinations, and dissertation - you can be considered for entry onto the DPhil programme at the School of Geography and the Environment.

2.8. Entering the Workplace

The department offers two programmes that support transition into careers.

2.8.1. Internship Opportunities

The Environmental Change Institute has a sustainability internship programme that is open to students on all four of our MSc courses. The programme runs a 3-day Training Better Leaders course during the Easter vacation and places students in 8 to 12 week paid internships after the course. These internships are sourced and managed through a coordinator who ensures that each placement satisfies specific criteria to make these experiences engaging, interesting and a useful next step in professional progression. They are advertised on a rolling basis through Hilary and Trinity terms for placements starting at the end of September. For more details and to sign up to the mailing list visit http://www.eci.ox.ac.uk/internship/.

2.8.2. Innovative Food System Teaching and Learning (IFSTAL)

In 2015/16 a group of Universities, including the University of Oxford, is launching an interactive training programme to address the urgent need for a workface more skilled in food system thinking. It aims to generate a cohort of MSc and PhD graduates equipped to address food system challenges by framing their specialist understandings (e.g. of Biodiversity) with the broader social, economic and environmental context. Participation is on a voluntary basis and will involve evening lectures and an engagement with a purpose- built virtual learning environment.

2.9. Security and care of personal belongings and data

People outside the School have access to the building. It is important therefore that you are vigilant of your own and others' valuables at all times. This applies particularly to laptops and phones. In an effort to combat crime the University runs registration schemes for bikes and personal possessions and you are encouraged to use these. Please contact your college for details. You are strongly advised to back-up your data, lecture notes and drafts of written work at regular intervals. In addition, we request that you are particularly vigilant of 'tail gating' i.e. people coming in through the security barriers behind you and who lack swipe card access to the Department.

2.10. Course Induction

All new postgraduates are expected to attend a full-time orientation and induction programme in the week before Michaelmas Term commences. The purpose of this orientation is to provide an opportunity to lay out the structure and expectations of the programme in an informal setting. The first half of the induction programme is organised by the department and comprises, among other things, an introduction to the School of Geography and the Environment, its component centres, and its facilities. It also introduces and explains the training and research programme, institutional and organisational procedures, the aims, objectives, structure, outline, and assessment methods of the course, the key expectations and responsibilities of the students. Information about supervision arrangements is provided. In addition, specialist induction to library and database resources, electronic databases and Internet facilities, and the use of available equipment and facilities is provided. The second half of the induction is organised by the student's respective colleges and includes information concerning college facilities and arrangements, college computing and internet access, university affairs, and the like.

3. ASSESSMENT

3.1. University Examinations

The procedure for entering for University examinations is explained on the University website: http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/exams/entry. If you have any questions about your entry for the examinations or requesting alternative examination arrangements, you should contact the academic office at your college.

The examination timetable will be confirmed no less than five weeks before the examination. The provisional dates for the examinations are in 4th week of Trinity Term of your first year. Once they are confirmed, the examination timetables may be found at: http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/exams/timetables

Information on (a) the standards of conduct expected in examinations and (b) what to do if you would like examiners to be aware of any factors that may have affected your performance before or during an examination (such as illness, accident or bereavement) are available on the Oxford Students website (www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/exams/guidance).

3.2. Good Academic Practice and Avoiding Plagiarism

Plagiarism is presenting someone else's work or ideas as your own, with or without their consent, by incorporating it into your work without full acknowledgement. All published and unpublished material, whether in manuscript, printed or electronic form, is covered under this definition. Plagiarism may be intentional or reckless, or unintentional. Under the regulations for examinations,

intentional or reckless plagiarism is a disciplinary offence. Please see the University guidelines: http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/skills/plagiarism.

All submitted work will be run through Turnitin (an electronic text matching system).

3.3. Examination Conventions

These conventions are the definitive version to apply for examination in 2016 and 2017.

