

School of Environment, Education & Development
Geography

**Taught Master's programmes in Geography: Notes of
guidance on dissertation preparation and submission**

This Handbook contains advice and guidance for students submitting dissertations
under the following programmes:

MSc Environmental Governance
MSc Climate Change (social science dissertation)

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1. Introduction

Students on all taught Masters programmes within the School of Environment, Education and Development are required to submit a dissertation on a topic approved by the programme director. There are two research **Options** for dissertation projects.

Option 1. Dissertation based on Primary Data Research. Dissertations that follow this option should contain an element of original research and the collection of primary data.

Option 2. Dissertation based on Secondary Data Research. Dissertations that follow this option may use secondary data only, but must demonstrate 'added value' by the way they organise, synthesise and critically evaluate already published research and findings.

Both options contribute a third of a programme's assessment (60 credits of 180 for a Masters programme) and must be submitted in September of the final year of study (or December for part-time, on-campus students).

Students are free to consider a wide range of topics, **subject to approval by the programme director.** Approval will be offered on the basis of supervisory expertise of staff delivering the programme, the feasibility of the topic within the timescale of the programme, and the extent to which the topic supplements and extends knowledge gained from following the particular programme of study.

These guidelines have been produced to help you with the process of preparing and completing a dissertation. The document sets out the initial objectives and requirements of the dissertation, advises on dissertation preparation, outlines formatting and submission arrangements and details the assessment criteria. You should use it as an aide-mémoire alongside your Programme Handbook and the advice of your supervisor.

1.1 Aims of the dissertation

The overall aims of postgraduate dissertations are to:

- provide students with an opportunity to plan, manage and conduct a programme of research on a topic related to their programme of studies;
- further students' knowledge of a relevant body of literature, and develop powers of critical reasoning;
- allow students to seek new research findings which add to the existing body of knowledge on a particular subject area;
- develop fully students' knowledge of, and competence in, an appropriate range of research skills, including the development of a study hypothesis, an appreciation of the research methodology and analytical techniques to be utilised, the undertaking of a specific research study, the synthesis and evaluation of findings, and a clear statement of conclusions and recommendations;
- develop students' writing, presentation and bibliographic skills; and
- develop students' experience of developing and managing a specific programme of work through to final submission.

1.2 Requirements

MSc Environmental Governance and MSc Climate Change students should submit a dissertation of 12,000 words in length requiring a total input of 600 hours of student time, comprising 100 hours during the second semester (of year two, for part-time students), and 500 hours during the period June-September (of year two, for part-time students).

1.3 Dissertation Option 1 (Primary Data) or Option 2 (Secondary Data)?

Option 1- Dissertation based on Primary Data Research

This dissertation option involves formulating a set of research aims and questions that are then addressed through original empirical research. This option is the same as that followed at undergraduate level in many social and environmental science subjects. The student designs and undertakes a piece of research to answer their research questions. This might entail a range of methods of data acquisition and analysis, from interviewing a set of people or professionals to testing statistical data.

Option 2 - Dissertation based on Secondary Data Research

This option will take either the form of a critical **review paper**, which will provide an in-depth analysis of an issue, organisation, or initiative based on published research and other publicly available information, or an **applied paper**, which will examine an area of environmental policy in detail and is based on published research and other publicly available information. The review paper is intended to provide more flexibility for students to specialise in their chosen fields. It works well for 'big issue' topics that are hard to research first-hand in the 3 months available (e.g. How is the EU's Emissions Trading Scheme performing with respect to promoting environmental justice across Europe?). It may also be appropriate for students working with external organisations who require a review of a field of research or policy rather than new empirical research. It will be distinguished from other standard essay/term-paper assessments on the basis of its length, which will provide a far sterner test of a student's written and organisational skills, and the depth of analysis and interpretation, which will require elements of synthesis and originality in the arguments put forward. As with dissertation option 1, it will be framed by the principles of enquiry-based learning.

The constraints of length and arrangements for staff support are the same for both options. All the guidance concerning the project development, supervision, presentation and submission contained in this document holds for both options

1.4 Submission arrangements

You must submit your final dissertation via Blackboard no later than 2 pm on **Thursday 29th August 2024** (full-time students). Details of dissertation submission procedures will be circulated at a later date. Please see section 3 and **Appendix 1** for more details.

Please be warned well in advance that **WE DO NOT** grant extensions for dissertations. The submission of the dissertation marks the completion of your degree, and we need the time following the deadline in order to mark, second mark, review and process your grades in time for the Exam Board in the Autumn and your graduation.

1.5 Submission arrangements for students with summer resits

Students who have failed any Postgraduate course units and who are completing summer resits for course work or examinations will, by default, have the deadline for dissertation submission deferred to January 2025. This enables the student to be sure they have successfully completed all of their other credits before focusing on their dissertation. Please note that this deadline is for students who are completing summer resits only and all other students will be required to meet the deadline as outlined in **Section 1.3** above.

1.6 Penalties for Late Submission

Please note that in accordance with Faculty policy, any student who submits their dissertation after the submission deadline will receive a penalty, unless they are subsequently able to prove Mitigating Circumstances.

The penalty for late submission at postgraduate level is a loss of 10 marks per day, for which the following principles will apply:

- A loss of 10 marks per day (sliding scale) for up to 10 days;
- A 'day' is 24 hours, i.e. the clock starts ticking as soon as the submission deadline has passed;
- A day includes weekends and weekdays;

Regulations with regard to your assessment can be found in your Programme Handbook. It is your responsibility to ensure that you are fully aware of these regulations. If you are unclear regarding any aspect of the regulations then seek advice from your Programme Administrator, Programme Director or the Student Experience Administrator.

Where relevant, students should alert their supervisor to any extenuating circumstances well in advance of the submission deadline.

As with coursework assessment, the Mitigating Circumstances mechanism also applies to dissertations. Any student who considers that their dissertation may be delayed due to 'unforeseen' and 'unpreventable' circumstances should make their case using the online form [*link below*], with

supporting evidence: (<https://www.seed.manchester.ac.uk/student-intranet/postgraduate/postgraduate-taught/mitigating-circumstances/>).

All work to be considered under Mitigating Circumstances should be submitted as soon as is practicable but note that any work submitted after the end of September 2024 may be too late to be marked and considered in time for the December graduation in 2024.

Students who do not submit a dissertation will normally be awarded a Diploma qualification if they have met all the other requirements of their programme. Students who fail the dissertation may be granted the opportunity to resubmit, depending upon performance in other course units.

1.7 Assessment arrangement

Once submitted the dissertations will be assessed and the marking moderated by a minimum of two internal examiners. A sample of dissertations is sent to the relevant external examiner for the programme, who validates standards. Final marks are confirmed by the Board of Examiners, which meets in mid-November. A full explanation of the assessment criteria for the dissertations and research papers is set out in **Section 4**.

1.8 Further Reading

There is an extensive range of reading material associated with dissertation and research paper preparation and research methods and specific reading will be distributed by your programme director next semester. Here are some generic texts:

- Allan, G. and Skinner C. (eds.) (1991) *Handbook for Research Students in the Social Sciences*, The Falmer Press, London.
- Berry, R. (1994) *The Research project: How to Write It*, Routledge, London.
- Blaxter, L., Hughes, C. and Tight, M. (1996) *How to Research*, OUP, Buckingham.
- Bouma, G. and Ling, R. (2005) *The Research Process*, OUP, Oxford.
- Bryman, A. and Burgess, R. G. (1994) *Analysing Qualitative Data*, Routledge, London.
- Burns, R. B. (2000) *Introduction to Research Methods*, Sage, London.
- Coombes, H. (2001) *Research Using IT*, Palgrave, New York.
- Cresswell, J. W. (1994) *Research Design: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches*, Sage, London.
- Denscombe, M. (2001) *The Good Research Guide*, Open University Press, Buckingham.
- Flowerdew, R. and Martin, D. (1997) *Methods in Human Geography: a Guide for Students Doing a Research Project*, Longman, Harlow.
- Kitchin, R. and Tate, N. (2000) *Conducting Research into Human Geography: Theory, Methodology and Practice*, Prentice, Hall Harlow.
- May, T. (1997) *Social Research*, OUP, Buckingham.
- McQueen, R. and Kaussen, C. (2002) *Research Methods for Social Science*, Pearson, Harlow.
- Parsons, T and Knight, P. (1995) *How to do your Dissertation in Geography and Related Disciplines*, Chapman and Hall, London.
- Peters, K. (2017) *Your Human Geography Dissertation: Designing, Doing, Delivering*. Sage: London.
- Pole, C. and Lampard, R. (2002) *Practical Social Investigation*, Prentice Hall, London.
- Robson, C. (2002) *Real World Research*, Blackwell, Oxford.
- Wilson, H. and Darling, J. (2021) *Research Ethics for Human Geography*. Sage: London.

