

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION

This document describes the **Master of Science and Postgraduate Diploma in Practising Sustainable Development**. This specification is valid for new entrants from **September 2011**.

(Note that points relating only to the MSc are highlighted in italics.)

The aims of the MSc/PGDip Practising Sustainable Development are:

- To examine the ways in which environmental, social, political and economic factors interrelate at a range of scales to produce particular understandings of 'sustainable development' and associated policies and practices.
- To provide training in skills needed to research and assess sustainable development, such as research design, project development, environmental monitoring, geographic information systems, remote sensing, participatory methods, project analysis and evaluation.
- To provide students with key competencies include holistic thinking, ability to manage complexity, change and unpredictability, critical awareness, group working, communication, reflectiveness and empathy. In addition, we aim to develop students' personal qualities, encompassing self-awareness regarding the student's learning i.e. 'learning how to learn', and the capacity to reflect on, in and for action.
- To provide a rigorous programme of research training, in both qualitative and quantitative methods for the analysis of physical and human aspects of sustainable development.
- To enable students to carry out independent primary fieldwork and research-based dissertations in less-developed countries and in cross-cultural situations, equip students to undertake further postgraduate study under current Economic and Social Research Council guidelines, and equip students to fulfil professional research roles in sustainable development-related fields, including both governmental and non-governmental development agencies.

The MSc and PG Diploma in Practising Sustainable Development are distinctive in three ways:

1. Being within a Geography department, we are in a unique position to present not only a focus on the interactions between natural and human environments, and the physical and social sciences, but have access to a range of facilities within the department to give students practical experience. There are few programmes in the field of development and environment in the UK that allow students to develop hands-on practical skills in a range of techniques, from the social to the physical sciences
2. We provide practical focussed research skills training and guidance in order to enable students to carry out and complete independent primary fieldwork and research-based dissertations in developing countries and in cross-cultural situations.
3. The MSc is taught by members of the Centre for Developing Areas Research (CEDAR), a leading interdisciplinary research centre in the field of development, environment and sustainable development, linking natural and social science theories, policies, tools and methodologies. We are in a unique position to convey research knowledge, experience and skills that will have direct relevance to employability as well as research training for further education, namely doctoral research.

The predecessor to the MSc in Practising Sustainable Development received 1+3 recognition in the last ESRC (Economic and Social Research Council) interim recognition exercise. This means that the programme meets the formal ESRC requirements for research training at the Masters level. UK and EU applicants to the programme may apply to ESRC for PhD research under the 1+3 as well as +3 studentship programmes.

Further information

[Learning outcomes](#)

[Teaching, learning and assessment](#)

[Details of the programme structure\(s\)](#)

[Progression and award requirements](#)

[Student support and guidance](#)

[Admission requirements](#)

[Further learning and career opportunities](#)

[Indicators of quality and standards](#)

[List of programmes, with details of awards, degree titles, accreditation and teaching arrangements](#)

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

Learning outcomes

The programme complies fully with Descriptors for a Masters and PG Diploma level qualification set out by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education in England and Wales (QAA) as all of its learning outcomes are at Masters (M) level. In general terms the programme provides opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate the following learning outcomes:

Knowledge and understanding

- Understand at an advanced level, the relationships between, and complexities of, social, economic, political and environmental aspects of sustainable development;
- Understand at an advanced level, how the key issues in sustainable development theory influence policy and impact on practice;
- Critically analyse complex or contradictory areas of knowledge in aspects of sustainable development.

Skills and other attributes

- Synthesise information with an innovative manner and with critical awareness;*
- Evaluate research, advanced scholarship and methodologies, and argue alternative approaches;
- Demonstrate a high level of ability to exercise, adapt and develop 'key competencies', namely holistic thinking, ability to manage complexity, change and unpredictability, critical awareness, group working, communication, reflectiveness and empathy;*
- Demonstrate a high level of ability in subject specific skills including environmental monitoring, geographic information systems, remote sensing, participatory methods, research design, project development, and project analysis and evaluation;
- Critically evaluate and apply a range of qualitative and quantitative methods for sustainable development research;
- Select appropriate field research methods, *plan and embark upon a research project in a less developed country, critically aware of the problems likely to be encountered during the research process;*
- *independently planning and executing a research project to time;**
- oral communication, including presentations, public speaking and communication with a non-academic audience;*
- written communication, including the ability to author briefings, reports and produce research papers with a logical structure and in comprehensible and unambiguous English;*
- authoring of simple web pages;*
- acquisition, analysis and interpretation of data;*
- presentation of data in a clear and appropriate format;*
- information synthesis, for presentation or written report;*
- time management;*
- team-work;*
- self-motivation, flexibility, adaptability.*