3.3.1. Introduction

Examination conventions are the formal record of the specific assessment standards for the course or courses to which they apply. They set out how examined work will be marked and how the resulting marks will be used to arrive at a final result and classification of an award.

The supervisory body responsible for approving the examination conventions is the Social Sciences Board's Teaching Audit Committee.

3.3.2. Rubrics for Individual Papers

The MPhil course comprises:
1. Three core courses associated with the relevant MSc programme offered by the School: the core courses will be examined in three 3-hour written examinations, taken in Trinity term of the first year (please refer to your individual MSc Course Handbook and examination conventions for further details);

2. Three elective modules (two in year one, one in year two), each assessed by an essay of no more than 4,000 words (which includes any footnotes, but excludes appendices, references and the abstract) plus 150 word abstract, to be submitted by the first Monday of the following term after which the module was taken; and,

3. A research thesis of no more than 30,000 words plus 300 word abstract, including footnotes, but excluding appendices, references and the abstract, to be submitted by the first week day in September of the second year.

3.3.3. Marking Conventions

University scale for standardised expression of agreed final marks
Agreed final marks for individual papers will be expressed using the following scale:

70-100	Distinction
50-69	Pass
0-49	Fail

Qualitative criteria for different types of assessment

Criteria for assessment of written examinations can be found in the Appendix.

Criteria for assessment of submitted elective essays can be found in the Appendix.

Criteria for assessment of theses are forthcoming.

Verification and reconciliation of marks

Each examination script, summative essay and thesis will be marked independently by two examiners or assessors. Where the overall marks given by the two assessors differ by more than 8 marks, or are across a classification boundary, the markers will meet to agree upon a reconciled mark and provide a clear justification for the final mark given.

Scaling
Scaling of marks is not used for these examinations.

Short-weight convention and departure from rubric

In cases where a candidate has not completed the required number of questions, or has not completed the required number of questions from each section, a mark of zero will be awarded for questions not attempted.

Penalties for late or non-submission

Penalties will apply to the grade awarded for any piece of late submitted work (without prior permission from the Proctors):

1.   Up to 20% deducted from the work submitted up to 7 days late;

2.   Between 21-30% of the assessed grade for work submitted between 8 and 14 days late, and

3.   No marks (0%) if the work is submitted more than 14 days late.

Failure to submit a required element of assessment without prior permission will result in the failure of the whole Examination.

Penalties for over-length work and departure from approved titles or subject-matter

Under the regulations concerning submitted work, Examiners are given the option of imposing an academic penalty where work exceeds the permitted length. Candidates must state the word count on the title page of their submitted work.

Exceeding the word limit will be penalized on a proportionate basis, i.e. every 1% (40 words for elective essays, 300 words for theses) of excess will be penalized by subtracting 1% from the mark.

3.3.4. Progression Rules and Classification Conventions

The written examinations at the end of the first year serve as qualifying examinations for the second year of the MPhil course. A candidate who fails one or more of the qualifying written examinations may not proceed to the second year of the course until the qualifying written examination has been passed. Examinations may be re-sat in Trinity Term of the following year (see section 3.3.5).

Qualitative descriptors of Distinction, Pass, Fail

Qualitative descriptors for each classification are provided in the Appendix.

Final outcome rules

1. Three core course written examinations: 25% of total marks (8.33% each);

2. Three assessed essays based on elective modules: 25% of total marks (8.33% each);

3. Thesis: 50% of total marks.

Based on a weighted average score, candidates will be classified as follows:

- Distinction: a weighted average score of 70% and above with grades of 50% or more for each examination paper and the thesis.

- Pass: a weighted average score of between 50% and 69% with grades of 50% or more for each examination paper and the thesis.

- Fail: a weighted average score of below 50%, or a mark below 50% for any examination paper or the thesis.

In exceptional circumstances the examiners may decide to award a classification notwithstanding the conventions.