2. Dissertation Preparation

This section offers some pointers on drafting postgraduate dissertations. It contains important information relating to the initial process of preparation and (in **Section 2.3**) the structure of the final dissertation.

While many of the points listed below apply to virtually all pieces of research, a few will be of little relevance to your particular chosen area of study. This emphasises the importance of consulting your supervisor as a means of gleaning advice related specifically to your dissertation. Nonetheless, many of the suggestions listed offer a general insight into the rules and conventions of research. **It is essential, therefore, that you read (and re-read) these carefully.**

The timetable for dissertation topic selection and submission is provided in **Appendix 1**. Note that some dates are programme specific so ensure you are reading this document for your specific programme.

2.1 Choosing a dissertation topic

It is important that you begin the process of choosing a topic as soon as possible. There are, of course, no hard-and-fast rules on how to choose a dissertation topic. However, a sensible approach is to identify a broad area of study – for example, related to one of your lecture courses – but then to narrow this down to a set of more focused research questions or hypotheses. It is important that you avoid vague and over-generalised topics. Proposals for studies like ‘something on sustainability’ or ‘something on East Manchester’ are insufficiently well-focused. Try to avoid something as vague as ‘issues in biomass’, and instead choose something tighter and more focused, like ‘Can biomass contribute meaningfully to the UK’s energy needs? A review of current policy and practice’. Consider the appropriateness of topic choice in relation to the type of dissertation you have chosen to complete.

Secondly, you must select a topic which interests you and will retain your enthusiasm for many months, but also one which is practicable within the available time. This seems an obvious point to make, but one which nevertheless is often overlooked as students select topics which they think will appeal to potential supervisors, but which are of little personal interest. Such an approach is rarely successful since any topic must be of sufficient interest to retain your attention for several months. However, you should avoid an *overly* populist topic: it is advisable to avoid selecting a topic which you think might appeal to a particular supervisor, or a topic based around some current (but often ill-defined) buzz-word (e.g. ‘climate change’, ‘sustainability’, ‘24 hour city’ etc) unless you can grasp precisely what such a term means, and construct a suitably well-defined and focused research topic around it.

It is often useful to look through recent academic journal publications to gain an idea of broad fields of contemporary research interest. In addition, trade or practice journals contain stories on areas of current professional interest, some of which may offer potential for more detailed investigation. Likewise, newspaper stories might stimulate initial ideas, though journalistic writing will need to be translated into suitably robust academic questions and hypotheses. If you would like to look at recently completed dissertations in the School, these are held in the Kantorowich library in the Humanities Bridgeford Street Building, and again can offer some initial pointers about possible research topics. Bear in mind, however, that the quality of earlier dissertations varies enormously.

2.2 Submitting dissertation topic suggestions

You are required to indicate your proposed dissertation topic, by completing the online **Geography Dissertation Title/Topic Indication Form**, (by the date shown in **Appendix 1**). Further details, including the link to the online form will be circulated via email at the start of semester two. You should note that:

- Topic suggestions are indicative only, and used principally to inform the allocation of supervisors.
- It is possible for you to amend dissertation topics/titles, but you must confirm a final, formal title (see **Appendix 1** and see **Section 2.3** below).
- You need not, at the initial stage, agonise unduly about the precise title for the dissertation; the topic is of greater importance. Again, the final title, when it has been agreed, needs to be concise.
- You will not be permitted to conduct primary research in countries or areas deemed too risky (after you have completed the risk assessment with your supervisor), and which are thus not covered by University of Manchester insurance

- You will not be permitted to do primary research with minors, the sick, vulnerable or incarcerated, or with any other human groups where ethical consent is problematic, because it is not possible to provide formal Ethical Consent for these groups within the timeframe of an MA or MSc.
- Even where primary research is not being conducted with the aforementioned groups, some procedures of research will also not be permitted for ethical reasons. This would include, although this is not exhaustive, investigative procedures involving subterfuge; undisclosed participant observation; interviewing in non-public spaces.

2.3 Ethical Applications, confirmation of title and risk assessment

Ethics: Please consult the **Dissertation Ethics Form** that is available to you on the dissertation tab on the Blackboard page for your programme and follow the instructions on this form carefully. It is best to consult this form immediately.

All students are required to complete a **Dissertation Title and Risk Assessment Statement**. It is essential that you complete this form in order that we have an indication of your agreed dissertation title.

You should consider whether your dissertation research will constitute a 'risk' of some description. The School provides advice on most types of risk associated with independent research work through generic risk assessments detailed in **Appendix 4**. For work within the UK, this normally falls into the 'low risk' category.

If your proposed work is not covered by these risk assessments e.g. you wish to interview people as a lone researcher, then **you must complete a risk assessment** and this will need to be accepted before you can start any work.

Any queries regarding ethical or risk assessment should be directed to your supervisor in the first instance.

It is best to consider risk and ethical review as soon as is practicable, which normally means as you are deciding or committing to a subject area or title. This would normally be done at the FIRST meeting with your supervisor. Just imagine how frustrating it would be to have done a number of months' work on a topic, which you then discover you cannot research for risk or ethical reasons! Any amount of pleas to the Programme Director of your lost time, or your emotional commitments to a particular community, will not override a refusal of a topic or method, should it fall outside our allowable risk and ethical framework: basically, the University has a duty to protect your safety, and to respect other participants in the research process, and if it cannot cover you within its insurance policy, or is not happy that your procedures are respectful enough you will NOT be permitted to submit that work for your dissertation.

If you do proceed to undertake fieldwork with human subjects, you will be required to provide them with information about participation in your research (see **Appendix 2**) and to obtain their consent to participate (see **Appendix 3**).

All ethics applications once discussed with your supervisor should now be submitted via the **Ethical Review Manager (ERM)** application system. However prior to completing your application online all students should use the [ethics decision tool](#) to determine whether your research requires ethical review, if so this should be at **low risk level only**.

We aim to process applications within 10 working days and you will be notified by email of the outcome. Further information on good research conduct, misconduct and policies and guidelines can be located on the Research governance, ethics and integrity webpages:

- [Research governance, ethics and integrity](#)

Further information and advice on Risk Assessments, Lone Working and DBS checks associated with an Ethics application can be located on the [SEED Student Intranet pages](#)

2.4 Taught Student Ethical Guidelines

For further information on who should use the school template for ethical applications, the type of research that can be approved at a low or medium risk level, responsibilities of and roles of the school ethics committee and the process to approve applications, please download the ethical guidelines document.

- [Ethical guidelines for SEED applications](#)

Whilst these guidelines are not exhaustive, they indicate a set of obligations to which researchers should normally adhere. Responsibility for both interpretation and compliance rests with the researcher.