* transferable skills

[Back to top](#)

Teaching, learning and assessment

Teaching and learning is mainly by seminars, oral presentations, role-playing, problem solving, group working, practical classes, completion of coursework and private study for the taught modules and research training; *and for the dissertation by independent research and private study, supported by research supervision.*

Students receive regular, scheduled, feedback on: their performance in taught modules; their dissertation plan and draft proposal (spring term); their detailed research proposal and oral presentation (summer term); *and part of the draft dissertation write up (summer term).* Completion of tasks is monitored centrally to ensure students experiencing difficulty can be identified and provided with appropriate support.

Assessment is by various forms of coursework for the taught modules, a research proposal for the research training *and the dissertation.* Full details of assessments for the individual courses can be obtained from the [Department](#).

[Back to top](#)

Details of the programme structure(s)

The MSc programme comprises of three compulsory elements, Theory, policy and practice (GG5401) (50%), Research Training (GG5402) (10%), and the Dissertation (GG5403) (40%).

The PG Diploma comprises of Theory, policy and practice (GG5401) (80%) and Research Training (GG5402) (20%). Further details are as follows:

Theory, policy and practice (GG5401)

This is comprised of ten modules which give students an interdisciplinary perspective on a range of development and environment issues from a temporal, spatial and practical viewpoint:

Module 1: Development and environment: theory and policy;

Module 2: Globalisation and governance;

Module 3: Grassroots development;

Module 4: (intensive): Participatory methods;

Module 5: Hazards and vulnerability;

Module 6: (intensive): GIS and remote sensing for development project management, assessment and monitoring; Module 7: Livelihoods and sustainability;

Module 8: (intensive): Participatory environmental monitoring;

Module 9: Water and development;

Module 10: Tools for development and environment.

Research Training (GG5402)

This provides training in a range of methods to enable students to plan, carry out and complete a piece of research. There are three modules in this element:

- Social Research methods training – provides a range of social science methods for field research and analysis. This module is co-taught with the Masters in Cultural Geography.
- Quantitative methods for graduates - provides basic statistical concepts and procedures used in empirical research. It entails the participation of graduate students from the Geography, Management and Social and Political Science departments.
- Development and environment research training – provides guidance for planning, developing and undertaking research in a development and environment context.

Dissertation (GG5403)

The dissertation (between 12,000 and 15,000 words, on a topic of the candidate's choice, which has been approved by the supervisor) requires both secondary and primary research, and the demonstration of originality in integrating theoretical and practical research methods in tackling a particular problem of the student's choice. Students are encouraged to carry out their dissertations in collaboration with an organisation in the field of development and environment.

Part-time arrangements

Masters students are expected to attend and complete all the assessments relating to *Theory, policy and practice* in the first year. In the second year, students are expected to attend and complete all the assessments relating to *Research Training and Dissertation.*

PG Diploma students are expected to attend and complete all the assessments relating to *Theory, policy and practice* in the first year. In the second year, students are expected to attend and complete all the assessments relating to *Research Training*. However, there is some flexibility in this arrangement and part-time students should discuss their options with the programme Director.

Further details of individual elements are given in the Programme Handbooks.

[Back to top](#)

Progression and award requirements

The Masters assessment is based on the three elements given below:

- *Theory, policy and practice* (50%): Students are expected to produce ten pieces of work from *Theory, policy and practice*. Eight of these are formally assessed, while the other two form formative assessment. The final mark for the element is an average of the eight pieces of assessed work, five of which must be at a minimum mark of 50%.
- Research Training (10%): This element is formally assessed through a full detailed research proposal (2500 words) which is submitted to a designated supervisor in April (constitutes 5% of the mark). In addition, students make an oral presentation outlining their research ideas and fieldwork plan in May, which also forms part of the assessment (constitutes 5% of the mark).
- Dissertation (40%): an individual research project conducted during the year.