Use of vivas
Vivas may be used for candidates with outcomes on the borderline between particular classifications.

3.3.5. Resits

A candidate who has failed a component may enter again for each failed component (examination papers, or thesis) on one, but not more than one, subsequent occasion. Candidates cannot resubmit a failed assessed essay during the academic year of the original submission date.

Arrangements for reassessment will be as follows:

- Examination. Candidates may re-sit the failed examination component(s) in the Trinity Term of the following academic year.

- Thesis. Candidates who fail the thesis have to resubmit the dissertation by the required date in September in the following academic year.

- Elective essays. Candidates will be required to resubmit the elective essay in accordance with the usual deadlines for elective essay submission in the following academic year.

Candidates under re-assessment have neither the right to attend classes nor to expect further dissertation supervision.

3.3.6. Factors Affecting Performance

Where a candidate or candidates have made a submission, under Part 13 of the Regulations for Conduct of University Examinations, that unforeseen factors may have had an impact on their performance in an examination, a subset of the board will meet to discuss the individual applications and band the seriousness of each application on a scale of 1-3 with 1 indicating minor impact, 2 indicating moderate impact, and 3 indicating very serious impact. When reaching this decision, examiners will take into consideration the severity and relevance of the circumstances, and the strength of the evidence. Examiners will also note whether all or a subset of papers were affected, being aware that it is possible for circumstances to have different levels of impact on different papers. The banding information will be used at the final board of examiners meeting to adjudicate on the merits of candidates. Further information on the procedure is provided in the *Policy and Guidance for examiners, Annex B* and information for students is provided at www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/exams/guidance.

3.3.7. Details of examiners and rules on communicating with examiners

The External Examiner for the MPhil in Geography and the Environment for the 2015-16 academic year is Professor Gail Davies (University of Exeter). The internal examiners are: Dr Jamie Lorimer (Chair), Professor Robert Whittaker, Dr Simon Dadson and Professor Jim Hall.

Candidates should not under any circumstances seek to make contact with individual internal or external examiners. Any complaints or queries about the content, conduct of outcome of an examination should be raised with the Senior Tutor of their College, in accordance with the guidance at: http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/edc/policiesandguidance/pgexaminers/15queriesandcomplaints/.

The following excerpt sets out one part of this guidance, but fuller guidance is given at the above link:

"Any complaint or query about the content, conduct, or outcome of an examination, by a candidate or their tutor should be made by the Senior Tutor, who is invited but not required to comment on the issues, and should be addressed to the Proctors. This prevents chairs and individual examiners from being lobbied or pestered in any way, and in particular ensures that no unfair advantage is given to particular candidates or groups of candidates by reason of a Senior Tutor's or tutor's acquaintance with an examiner. Examiners must on no account discuss any matter relating to individual candidates with tutors, Senior Tutors, or candidates. Any attempt at direct communication with examiners by

individual candidates should be reported to the Junior Proctor, who will advise the examiners. Such communications compromise the anonymity of the examination process, and are not in candidates' interests."

4. ELECTIVE MODULES AND THESIS

4.1. Elective Modules

Students are required to submit written essays (of no more than 4,000 words plus 150-word abstract) on a total of three elective courses by the first Monday of the following term after which the elective module was taken (i.e. a Michaelmas elective module requires submission on the first Monday of Hilary Term). One elective course, chosen from those available to MSc students, must be taken in Michaelmas Term of Year 1 and the second in Hilary Term of Year 1. The third elective may be taken in either Michaelmas or Hilary Term of Year 2 but the timing should be discussed with and approved by your thesis supervisor. The essay topic and scope will be decided in consultation with the elective module leader.

Two copies of each essay must be submitted to the Examinations Schools and addressed to the Chair of Examiners of the MPhil in Geography and the Environment, c/o the Examination Schools, High Street, Oxford, OX1 4BG. Note that you must use your candidate number for these purposes and your name should not appear within the submitted essays. By the same deadline you should submit a pdf of each essay (in exactly the same format as the hard copy) to the MPhil Course Coordinator.