Further sources of information

Source of information / act	URL
Economic and Research Council (ESRC)	www.esrc.ac.uk
Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC)	www.ahrc.ac.uk/
British Sociological Association	www.britisoc.co.uk
Association of Social Anthropologists	www.theasa.org/
Political Studies Association	www.psa.ac.uk/
Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)	www.gov.uk/disclosure-barring-service-check
Central Office for Research Ethics Committee – COREC (NHS)	www.corec.org.uk
The Human Rights Act (1988)	http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/42/contents
Data Protection Act (1988)	http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/29/contents https://ico.org.uk/
UK Copyright Act (1988)	http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1988/48/contents
Race Relations Act (1976)	http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1976/74/contents
Race relations (Amendment) Act 2000	http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/34/contents
Disability Discrimination Act (1995)	http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1995/50/contents
Freedom of Information Act (2000)	http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/36/contents https://ico.org.uk/
Communications Act (2003)	http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/21/contents
University of Manchester	www.campus.manchester.ac.uk/studentnet/policies/
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Code of Practice for Dealing with allegations of Misconduct in Research• Disability Discrimination Act Policy• Equality & Diversity Policy• Freedom of Information Act Policy• Health & Safety Policy• Harassment, Discrimination & Bullying Policy• Intellectual Property Policy (guidance on) Plagiarism and other forms of academic malpractice	
University's data protection policy	http://www.dataprotection.manchester.ac.uk/

2.5 Keeping on top of the dissertation process

Planning ahead

When you are planning your schedule, please do remember that your own time and application is only one of the determining factors. You need to take into account your supervisor's time as well as your own when you are estimating overall time needed. Students may find email attachments an efficient way of sending information to their supervisors. Data collection always takes longer than you expect, as does, for example, the writing of a literature review, and even the completion of your reference list, so be on the safe side and double your first estimate. Part-time students need to be sure that they have time off for supervisor meetings and for data analysis, if this is a problem for you the University can write to your employer to remind them of the time commitments required to complete a dissertation.

Organising and backing up your work

Organising your work is of key importance. You should build up separate reference files of material as the study develops including notes of all documents read, and photocopies of particularly useful papers or diagrams, and notes of all meetings and discussions. Ensure that all references are complete, using the Harvard System (see **Section 3.8**). Allow time for the development of ideas and arguments through revision and redrafting and full discussions of each section of study. Preparing summaries of each section as part of the drafts can help you achieve this.

Remember to make back-up copies of work held on hard or portable disks. This can be done using your P: drive, free web-based services such as Dropbox, or a CD or DVD or USB memory stick. If you have a PC or laptop, backup copies using some of these alternatives. Note that any such 'disasters' of lost work will not justify late submission. Make sure you leave plenty of time to proof read work, format the layout, chase-up any remaining references and print the final copies; these invariably take much longer than you expect.

The writing process

A golden rule is to write down as much as you can from as early on as you can – and your task will become easier. There are several good reasons for this advice. It is difficult to spot the flaws in your reasoning until it is set out on paper, so you are well advised to write up bits and pieces in draft as early as possible. An early session with your supervisor should be followed by a period where you get down on paper and develop ideas that have been mentioned. Another reason for writing early on is that your supervisor will want to see your reasoning is committed to paper; supervisions based on loose discussion can be unproductive. The daunting task of 12,000 words does not seem nearly so unattainable when you realise how many thousands you have already written on literature review and a description of methodology.

2.6 Working with your Supervisor

The student's role

The initiative for requesting supervisions lies entirely with you, the student. Agreed methods of getting in contact with your own supervisor: email is usually the best way, and if you wish to see your supervisor, you should make an appointment. You must ensure that dissertation supervisors are kept fully informed on progress and difficulties, and are approached with prepared specific questions at supervisory meetings. You should submit work in advance of meetings in sufficient time to allow for comment and discussion before proceeding to the next stage (work is submitted usually one week in advance of the meeting).

It is your responsibility to make sure you arrange meetings with your supervisor: you will not be 'chased' by supervisors. Your supervisor will almost certainly be supervising a variety of other projects; therefore, you should not assume that s/he can immediately recall the last discussion you had together about yours. Supervisions will be conducted on a one-on-one basis, and they always need to be prearranged. You should never expect on-the-spot supervisions. There will also be periods when your supervisor is not available, either because s/he is heavily committed with other duties such as examining, or on leave for work or holiday reasons. Do make sure that you and your supervisor are aware of each other's periods of absence. All supervision meetings must be completed by the end of June. Students are expected to be ready to work independently on their dissertation project after that point. So, please make sure you 'use up' all your three supervisory meetings by the end of June.

Supervisors are not allowed to read or comment on chapters or other written sections of your work after the end of June. This is in the name of fairness to all students and in order to advance independent research skills from the part of the student. If you have very specific queries on specific aspects of your dissertation, or if you encounter academic related problems with your dissertation after the end of June, you may email your supervisors, but bear in mind that you cannot expect an immediate answer as your supervisors are likely to be conducting their own fieldwork and research during this period.

Supervisors are only allowed to read and comment on one chapter of no more than 2,000 words will be submitted through Blackboard by the end of May (the date will be provided in due time). This ensures that all students receive the same level of support and feedback. It would be a good idea, therefore, to establish early on which chapter you wish your supervisor to see, and work diligently towards completing these. Please avoid handing in a sub-section of the introduction or the methodology, with no relation to the broader context of the dissertation. You need to have a draft of your contents so that it is quite clear what follows on from what. You may also need to add a note to show if and how the section in question is incomplete.

Also, supervisors are not to be expected to proof read or to correct spelling/grammar. Students are advised to buy-in or otherwise arrange such services if needed. Even if your supervisor comments positively on the parts of your thesis he or she reads, and you make the suggested changes, this is no guarantee that your final dissertation will be of a pass standard; after all, the work is yours and its quality is dependent on your input. Although supervisors are allowed to read a maximum of two chapters, examiners, read all of your dissertation!

In conclusion, the dissertation has to be a self-managed process to a large extent. Your role is to organise the research programme as a whole, taking advice from your supervisor and taking the initiative in raising problems/difficulties. The supervisor's role is to give advice and help about the nature and standard of the work, and direct you to useful literature and appropriate methodology. But remember, the ultimate responsibility remains yours. Do NOT expect your supervisor to read drafts and re-drafts of every piece of your work. When submitted, the dissertation is referred to internal and, in some instances, external examiners who will make an independent judgment of your work in its entirety.

The role of the supervisor is to:

- give guidance concerning the nature of the research, the standard of work expected and helping to plan the programme of research involved.
- establish at an early stage the supervisor's responsibilities in relation to the student's written work, including the nature of guidance and comments to be offered as work proceeds.
- be available for three meetings which need to be completed by the end of June, and which should be agreed in advance. If students have not initiated three supervisory meetings before the end of June, they are not eligible to further meetings after the end of that period, as this is considered an independent study period. So, for example, if the student asks their supervisor for only two meetings before the end of June, they will be missing out on the opportunity to receive a third meeting.
- agree completion dates for successive stages of the work, submitting feedback on written material with constructive criticism on the broad shape and structure of the work (but not on its detailed content). Please note: the University allows a two week period before any feedback is returned to students
- provide advice and guidance to help improve the quality of the work. At all times, however, it must be made clear to the student that dissertation preparation for a higher degree is undertaken within the general principle that it must be the student's own work.

Supervisory Structure

What you can expect of your supervisor

During the preparation of the proposal

Supervisors are available by appointment to discuss and develop your proposal

During the initial stage of research (until the end of June)

This is a key period in setting up your research and a key period to hammer out your research project in consultation with your supervisor. Supervisors are available by appointment, which you can set up by sending them an email. Note that you can only have a maximum of **three** individual supervision sessions. Therefore please use this time effectively, and come to each meeting prepared. Try at all costs to avoid rambling and vague discussions; both you and the supervisor need to use time economically. Remember that every time you give your supervisor something to read, s/he will need a few days to read it. Supervisions should almost always be based on something written by you, so that the supervisor can give you feedback on your ideas and proposed methods. The initiative should be taken by you rather than your supervisor.