The PG Diploma assessment is based on the two elements given below:

- *Theory, policy and practice* (80%): Students are expected to produce ten pieces of work from *Theory, policy and practice*. Eight of these are formally assessed, while the other two form formative assessment that do not count towards the final mark. The final mark for the element is an average of the eight pieces of assessed work, five of which must be at a minimum mark of 50%.
- Research Training (20%): This element is formally assessed through a full detailed research proposal (2500 words) which is submitted to a designated supervisor in April (constitutes 10% of the mark). In addition, students make an oral presentation outlining their research ideas and fieldwork plan in May, which also forms part of the assessment (constitutes 10% of the mark).

Assessment criteria are given in the Programme handbook and marking is based on these.

The requirements for the award of the MSc and PG Diploma are:

- **Distinction:** an overall weighted average of 70.00% or more, provided that the mark for each of the elements is 50% or above.
- **Merit:** an overall weighted average above 60.00%, provided that the mark for each of the elements is 50% or above.
- **Pass:** an overall weighted average above 50.00%, provided that the mark for each of the elements is 50% or above.
- **Fail:** an overall weighted average below 50.00%, or where the mark for any of the elements is below 50%.

Students may retake a failed individual module or element once only. If students score below 50% for any of the modules of *Theory, policy and practice*, they can resubmit any of the failed pieces without retaking the module. In addition, we would expect a 'reasonable attempt' to be made at all pieces of coursework, which we define as 30% and above. If students get below 30% for any of the eight pieces of coursework, they would be expected to resubmit that piece of coursework (without retaking the module). Resubmitted work may not be awarded a Distinction and in assessment will normally be awarded no more than a Pass at 50%. The PG Diploma is available for Masters students as an early exit award if they fail or opt out of the dissertation, if all the requirements for obtaining the PG Diploma have been fully met.

[Back to top](#)

Student support and guidance

- Personal Tutor: All students are allocated a tutor, with whom they meet regularly to discuss all matters relating to their course and for pastoral support.
- *MSc Personal Supervisor:* All MSc students are allocated a supervisor, with whom they meet regularly to discuss all matters relating to their dissertation.

- PG Diploma Personal Supervisor: All PG Diploma students are allocated a supervisor, with whom they meet regularly and who will provide guidance on research proposal writing
- Personal Adviser: Students also have an advisor, who deputises for the supervisor in his/her absence, and who can provide additional support and guidance. Students are free to meet their advisors as and when necessary.
- Induction sessions and termly meetings with the Programme Director.
- Membership of a research group.
- Representation on the Postgraduate Committee.
- All staff available and accessible through an open-door policy or by operating an office hours system.
- Programme handbook.
- Supporting materials and learning resources in the Department, College libraries and computer centre.
- Dedicated Departmental teaching rooms and computer suite.
- A Geography Special Needs Officer.
- College Careers Service and Geography Careers Service Liaison Officer.
- Access to all College and University support services, including Student Counselling Service, Health Centre and the Education Support Unit for students with special needs.

[Back to top](#)

Admission requirements

You are eligible to apply if you have a good academic background (upper second class BSc or BA Honours) in a related field (natural or social sciences), and/or considerable professional experience in any agency involved in development and environment issues. We welcome both full-time and part-time students. Students whose first language is not English may also be asked for a qualification in English Language at an appropriate level. For further details please refer to the [Prospective Students](#) web page. It may also be helpful to contact the [Admissions Office](#) for specific guidance on the entrance requirements for particular programmes.

[Back to top](#)

Further learning and career opportunities

Past students of the course are now employed by international development and environment agencies, national policy making and implementing agencies, higher education institutions, private sector natural resource companies and NGOs, as environmental and development workers, activists, teachers and researchers. Many of our alumni are also currently undertaking doctoral programmes in the UK and abroad.

Information on these opportunities is provided by talks on careers and higher degree opportunities, organised by the Department and College Careers Service. For further details on further learning and career opportunities please refer to the [Careers Service](#).

[Back to top](#)

Indicators of quality and standards

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

[Back to top](#)

List of programmes

The programmes are taught entirely by staff at Royal Holloway, University of London and the Masters

leads to an award of the University of London. The Postgraduate Diploma and Postgraduate Certificate lead to awards of Royal Holloway and Bedford New College. Programmes in Practising Sustainable Development are not subject to accreditation by a professional body. The Banner programme codes are given in parentheses.

Master of Science Programme in Practicing Sustainable Development

MSc in Practising Sustainable Development (1499)

Postgraduate Diploma in Practicing Sustainable Development

PG Diploma in Practising Sustainable Development (1500)

[Back to top](#)