Max word count: 4,000 words, including footnotes, but excluding appendices, references and the abstract

Type: 12 point

Font: Times New Roman or Arial

Spacing: 1.5 or double

Printing: Print on both sides of the paper

Front page: You should include a front page with the title of the essay, title of the elective module and your candidate number. You should not put your name on the submission

References: Unless you have been instructed otherwise use a references section rather than a bibliography

4.2. Thesis

You must submit for the approval of your MSc Course Director by the end of the first week in Hilary Term in your first year, the title and details of your thesis as set out in the proposal template, together with the name of a person who has agreed to act as your supervisor during preparation of

the thesis. Candidates registered for the MSc programmes may petition for transfer to the MPhil degree by submitting a thesis title and proposal by the deadline stipulated above.

You will be allocated a supervisor for your thesis in Trinity Term of Year 1.

Two copies of the thesis must be received, no later than 12 noon on the first weekday in September 2017 by the Examination Schools and marked for the attention of the Chair of Examiners of the MPhil in Geography and the Environment, High Street, Oxford, OX1 4BG. By the same deadline you should submit a pdf of the thesis (in exactly the same format as the hard copy) to the MPhil Course Coordinator.

Copies:	2 bound copies. A final bound copy for deposit in Bodleian Library plus one electronic copy, emailed to MPhil Course Coordinator
Abstract:	An abstract not exceeding 300 words should be included
Word count:	Maximum 30,000 including footnotes, but excluding appendices, references and abstract
Type:	12 point
Font:	Times New Roman or Arial
Spacing:	1.5 or double
Printing:	Single sided
Front Page:	You should include a front page with the title of the thesis and your candidate number. You should not put your name on the submission.
Acknowledgments:	It is considered good academic practice to include a short acknowledgments section, but if doing so please ensure that the content of this section does not identify you to the markers
References:	Unless you have been instructed otherwise use a references section rather than a bibliography and ensure that you adopt consistent and scholarly citation and reference list practices
Plagiarism declaration:	Include one loose completed form not bound with the dissertation

Important notes and forms on the submission process and including guidelines on the presentation of your thesis can be found at: http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/graduate/progression under the section: **Forms & notes for the examination of research degrees.**

The MPhil theses are assessed by two assessors appointed by the MPhil and MSc examiners.

Once a student has been granted leave to supplicate, they will be requested to submit a finalised hardbound copy of the thesis, as approved by the examiners, to the Examination Schools for deposit in the Bodleian Library. The candidate must also submit an electronic copy to the Oxford Research Archive. Please refer to the Examination Regulations in the section relating to DPhil thesis submission for more information. Successful candidates will be required to sign a form stating whether they will permit their thesis to be consulted.

4.2.1. Thesis planning and time-line

Our expectations and advice regarding the execution of thesis research is as follows:

- 16 weeks fieldwork from mid-June Trinity Term to 0th Week Michaelmas Term (Year 2);
- Michaelmas Term (Year 2) analysing data, attending third assessed elective;
- Christmas vacation (Year 2) write essay for third assessed elective;
- HT and TT writing thesis, submitting to supervisor for comments before the end of Trinity Term; and,
- Finalise thesis during August for submission on the first weekday of September in the second year.

or

- Extended field research into Michaelmas Term;
- Hilary Term (Year 2) analysing data and attending third assessed elective;
- Easter vacation (Year 2) write essay for third assessed elective;
- HT and TT writing thesis, submitting to supervisor for comments before the end of Trinity Term; and,
- Finalise thesis during August for submission on the first weekday of September in the second year.

The timing and structure of field work may deviate from this outline with the authorisation of your supervisor; however, attendance at the third elective in either Michaelmas or Hilary Term of Year 2 is mandatory.