Meetings with supervisors should be used effectively to discuss progress, address problems, and to plan ahead. Writing up the dissertation is an independent exercise; supervisors are not allowed to edit drafts of the dissertation, or give feedback on completed chapters. For fairness sake, supervisors are allowed to read and comment (but not edit) on **one** other chapter of your work (and no more than 2,000 words).

For your first meeting (April) you should email your supervisor a one or two pageresearch proposal, ideally a draft of the dissertation proposal you will submit for the Doing Environmental Research assessment 2 in Week 11. This will form the basis of your first discussion. You must send this to your supervisor at least 48 hours in advance of your meeting.

In your next meeting (May) you will meet your supervisor to confirm your plan of work, proposed methods, and get risk assessment/ethics sign off (student to email supervisors a plan of work 48 hours in advance to the meeting)

During the summer period (June-September)

Dissertations are completed over the summer period when staff are engaged in research. It is likely that during the summer your supervisor may be on fieldwork away at a conference, or taking their annual leave. By this stage, however your research should be planned and underway. You can still communicate with your supervisor and ask specific questions and guidance via e-mail. Please allow a few days for them to get back to you, as they may be away from an internet connection. You will submit a draft dissertation chapter by early June, and you will receive written feedback from your supervisor through Blackboard in late June. All meetings will be completed by the end of June, where you will be working independently on the dissertation write-up.

In Summary

The key to a successful student-supervisor partnership is communication and exchange of written material prior to meetings. Good communication will allow you to plan around periods when your supervisor is away from the university. E-mail communication is reliable since staff can pick up e-mail when working at home or elsewhere.

What your supervisor will expect of you

The MSc thesis is an independent piece of postgraduate research. You will be expected to show initiative in designing and implementing the study.

You will inevitably encounter some problems during your research and need to discuss these with your supervisor. Prepare for these discussions by thinking through possible solutions to the problem. Ensure that you plan your work and seek help where necessary in good time.

2.7 Conducting Dissertation Research with an External Organisation

You may wish to design your dissertation so that it addresses a research question that is of interest to an external organisation. Many of you will be doing a placement with such an organisation during semester two. However, working with an external organisation raises a series of challenges. There are clear benefits, but students should be aware that it is definitely not an easy option. Similarly, it is important to the University that any collaboration between students and external organisations are undertaken with due care and attention. Often organisations will judge the whole University on the performance and professionalism of the student that they work with.

This section outlines the key benefits and challenges of undertaking this kind of research, and presents guidance about how to make such collaborations successful for both the student and the client organisation.

Opportunities for the student

- Apply accumulated knowledge and understanding of environmental governance and apply it in a 'live' situation for an external client/organisation
- Experience a professional environment that simulates expectations in a real 'world of work' environment.
- Prepare a major piece of professional work related to the 'real world' of environmental governance, linked to specialist area of expertise.
- Undertake work placement with organisation as part of research.
- Gain access to information and people who would otherwise be very hard to access for research purposes.
- Provide an excellent credential showing professional collaboration to list on CV.
- Develop networks with the possibility of securing employment.

Threats for the student

- Extra time and effort required to forge relationship with client organisation and identify research topic.
- Must be flexible in terms of how research is framed in order to incorporate client organisation needs.
- Potential financial implications as work placements tend to be unpaid.
- Pressure of completing a dissertation while also undertaking a work placement.
- Need to balance the advice of the academic supervisor with the needs of the client organisation.
- Difficulty of producing a dissertation that is both academically rigorous and useful to client organisation often means that an extra report must be produced for the client organisation.
- Extra pressure of representing the University to an external organisation.

Opportunities for the client organisation

- Access to highly motivated, intelligent Masters students (environmental organisations lack the resources to conduct research that they want done, making this very attractive).
- Indirect access to the research facilities at the University through the student.
- Prestige of association with the University.
- Cheap/ free labour through work placements.
- Opportunity to identify potential employees.

Threats for the client organisation

- Risk of putting time and effort into advising student who may not produce work of either a high enough standard, or that is relevant.
- Risk of getting a 'needy' student who costs the organisation more in time and effort than the benefit derived from the student's work.

Managing a successful collaboration

There are a number of simple things that you can do to maximise the chances of making a collaboration work. Many of these are common sense. One golden rule is not to waste the time of the client organisation or to antagonise them with too many emails. A second golden rule is to be very clear about what each side is expected to contribute to the research process and what output the client wants.

Approaching the client organisation

Do your research on the client organisation in advance! Most give a wealth of details on the internet, which will allow you to identify a topic that will be of relevance to them (and where possible a person to approach). Having a specific name or person to contact is the best way to get a response. We are happy to help you approach an organisation.

Focusing the research topic

This would probably take the form of two or three email exchanges along the following lines:

- Initial approach: student suggests a topic area
- Client makes suggestions about work they are doing or would like done in that area
- Student puts together a one page research plan including policy background, research aims, methods, and outputs
- Client comments on the plan
- Student revises plan

Defining the terms of the collaboration

Clarify exactly what support the client wants to give in terms of meetings, email support, phone calls or work placements. If you do negotiate a work placement as part of the collaboration then be clear about what proportion of the placement will be dedicated to doing the dissertation and what proportion will be working on other tasks for the organisation. Also clarify whether they will want to comment on the research as it progresses, and if so whether they will want summaries or to actually look at chapters. Negotiate what type of output they want (e.g. short report, presentation, copy of dissertation etc). Remember, the client organisation is NOT your supervisor. You have an academic supervisor to deal

with the day-to-day job of supervising you. When it comes to writing a successful dissertation, the requirements and comments of your supervisor should override comments by the client, in case of conflict of views.

A note on the assessment of collaborative dissertations

In line with the goals of the programme, assessment criteria for dissertations undertaken in collaboration with client organisations will take account of their applied nature and the extra challenges associated with designing and undertaking research with other people.

That said, the research must still be academically rigorous, and presented in accordance with the guidelines outlined in this handbook. Reports or other outputs produced as part of the work may be appended, but may not be substituted for the dissertation/research paper itself. A report for your client is not your dissertation. This is a separate (though related project). Similarly, problems between the student and client organisation will not be accepted as mitigating circumstances for late submission or poor work.

2.8 Structure for Dissertations

Your submission is likely, in the majority of cases, to be structured along the following lines, although your supervisor will be able to give you more detailed advice tailored to the specific nature of your research topic. It is helpful to have brief introductory and concluding paragraphs for each chapter to introduce its content and draw findings together and link to the next chapter. This section discusses the format for a traditional dissertation first, before outlining a potential format for the research paper dissertation.

Dissertation Option 1 (by Primary Research)

- **introduction** to the study, outlining: (a) **background** to the topic, in terms of key policy and/or research questions, issues and debates; (b) the **shape and scope** of the dissertation, outlining for the reader the broad purpose of the study; (c) an outline of the **structure** of the dissertation.
- a **literature review**. This should provide an overview of a range of literature relevant to the topic chosen, including relevant policy documents and technical reports as well as other academic work detailing research findings in your chosen field of study. The purpose is to identify gaps in the overall body of research and to outline the (modest) ways in which your research can fill those gaps and expand the larger body of knowledge. It is *not* simply a summary of everything written on a particular topic; rather, it is an attempt to locate your research within the broader array of knowledge on a particular subject. This, in turn, will provide a detailed justification for, and explanation of, the research questions or hypotheses around which your work will be structured.
- The **methodology** you have employed to attempt to answer the research questions or test the hypothesis, outlining both the broad research design and justifying the particular methods and techniques selected.
- **results, analyses and evaluation** chapters, outlining the findings of research undertaken (e.g. review of policy and technical documents, interviews with key actors, questionnaire-based surveys, or analysis of data collected from secondary sources such as the Census), and exploring the significance of the results, relating them to the 'bigger picture' issues outlined in your literature review and highlighting the implications in light of the research questions or hypotheses. A neat way of organising these chapters is one for each research aim.
- a **concluding** chapter, relating findings presented in the previous chapters to the research questions/hypotheses, and highlighting the implications of your work for policies, practices, theories or techniques, and setting out the ways in which your research has advanced or reinforced knowledge of your chosen subject area.
- a full **bibliography**, covering *all* works cited in the main text or any other relevant reference materials, which may be presented in the **appendices**.