In the second year of your MPhil, you may request hot-desk facilities in the DPhil/MPhil study room.

5. COURSE GOVERNANCE AND STUDENT REPRESENTATION

5.1. MSc Committee

The MSc Committee, chaired by the Director of Graduate Studies (Taught Programmes), defines the strategic direction of MSc and MPhil provision in line with SoGE's evolving academic strategy. It is responsible for coordinating academic programmes, staffing and timetabling across all four MSc courses and the MPhil. It receives and considers the minutes of course team meetings, examiners reports and student assessments in preparation for Divisional scrutiny. It discusses and proposes amendments to assessment regulations for approval by higher committees as appropriate.

5.2. Student Representation: Joint Consultative Committee

At the start of the course the MSc student group elects two of their members to serve as representatives on the Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) which meets each term. If you have any comments or concerns you should pass these on to your representatives who will raise them with the Course Team at the JCC meeting. Students in the second year of the MPhil elect a representative

who attends the JCC (PGR), the JCC meeting for post graduate research students. The minutes of this meeting are considered by the International Graduate School Committee.

5.3. Feedback and concerns

Our courses are constantly being adjusted in response to changes in the discipline and student feedback. We welcome your constructive feedback and have a number of avenues through which you can contribute feedback. You can also use these avenues to raise any concerns that you might have; we will seek to resolve these as quickly as possible.

You can:

- Provide feedback and ask questions during weekly class meetings;
- Speak with your MSc Course Director or Academic Director during his/her weekly office hours;
- Provide feedback or raise concerns via your class representatives; and,
- Ensure that at the end of each term you complete the feedback on each module, field-trip, or workshop.

The DGS (taught) may be approached to raise such MPhil-specific concerns as cannot be dealt with by the above means.

Feedback received, inclusive of any concerns raised, will be discussed at the termly Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) for your course. The minutes of the JCC and the module feedback are then considered by the relevant Course Team and by the MSc Committee (on which there is student representation).

5.4. Complaints and Appeals

The University, the Social Sciences Division and the School of Geography and the Environment all hope that provision made for students at all stages of their course of study will make the need for complaints (about that provision) or appeals (against the outcomes of any form of assessment) infrequent. Nothing in the University's complaints procedure precludes an informal discussion with the person immediately responsible for the issue that you wish to complain about (and who may not be one of the individuals identified below). This is often the simplest way to achieve a satisfactory resolution.

Many sources of advice are available within colleges, within faculties/departments and from bodies such as the Student Advice Service provided by OUSU or the Counselling Service, which have extensive experience in advising students. You may wish to take advice from one of these sources before pursuing your complaint. General areas of concern about provision affecting students as a whole should be raised through Joint Consultative Committees or via student representation on the faculty/department's committees.

5.4.1. Complaints

If your concern or complaint relates to teaching or other provision made by the department, then you should raise it in the first instance with the MPhil or MSc Course Director. Within the department the officer concerned will attempt to resolve your concern/complaint informally.

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome, then you may take your concern further by making a formal complaint to the University Proctors. The procedures adopted by the Proctors for the consideration of complaints and appeals are described on the Proctors' webpage (www.admin.ox.ac.uk/proctors/complaints/proceduresforhandlingcomplaints), the Student Handbook (www.admin.ox.ac.uk/proctors/info/pam) and the relevant Council regulations (www.admin.ox.ac.uk/statutes/regulations/247-062.shtml).

If your concern or complaint relates to teaching or other provision made by your college, you should raise it either with your tutor or with one of the college officers, Senior Tutor, Tutor for Graduates (as appropriate). Your college will also be able to explain how to take your complaint further if you are dissatisfied with the outcome of its consideration.