The following checklist gives some tips on the scope and content of each of these sections.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Background

The dissertation should begin by outlining the background to your topic. This could include both the broad policy context (where relevant), and details of other research studies which have looked at the area of study. You should introduce the case study, the geographical focus and relevance.

You must remember that this section should act as a general introduction to the study, and should therefore be short and snappy, avoiding too much detail. A common problem with dissertations is too much contextual, background material, and insufficient analytical detail or synthesis of source documents and interviews. You should merely introduce the topic, and flesh-out some of these ideas later-on in the work, particularly in the literature review, which will involve a much more detailed exploration of key research issues and questions, based on current findings.

Shape and scope of the study

The second section of chapter 1 should build upon the background context that you have outlined, and explain in brief the purpose of the study and the research aim and questions, and issues you will be addressing. These can also be explained at the beginning of the methods chapter, when, on the basis of the earlier literature review, you (re)state the formal aim and objectives of the study and outline the research questions to be addressed or hypotheses to be tested.

Structure

The third section in the chapter 1 is normally an outline of the structure of the dissertation. The progression of chapters must be logical, with each building upon material covered in the preceding chapter. This will help focus your mind on the material required for the final report, and in planning your time. The precise structure adopted will be dependent on the particular topic chosen, and should be devised in consultation with your supervisor.

Chapter 2: Literature review

The second chapter might be a literature review, although again the structure will vary according to the precise topic selected and should be discussed at length with your supervisor.

The literature review is something which confuses many students. In essence, the aims of a literature review are two-fold. First, it should bring the reader up to date on **previous research findings** in the field, with particular reference to your chosen topic. This can point towards areas of general agreement (or disagreement) among researchers, highlighting what different studies say about your chosen topic. To use the example of biomass once more, it may be the case that previous research has yielded important findings on biomass (even if some studies disagree), but there have been recent changes in the policy context or technology which raise new and unanswered sets of questions which your research will proceed to explore. The central aim is to pull out the key ideas and findings from past research and 'locate' your study within that broader body of knowledge.

Secondly, where your chosen topic is related to particular **policies**, your literature review should consider relevant policy and/or technical documents, in addition to the more 'academic' literature. For instance, in the case of biomass, the literature review might also assess the ways in which different strategic policies through time have attempted to encourage projects at the local level and explore the extent to which (in the eyes of other evaluative studies) they have met with any success in doing so. In other words, some dissertations may have a 'policy review' as well as a 'research review' as part of the overall literature review.

In summary, then, a literature review should *synthesise* others' work, highlighting the key themes to emerge from other studies and applying these to your own research. You should **not** treat the literature review as simply a summary or précis of policy documents, journal articles and books: it should not be, for example, 'everything I know about biomass', or 'everything I know about transport policy'. Instead, the literature review must be related to the tightly defined research questions or hypotheses which your study is intended to address. In other words, it requires your own assessment of the key findings of earlier work which relates to your topic. A literature review has to be comprehensive, covering policy debates as well as theoretical and conceptual issues (i.e. academic literature). It is also important that you concentrate on literature which is of direct relevance to your work; skip-read related material of only marginal relevance.

It is also vital that you avoid plagiarism, whether unintentional or deliberate. If you lift ideas, or quote a short passage from others' work – which is, of course, perfectly acceptable – you have to acknowledge the source by full and proper referencing.

A useful starting point for literature reviews is to read a small number of core texts, and then trace back

the more detailed articles cited. For example, if your dissertation is on 'The role of the private sector in environmental initiatives: a Greater Manchester case study', you might begin your literature review by looking at broad texts on urban regeneration policy, before focusing-in upon more detailed (and directly relevant) work cited in these texts (e.g. on the role of the private sector in environmental policy). You should also try to make use of a full range of sources for literature review material. In particular, learn to use the library search facilities, which are available 'on-line' from any computer terminal in the building. In addition to the Main Library catalogue of books, with which you will already be familiar, try using the library's journal abstracts available via the library's e-resources webpages. The Geobase, BIDS and Web of Science databases are particularly useful in unearthing relevant material from academic journals.

The second year Environmental Research Design and Application course unit should give you more details on literature reviews.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Research questions and/or hypotheses

Building on the key areas of interest you have identified in the literature review, the first part of chapter 3 would normally contain a question or set of questions to be addressed by your dissertation, a particular issue to be explored, or a set of hypotheses to be tested. It is vital that you set out in detail the research questions, hypotheses, issues or problems your study addresses. This could take the form of either of the following:

- *research questions*, e.g. what policies exist in the UK concerning biomass, how do they vary between scales, who are the main stakeholders involved, what are the barriers)?
- *hypotheses* to be tested, e.g. 'environmental quality in Manchester wards between 1991 and 2001 was not affected by the level of spend on urban regeneration projects'. The veracity of this hypothesis would be tested, possibly by using appropriate quantitative methods, or through interviews with policy-makers. However, you should bear in mind that it is not always possible to develop such research hypotheses for certain topics; a detailed description of the research question(s) may be more appropriate. In addition, it is vital that you devise hypotheses which are not over-ambitious: remember that your study is limited in both time and in the length of the final dissertation.

Aim and objectives

The second part of chapter 3 should show the aims and objectives for your study:

Aim: this sets out the overall purpose of the study. It is abroad statement to explain what you are trying to achieve to a non-expert reader who may not be familiar with your topic area.

Objectives: these are the specific operational targets which will assist in meeting the broad aims of the study. Since these objectives are clearly set out, they will be used to judge what you have been able to achieve at the end of your dissertation. It is thus unwise to be over-ambitious by setting objectives which are not realistically achievable. At the same time, devising clear objectives at the outset of your research will ensure that the work is sufficiently focused, and avoid the work being too generalised. Throughout your programme of research, you should constantly refer back to your objectives to ensure that what you are doing or writing is relevant, and to ensure that it will help to meet those objectives.

For both aim and objectives, these should be stated as succinctly as possible, and should be revised, if necessary, as work progresses.

Note that in outlining aims and objectives, you need to build upon the conclusions of your literature review, the purpose of which in essence is to explain and justify the focus of your research.

Research design

Thirdly, having generated relevant research questions and/or hypotheses, you have to explain clearly *how* you will go about answering or testing these. In other words, you must give details of the research methods to be used, outlining the overall research design, and (in relevant cases) specifying methods of data collection (e.g. sources of published data that have been used, semi-structured interviews which have been conducted). You must attempt to **justify** the choice of your particular methodology, in light of the chosen research topic: **you have to try to demonstrate why the methods selected are appropriate to answering a particular question**, or investigating a given hypothesis. It is not sufficient to simply list what you have done. Why, for example, is a programme of interviews useful in investigating

your topic? Why are particular data sources useful? Why have you chosen to collate a series of policy documents? Why have you selected particular case study areas? And how have you gone about investigating a particular case study?

Example: the use of a case study approach. You should explain **briefly**:

- why a case study approach is the most appropriate method to tackle the research questions;
- why you have used one case study rather than two or more, or vice versa;
- why you have used a particular case study or studies (e.g. previous research might have ignored certain places; a problem or issue might be especially apparent in that area; or the area may be representative of the general pattern);
- the ways in which you have collected information for these case studies, whether it be interviews, collation of policy documents, or use of published data for that area (it is not sufficient simply to say that you will 'do' a case study, without specifying the means by which this will be conducted).

Example Two: the use of interviews. You should explain **briefly**:

- why you have chosen to use interviews to address the research problem;
- who you have interviewed, and why;
- what questions were asked and why?
- the means by which you conducted interviews (e.g. were they unstructured discussions, structured face-to-face questionnaires, or postal questionnaires?);
- how you have used the information collected (e.g. quotes from interviewees etc.)?

Chapters 4 and 5: Fieldwork/results and analysis/evaluation/discussion

The dissertation should attempt to build upon the material covered in the literature review through a programme of fieldwork or further desk-based analysis. This might take the form, for example, of:

- a short programme of structured, semi-structured or unstructured interviews (e.g. face-to-face, or by post);
- the collation of data from published sources;
- the collation of relevant policy documents, both published and unpublished;
- a structured questionnaire survey (again, face-to-face, by telephone or by post).

While it is important that you consult formal published sources such as reports, books and journal articles, summaries of these alone are insufficient as original research. You must complement the literature reviewed with additional material of the sorts outlined above. In addition, you must also take care to avoid a purely descriptive study which is then dutifully described without interpretation, commentary or evaluation. You must try to develop themes and arguments on the basis of interviews, data assembled or documents collected. Your work must go beyond mere description, to provide an analysis of information collected, and to highlight the implications of your findings. Where you are undertaking a case study, for example, you should ensure that you constantly refer to the bigger picture: what, if anything, does the experience of a case study area or subject say about the broader question you are exploring through your research?

In writing a suitably analytical and interpretative piece of work, it is important that you refer back continuously to your initial objectives and avoid being side-tracked on irrelevant detail, or bogged-down by the superfluous minutiae which surround any topic. At the same time, you must also take care to ensure that the information collected is not simply 'analysed' for its own sake, without identifying the implications for the study: this is one distinction between a dissertation and project work. Throughout this stage of the work, you should constantly ask yourself what is the implication of a given finding for your research question or hypothesis. For example, if an interviewee makes a particular comment, or if you note an interesting quote in a local authority committee report, what are the implications of this for your dissertation topic? It is important to avoid writing in an over-generalised way, neglecting to concentrate on tightly defined objectives for the research. For example, on too many occasions, student dissertations read like 'everything I know about urban regeneration/sustainability/transport in Poppleton', rather than a study which focuses on a clear and well-defined research question and which is of interest beyond a particular case study area.

In some cases, you might opt to have two chapters devoted to 'results': a first one describing your main

findings and outlining the results of any fieldwork; and a second discussing the broader implications. Whether you have one, two or three chapters is likely to depend upon the topic in question. Again, you will need to discuss this with your supervisor.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

The concluding chapter should not merely summarise material already covered in previous chapters. Instead, you must attempt to draw together the various messages to emerge from your review of the literature, and from your 'analysis' chapter(s). Again, it is important not to be descriptive, and to concentrate on the research questions posed at the outset of your study. In particular, you should try to highlight the implications of your study for both (a) research and knowledge of a particular topic area, and (where relevant) (b) policy and practice.

Dissertation Option 2 (By Secondary Research)

Dissertations by Secondary Research are critical analyses of a single topic, issue, organisation or policy based on a sufficiently large quantity of good quality published research. Research papers can also (but not exclusively) draw upon 'grey' research and other publicly available knowledge and information – critically so where appropriate and necessary. Research papers usually cover more than just a few works on a selected topic and always employ synthesis, organization, description, comparison, and/or evaluation of information to put the topic and the works about it into perspective. The purpose is to synthesise a body or bodies of ideas, evidence and arguments in a critical manner and in a new way so as to contribute to a new understanding of a particular problem or field. It is NOT simply a summary of everything written on a particular topic; rather, it is an attempt to shape the broader field of knowledge on a particular subject, or interrogate it to a particular end. This, in turn, will highlight key issues, gaps or challenges within the field. The implications should also be considered in light of the research questions or hypotheses and be related to the 'bigger picture' issues.

This type of writing is often known as a Review Article. These types of articles are common in both social science and many humanities disciplines. They may seek to clarify knowledge about a research question or problem, or to assess the state of current research and the way in which different authors/researchers approach the subject under review. This may include evaluating the significance of particular works to the field, the accuracy of research and presentation, and the cogency of different arguments.

In the environmental field, review articles are often organised around an applied problem relating to a specific area of policy or policy challenge. In this case they will identify the key aspects of a specific policy issue, including its main principles, difficulties or inconsistencies. The review draws on academic literature pertaining to the issue, and/or applies a new theoretical understanding to the problem in question, to make sense or shed new light on it.

At their best, dissertations by secondary research depict the current state of knowledge or understanding of a topic, providing both an informative outline and an evaluative assessment, and suggest productive avenues for further research or solutions to problems currently surrounding the issue reviewed. They are coherent, succinct, unified pieces of prose, rich in concrete vocabulary.

A dissertation by secondary research is NOT just a descriptive list of papers or summaries. It should not simply list sources and describe them in detail one at a time. Unlike an annotated bibliography, they are organised around ideas, not the sources themselves. They differ from literature reviews in that they seek to give shape to the literature under review in order to clarify existing research questions or identify new ones.

It is appropriate to opt for Dissertation Option 2 if you wish to discuss a 'big' topic, issue or policy that cannot be researched first-hand in the 3 months available.

Defining a topic

While it is not necessary to list aims and objectives like you would in dissertation option1, it is still essential that you construct a working research question that will form the basis of your dissertation. The statement does not have to argue for a set position or an opinion. It will rather argue for a particular slant on the material. Preliminary literature searches will help identify key issues in an academic or policy field that the paper could consider.

Under Option 2, your dissertation should add something to existing knowledge, but this does not necessarily mean that you must find a completely new area of knowledge or policy to review. For example, a research paper may:

- Synthesise work on a topic, policy, issue or organisation (e.g. the UNEP) that is spread across different disciplinary fields.
- Synthesis work on an emerging topic.
- Apply a new theoretical approach to academic material which has already been studied before.
- Apply existing theoretical approaches to a new field of policy.
- Apply a new theoretical approach to a policy domain which has already been studied before.

An example of the first two above would be if you wrote a dissertation on the European Emissions Trading Scheme, where you seek to understand how it has evolved since launched, whether it's working in terms of delivering environmental justice (or any other deliverable you may choose to explore), and what (if anything) needs to be done to fix or improve it.

Analysing and interpreting the literature

Understanding the literature requires you to read, re-read and assimilate complex ideas. A range of literature may be relevant to the topic chosen, including policy documents, technical reports, grey literatures, as well as the more familiar academic work. Practical information about how to conduct literature and policy searches, and the resources available to help you, are covered elsewhere, but there are some general things that you can do to make life easier:

- Read the easier articles first. Difficult or badly written articles will probably be easier to understand if you read them last when you have gained familiarity with your subject.
- For the preliminary scan, avoid reading the articles closely so as to avoid getting mired in detail.
- Published review articles may contain more than a hundred studies, although this depends to some extent on the topic chosen for study and the breadth of the study that is therefore undertaken. When you frame the study you should think about how far you should go back in time and how many articles you want to include.
- Note down the key points for each article, including what the research question and the specific hypotheses are, the findings and how the findings were interpreted, whether the authors are objective and whether contrary data is considered and discussed.
- If working on policy, then make sure you understand which documents are most important, what the key principles are, how they relate to other areas of policy and preceding policies, consistencies and inconsistencies both within and across policy areas and scales.
- Read key texts closely, as authors often have subtle differences in theoretical outlook. When you are comparing the work of a number of researchers some of whom have a different take on the problems of the research question, you will need to have an in-depth understanding of their work.
- Notice whether different authors cite the same work. One author may explain the method of an earlier study, describe its results in great detail and cite it repeatedly while another may give it only a passing reference.
- Allow enough time. Before you can write about your research project you must have evaluated the existing literature properly so do allow yourself sufficient time to do this.

Writing a dissertation by secondary research

Depending upon the goals, this should incorporate a selection of the following:

- An introduction that defines the topic under review (what it is, why it is worth examining), and defines and clarifies the research question or problem assessed. It should also outline the exact bounds of the literature that will be explored.
- A summary of the current state of understanding of the topic
- A brief outline of the organisation of the paper, including an optional statement on the methods that you used to gather and analyse material. Depending on your topic, you may need to establish basic premises and define important terms.