5.4.2. Academic Appeals

An academic appeal is defined as a formal questioning of a decision on an academic matter made by the responsible academic body. For undergraduate or taught graduate courses, a concern which might lead to an appeal should be raised with your College authorities and the individual responsible for overseeing your work. It must not be raised directly with Examiners or Assessors. If it is not possible to clear up your concern in this way, you may put your concern in writing and submit it to the Proctors via the Senior Tutor of your College.

 As noted above, the procedures adopted by the Proctors in relation to complaints and appeals are described on the Proctors' webpage:
(www.admin.ox.ac.uk/proctors/complaints/proceduresforhandlingcomplaints), the Student Handbook (www.admin.ox.ac.uk/proctors/info/pam) and the relevant Council regulations (www.admin.ox.ac.uk/statutes/regulations/247-062.shtml).

Please remember in connection with all the academic appeals that:

• The Proctors are not empowered to challenge the academic judgement of Examiners or academic bodies;

• The Proctors can consider whether the procedures for reaching an academic decision were properly followed; i.e. whether there was a significant procedural administrative error; whether there is evidence of bias or inadequate assessment; whether the Examiners failed to take into account special factors affecting a candidate's performance; and,

• On no account should you contact your Examiners or Assessors directly.

6. KEY DOCUMENTS AND RESOURCES

6.1. Library and Learning Facilities

The Oxford University library system is extensive, with state-of-the-art online facilities and dozens of individual libraries around the city. A tutorial on using the library facilities will be provided during induction week.

More information may be found at: http://www.ox.ac.uk/research/libraries/ and in the library subject guide for Geography and the Environment: http://libguides.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/geography.

6.2. WebLearn

WebLearn is Oxford University's Virtual Learning Environment. Each course has its own space (rooms) where we post general course information along with lecture notes, reading lists and other materials specific to each module, workshop or field trip. There is also a class message board and the WebLearn resource system contains information on all staff and students at Oxford, and their groups, thus allowing you to easily restrict access to certain cohorts. http://www.geog.ox.ac.uk/graduate/msc-nseg/.

6.3. Departmental Intranet

The department's intranet pages contain much information on members of staff, Health & Safety, House Rules and so on. To view this information, follow the link via the SoGE homepage. www.geog.ox.ac.uk

6.4. Past Exam Papers

Available from OXAM: http://missun29.offices.ox.ac.uk/pls/oxam/main.

6.5. The Central University Research Ethics Committee

Their website (http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/curec/) provides essential information on the University's policy concerning the ethical review of research projects involving human participants or personal data, undertaken by staff and students, or on University premises. The form you must complete and have approved before conducting such research is available at: http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/curec/oxonly/checklistsandapplicationform/.

6.6. Fieldwork Behaviour and Safety

As a student, you are obliged to comply with all relevant University requirements relating to health, safety and risk assessment. **You must not begin your research without being notified that your research risk assessment has been approved.** The relevant forms to complete are available on the School's intranet at: https://intranet.ouce.ox.ac.uk/safety/fieldwork.html.

6.7. IT Services

IT Services (http://www.it.ox.ac.uk/) offer a wide range of Information Technology support including excellent training courses and a shop selling leading software at educational discount prices.

6.8. Alumni Networks

The School of Geography and the Environment now runs active alumni networks. With over 1,000 Masters' graduates as well as more than 5,000 thousand former geography undergraduates, this network is a growing source of professional contacts, knowledge, and advice. You will be invited to become part of the alumni networks upon graduating.

In addition, each MSc course runs an active LinkedIn group which you can join on arrival. This provides an opportunity to network with alumni to discuss career opportunities, dissertation ideas and current issues in science and policy.

For more information, please visit www.geog.ox.ac.uk/alumni or email Christine Baro-Hone, the Alumni Relations Officer, at Christine.Baro@ouce.ox.ac.uk.

Alumni are always keen to hear what current students are up to – so do let Christine know about projects, field trips and events you think might be of interest to them.