- Thematic sections, which should reflect key dimensions and debates of the topic under enquiry. These sections would be expected to include descriptions of individual works that relate to the review topic, an assessment of how those individual works relate to the review topic, an assessment of how those individual works relate to each other, including contradictions, gaps in knowledge, inconsistencies in how they handle information on the topic, etc.
- Key conclusions. These should summarise how your research has advanced or reinforced knowledge the subject area, and highlight implications for further academic research. It should also relate your findings to the research questions/hypotheses, and highlight, if applicable, the implications for policies, practices, theories or techniques.
- A suggestion of the direction further research might take.
- A full bibliography, covering all works cited in the main text.
- Any other relevant reference materials, which may be presented in the appendices.

Models for different types of research paper

The best way to understand how to frame a question and structure your dissertation is to look at review papers in the academic literature. The journal *Progress in Human Geography* is particularly useful, as it mostly publishes review articles in emerging or consolidating areas of the discipline. The critical point to remember is that academic review articles **are not policy reviews** and should not fall into mere description. Even if you are focusing on a policy area, it is necessary to use academic literature to help make sense of it in some way.

Here are some examples (from many) papers that review academic work and policy in differing ways:

1. Braun, Bruce (2005) Environmental issues: writing a more-than-human urban geography *Progress in Human Geography* 29 (5) 635-650. Available at: <http://phg.sagepub.com/cgi/content/refs/29/5/635>
This really is an excellent research paper that reviews primarily theoretical work to shape the research agenda in the field of urban environmental studies. It identifies key conceptual questions and orders the discussion thematically around these, making a clear argument concerning the strengths, weaknesses and future directions of the field.
2. Bowen, William (2002) An Analytical Review of Environmental Justice Research: What Do We Really Know? *Environmental Management* Vol. 29, No. 1, pp. 3–15. Available at: <http://www.springerlink.com/content/btn83xu371h11b09/>
This paper reviews the empirical evidence base in the field of environmental justice in order to identify research gaps in the field. As such it is very methodical, simply structured, and operates within a clearly defined academic field, making a clear point concerning the need for more evidence to test assumptions in the field.
3. Ricketts Hein, Jane, Evans, James, and Jones, Phil (2008) Mobile Methodologies: Theory, Technology and Practice *Geography Compass* 2/5 (2008): 1266–1285. Available at: <http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/121369967/abstract?CRETRY=1&SRETRY=0>
This paper again focuses on academic literature, but in this case is methodological, bringing together work in the emerging field of mobile methods. Again, it adopts a fairly simple thematic structure, and offers clear opinions in the conclusions concerning future opportunities and challenges.
4. Baker, Susan (2003) The dynamics of European Union biodiversity policy: interactive, functional and institutional logics, *Environmental Politics*, 12:3, 23 — 41. Available at: <http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/868972036-16158911/content~content=a714039782~db=all~order=page>
This paper explores tensions between existing biodiversity policy at different scales. It focuses upon well known policies, but uses academic literature and theories to put together an original analysis of them. The structure simply follows that of the different scales of policy, and there is a clear concluding argument that more social analysis is required in this field.

3. Submission Format

3.1 General information

All dissertations must be written in English; quotations, however, may be given in the language in which they were written. In exceptional circumstances variation of this regulation may be approved by the University for candidates to submit a dissertation predominantly in their language of research.

Students will be asked to submit their dissertation in electronic form through Blackboard. Further instructions will follow via email nearer to the submission date.

3.2 Presentation

Marks will be awarded for the degree of professionalism in the style and layout of the dissertation. The overall structure must be clearly presented (e.g. with an organised hierarchy of fonts and typefaces for chapter and section headings), with logical layout of chapters and paragraphs, and with text and graphics integrated in an overall 'house' style. For tips on professional style and layout, consult any of the main environmental studies/science, planning or geography journals in the Kantorowich and Main Library.

3.3 Style and Language

The aim should be to use simple prose, but with variety in the construction of sentences and an expansive approach to the vocabulary employed.

Sentences are best kept short (maximum of around three lines), but their length should be varied to avoid monotony. Paragraphs should be of reasonable length (normally 3-6 sentences in length) and help to build up argument sensibly, allowing the reader time to digest one idea or theme before introducing another. It is also important to use language which is neutral when matters of race and gender are involved. Terminology is often used as verbal shorthand to convey complex ideas (e.g. 'multiplier effect', 'regime approach') and terms employed must be used accurately in the sense by which they are understood among those familiar with the subject.

The most frequently used abbreviations are - *i.e.* (that is), *e.g.* (for example), *etc.* (*et cetera*, other things of the same class), *viz.* (namely), *cf.* (compare with), *no.* (number), *ibid.* (the same place), *idem.* (the same), *sic* (*sic passim*, thus, typically used to denote an error in a quote), *et al* (and others) – be sparing in the use of these in the main text. Where title abbreviations are used it is common practice to use the full term followed in brackets by the abbreviation on the first occasion of use in the text, and thereafter use the abbreviation only e.g. EA (Environment Agency), Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). The punctuation between the initial letters of well known organisations should be omitted in the text e.g. EU, UNESCO. Do not abbreviate units of measurement unless they are preceded by an exact number e.g. 17ft; do not add an s to the plural of an abbreviation e.g. 40cm, 18lb.

3.4 Word limit

The maximum word count for dissertations is 12,000 words. This is a **maximum** word count and should not be exceeded. Markers can take into account minor transgressions of up to 10% within the existing marking criteria which means that you can lose marks for not being concise.

The word count includes:

- Chapter footnotes and endnotes
- Contents pages
- Abstract
- Quotations
- Tables, etc.

It does **not** include:

- Declaration
- Intellectual Property Statement
- Bibliography

- Appendices (which should be for supporting, illustrative material only and may not be used to elaborate or extend the argument)

You **must** include a word count on the bottom of your contents page. Failure to indicate the word count, or the provision of a false word count, may lead to disciplinary action.

What are the penalties for exceeding the word count?

- If you exceed word count by between 10% - 50%, your final dissertation mark will be capped at 50%. You will still be able to pass the dissertation element, but your mark may be lower than you would have otherwise achieved
- Work exceeding the word count by more than 50% will be viewed as not having met the requirements of the assessment. The work will not be marked and a mark of zero will be recorded.

3.5 Graphical material

Maps, statistical tables, figures, diagrams, graphs and photographs often provide a useful means of summarising complex information. They can also add to the work in a presentational sense. However, you should take care to use these sparingly in a manner appropriate to the topic. For example, dissertations are too often sprinkled haphazardly with too many irrelevant photographs, which bear no relation to (and are not mentioned in) the text. Any graphical figures must be referred to in the main body of text and properly labelled. All illustrations must have a designation, number and title situated immediately above or below, usually with the prefix of Figure or Table in capital letters. Ensure that you can obtain or draw illustrations easily for the final draft. Making use of the skills acquired elsewhere in the Masters programme (for example, in relation to Photoshop) should be especially useful. Illustrations may be lifted from other sources, if properly acknowledged.

Statistical tables or graphs should normally be no greater than a single A4 size page. All rows and columns should have unambiguous headings, and use ruled lines sparingly. Graphs should only have as many grid lines as are needed for comprehension of trends and relationships (normally 4/5 being the maximum), and with legends and descriptive notes normally standing clear of the grid lines. Graphs and tables formatted as JPEGs or GIFs will reduce the impact of such additional information on your word count.

Note also that students should not use the University logo in any correspondence (e.g. letters or online questionnaires).