7. KEY DEPARTMENTAL CONTACTS

- DGS (Taught Programmes): Professor Robert Whittaker
- MPhil Course Coordinator: Mrs Sarah Davidson
- Academic Administrator: Dr Lorraine Wild
- Head of Finance and Administration: Mr Richard Holden
- Disabilities Officer: Dr Vanessa Winchester

8. KEY DATES

8.1. Term dates

Term	1st day of term	Last day of term
Michaelmas 2015	Sunday, 11 October	Saturday, 5 December
Hilary 2016	Sunday, 17 January	Saturday, 12 March
Trinity 2016	Sunday, 24 April	Saturday, 18 June

Michaelmas 2016	Sunday, 9 October	Saturday, 3 December
Hilary 2017	Sunday, 15 January	Saturday, 11 March
Trinity 2017	Sunday, 23 April	Saturday, 17 June

8.2. Assessment Dates

- 1st elective submission: first Monday of Hilary Term, 18th January 2016
- 2nd elective submission: first Monday of Trinity Term, 25th April 2016
- 3rd elective submission: first Monday of Hilary/Trinity Term, 16th January/24th April 2017
- Thesis submission: Friday 1st September 2017
- Provisional dates for examinations: Week 4 in Trinity Term of first year

9. ADMISSION TO THE DPHIL PROGRAMME

Students wishing to continue onto the DPhil programme should complete the MPhil and submit their MPhil thesis for the award of the MPhil degree, and apply during the second year of the MPhil for admission to the DPhil programme.

Applications to the DPhil programme will be assessed against our normal admissions criteria and any offer would normally be conditional on obtaining either a distinction overall or on the MPhil thesis. The readmission application form should be used when applying for the DPhil.

The DPhil thesis will be expected to be submitted within three and, at the most, four years after entry to the DPhil programme. The fee liability for the DPhil is 9 terms, however, students already awarded an MPhil from the University of Oxford may have their DPhil fee liability reduced by 3 terms. A continuation fee will be charged once the standard period of fee liability has been reached up to and including the term in which the thesis is submitted.

Students are normally admitted in the first instance as Probationer Research Students (PRS) and will be required to undergo the Transfer of Status in their first three terms. They will also be required to undergo the Confirmation of Status by the end of their 9th term. No student will be allowed to go beyond these milestones without a successful application for deferral otherwise their status will be lapsed.

In some cases, if a candidate's proposed DPhil research is an extension of their MPhil work, they may be admitted directly as a DPhil candidate and will not be required to undergo the transfer of status procedures. They will, however, be required to undergo the confirmation of status at the end of their 3rd term and will only be allowed to go beyond this with a successful application for deferral otherwise their status will be lapsed. In the case of a direct transfer to the DPhil it is expected that the thesis will be submitted within 6 terms of admission as a DPhil student.

APPENDIX

Marking Criteria

Class	Score	+ Indicative description: Dissertations −
Distinction	90%	An exceptional dissertation, of sufficient quality for publication in a highly regarded peer-reviewed journal Evidence of novel ideas in the conception of the project and in the originality of approach Exceptionally deep and critical understanding of the focal topic Novel methodologies applied or established methodologies deployed with rigour. Creative synthesis of materials Robust analysis of project data Imaginative, thought-provoking and challenging Superb presentation throughout, without typographic/formatting errors Presentation of novel conclusions, based firmly in evidence and placed within the wider context
Distinction	80%	An excellent dissertation of publishable standard with some minor revisions A well-balanced, incisive elucidation of theory or models Highly organised evidence-based discussion, containing thoughtful arguments Evidence of original thinking or insight based on an evaluation of the evidence Critical synthesis of a substantial body of data Perceptive conclusions relating to project findings
Distinction	70%	A very well-focused piece of research Identifies with a professional research approach A well-balanced project, providing a full answer to the research question(s) posed Demonstrates clear understanding of existing research problems A very high standard of data collection Arguments are clear, structured and sustained over the entire duration of thesis Analytically strong, demonstrating depth of understanding in support arguments No significant misunderstandings of data or concepts Demonstrates a clear awareness and understanding of current literature Well-written, orderly, convincing and interesting to read Well-founded well-reasoned conclusions High standards of presentation throughout
Pass	65%	Clear signs of well-directed effort Evidence of wider reading and broader understanding Good methodological insight and careful application of techniques Efficient and effective research design Good degree of clarity of data presentation and explanation Cautious and accurate interpretation of information Conclusions are linked well to both main body and to existing literature Presentation is careful with few linguistic errors Minor gaps in background material and/or literature cited Minor deviation in focus
Pass	60%	Conception of project is clear and well defined Data collection is careful, and appropriate for addressing the research question Clear understanding of methods and analysis is demonstrated Significant body of core subject literature well represented and referenced Discussion linked well to evidence presented Conclusions follow logically from the body of work Good standard of presentation throughout Occasional but significant gaps in background material and/or literature cited Not all sections are well-focused on the question Conclusions contain some degree of ambiguity and/or limitations in critical interpretation

		55%	Project execution is reasonably well-focused on the research question Effort made to integrate the research with existing literature Methods employed are appropriate Some well-argued points/perspectives, with some balanced discussion The majority of relevant data is adequately used Demonstrates a reasonable understanding of the general research area Attempts are made to draw conclusions based on the findings Some arguments are individually incomplete or rather pedestrian Not all aspects of the research question are adequately addressed Some signs of confusion in methodology and/or interpretation The discussion fails to adequately tie the findings together Occasional sections may be badly written, or might be superfluous Otherwise a good project, but which is lacking key components of analysis/interpretation/discussion
		50%	Answer demonstrates competent engagement with a reasonable range of primary data Achieves an acceptable level of proficiency in choosing and using research methods Successfully uses part of the obtained material in constructing arguments Contains several valid arguments Provides some connection to the literature Original conception of project is narrow, unrealistic or self-limiting in scope Fails to adequately use data to directly address the research question Treatment of the topic is superficial in places Too high a degree of description, without adequate analysis and interpretation Large parts of the project lack focus Arguments lack adequate depth or support Occasional errors in methodology or interpretation Fails to give a full account of data collection/methods/analysis Several sections are poorly written
Fail		40%	Achieves a minimal response to the research question Reveals some basic understanding of methodology Literature review includes some relevant material Link between the methodology and the research question is discernible Some attempt is made to organize material in to a coherent argument Poorly organised and/or written Little sign of deep/critical engagement with the literature or methods Contains significant errors of fact and/or interpretation but these do not invalidate major arguments Much of the argument is under-developed and/or ill-focused Conclusions indicate some evidence of poor judgement
		30%	Achieves a very limited understanding of the research topic Demonstrates some basic knowledge/understanding of background material Relatively simple analysis and discussion is present Conclusions relating to the research question are attempted Fails to directly address the topic Very little substance to the majority of the work Multiple inaccuracies in language No evidence of reading or significant engagement with literature Significant errors of interpretation Generally poorly written Ineffective information gathering and/or methodology Lacking in substantial analysis Conclusions are ill-founded

	20%	Addresses research question in a highly rudimentary manner but coherent manner Demonstrates some minimal effort in gathering data Shows only minimal evidence of having understood the topic Provides adequate analysis to avoid outright failure Contains some superficially relevant information Includes some sense of a coherent structure Information presented only in reduced (e.g. note) form, or unfinished Very limited evidence of structured/focused research Information conveyed is largely irrelevant and superficial Very little connection to the research topic literature
	0%	Fails to address the specified research topic Provides virtually no evidence of original research A very short piece of work, demonstrating little commitment Very little understanding of basic topic demonstrated No clear logically structured argument Poorly-written, containing many mistakes Lacking the required structure No attempt made to link information directly to the question

MPhil GEOGRAPHY & THE ENVIRONMENT