3.6 Proof reading

The final draft of your dissertation should be read, where possible, by another person in order to eliminate errors of syntax and grammar, and any typographical errors which are not picked up by standard word processor spell-checkers. Proof reading is time consuming, but extremely important. In particular, you should take care to avoid long, rambling sentences, pretentious and jargon-ridden prose, and bad grammar. Learn how to use the apostrophe in the correct manner. Avoid vague, vogueish jargon like 'sustainability', 'partnership' or 'stake-holder' unless you are sure of the precise meaning of these. **Note that it is *not* your supervisor's role to proof-read final drafts.**

3.7 Plagiarism

The University's regulations covering plagiarism (copying work from others without reference to the source) is fully set out in your programme handbook. It is regarded as a serious malpractice, and may lead to severe penalties for the work submitted as well as being recorded on the student's record card. The most common way in which plagiarism occurs is by the verbatim reproduction of another author's work without acknowledgement, or the 'lifting' of a concept from a specific source without attribution. Reports which contain long quotations or illustrations which are not the writer's own work cannot be published without the express consent of the copyright holder, although dissertations are not generally perceived to be 'publication'. Full and proper referencing of sources is a vital safeguard against plagiarism.

3.8 Bibliography and referencing

References must be consistent throughout the dissertation. A complete bibliography of all policy documents and literature consulted should be given and properly referenced using the Harvard System, following the standard guidelines for work in Geography and outlined in student handbooks. All work cited in the main text should appear, fully referenced, in the bibliography; all works in the bibliography

should appear in the main text. **It is vital that you adopt the proper referencing system, otherwise you will lose marks.** It is often helpful to keep a file of all work to which you refer over the course of your study; this can prove invaluable when you come to compile your final bibliography.

In your text, references **must** take the following forms:

For single authored work	either Smith (1990) or (Smith, 1990)
With two authors:	either Smith and Jones (1997) or (Smith and Jones, 1997)
With more than two authors:	either Smith <i>et al.</i> (2006) or (Smith <i>et al.</i> , 2006)
Where one author quotes another:	Smith in Jones (1990)

Page numbers **must** be shown with the date [e.g. (Smith, 1990, 25-36)] if you are giving a direct quotation from a text, or you wish to direct your reader to a particular part of the cited text for reference.

Less than full and proper referencing in all submitted student work will be penalised when the work is assessed, and especially in dissertation work

At the end of the text, in the bibliography/reference section, the full reference takes a slightly different form depending on the type of publication. Please remember that all works cited anywhere in your text **must** have an appropriate entry in your bibliography.

Referencing for a book

Hughes, P.D., Castree, N. and Evans, J.Z. (2005). *Referencing for Geographers*. Braithwaite Press, New Mills, 36-42.

(i.e. published by Braithwaite Press which is based in New Mills)

① Page numbers are only needed for books if it is a particular section which is relevant, or to give the page numbers of a specific chapter, if multi-authored, or for a quotation or diagram you are copying.

Referencing for a journal article

Evans, J.Z. (2002). 'Pubs and the Modern Geographer', *Modern Geography Viewpoint*, 63(6), 456-504.

(i.e. Volume 63, Number 6, pages 456 to 504)

① Page numbers are **always** given, though they may apply only to part of the article, or a single quote, figure or table.

Referencing for an article from an edited book

Hughes, P.D. (2006). 'Effects of Prehistoric Brewing Effluent on the Environment', In: Braithwaite, R.J. (Ed.) *The Geography of Brewing*. Routledge, London, 345-388.

(similar in style and reasons to a journal article reference)

① (Ed.) = Editor. Where there is more than one editor use (Eds.).

① **Always** give page numbers.

Referencing for an on-line article

NASA (2012). GISS Surface Temperature Analysis (GISTEMP). <http://data.giss.nasa.gov/gistemp/> (Accessed 24th January 2012).

3.9 Appendices

Appendices, if necessary and if relevant, can also be included in your dissertation. However, the use of appendices has to be justified and legitimate: they should not just be a repository of disparate information which does not fit anywhere else; nor should they be used to avoid exceeding the word limit. Instead, appendices might usefully contain material such as the list of interviewees canvassed, lists of documents collected, data sources consulted, tables of data, correspondence, questionnaires, extracts from circulars or statutory regulations, and summarised accounts of previous studies.

3.10 Presentation conventions for text and formatting

There are a number of conventions to which you must adhere when submitting your completed dissertation. These are listed below.

<i>Title</i>	The title must be short, unambiguous and accurate, and finalised by the time you submit the 'Title and Risk Assessment Declaration' form (Key date 3) (Appendix 1).
<i>Title page</i>	<p>This should provide a statement as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Title of the dissertation▪ The following text: 'A dissertation submitted to the University of Manchester for the degree of xxx in the Faculty of Humanities'▪ Whether it follows the 'traditional format' or the 'research paper' format.▪ the year of submission (not including the month).▪ the candidate's name (the same as the name under which he or she is currently registered, or was last registered, at the University).▪ the candidate's student ID number▪ the name of the candidate's School ('School of Environment, Education and Development').
<i>Table of Contents</i>	<p>A list of contents, giving all relevant sub-divisions of the dissertation and a page number for each item (in Arabic numerals throughout). The final word count, including footnotes and endnotes, must be inserted at the bottom of the contents page. If illustrative materials are integrated within the text a separate list of illustrations should be prepared.</p>
<i>List of Illustrations</i>	<p>The term 'illustration' refers to all tables, maps, plans, graphs, diagrams, photographs. The list of illustrations should provide number, title, and page references. This usually appears on a separate page unless included in the table of contents.</p>
<i>Abstract</i>	<p>All dissertations must include an abstract. This should be undertaken when the dissertation is otherwise complete. The abstract should precede the introduction so that the reader/examiner can quickly see what the text is about prior to more detailed reading. Typically the abstract defines the problems the writer sets out to solve, the main procedures adopted, and the principal results and conclusions; it should occupy a single A4 page, and can be single-spaced.</p>
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<p>Assistance given to the student in the preparation of their work must be acknowledged, and would usually include the supervisor and any key individuals (other academics, individuals from the agencies under study etc) who have helped. Acknowledgments should not normally exceed one or two paragraphs.</p>
<i>Declaration</i>	<p>A declaration stating that: 'No portion of the work referred to in the dissertation has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning'.</p>
<i>Intellectual Property Statement</i>	<p>All four of the following notes on copyright and the ownership of intellectual property rights must be included as written below:</p>

- i. The author of this dissertation (including any appendices and/or schedules to this dissertation) owns certain copyright or related rights in it (the "Copyright") and s/he has given The University of Manchester certain rights to use such Copyright, including for administrative purposes.
- ii. Copies of this dissertation, either in full or in extracts and whether in hard or electronic copy, may be made **only** in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 (as amended) and regulations issued under it or, where appropriate, in accordance with licensing agreements which the University has entered into. This page must form part of any such copies made.
- iii. The ownership of certain Copyright, patents, designs, trade marks and other intellectual property (the "Intellectual Property") and any reproductions of copyright works in the dissertation, for example graphs and tables ("Reproductions"), which may be described in this dissertation, may not be owned by the author and may be owned by third parties. Such Intellectual Property and Reproductions cannot and must not be made available for use without the prior written permission of the owner(s) of the relevant Intellectual Property and/or Reproductions.
- iv. Further information on the conditions under which disclosure, publication and commercialisation of this dissertation, the Copyright and any Intellectual Property and/or Reproductions described in it may take place is available in the University IP Policy (see [The University of Manchester Intellectual Property Policy](#), in any relevant Dissertation restriction declarations deposited in the University Library, The University Library's regulations (see <https://www.library.manchester.ac.uk/about/regulations/>) and in The University's Guidance for the Presentation of Dissertations.

<i>Text</i>	Text should be formatted as double or 1.5 spacing, with a minimum font size of 12 for the main text. Single-spacing should be used for indented quotations of more than three lines, footnotes and references. Headings section headings should be bold and capitalised; sub-section headings should be bold.
<i>Page sizes and margins</i>	The margins must be not less than 15mm. The required page size is A4 (197mm x 210mm).
<i>Page numbering</i>	Page numbering must consist of one single sequence of Arabic numerals (i.e. 1, 2, 3 ...) throughout the dissertation. Page numbers must be displayed on all pages except the title page. The pagination sequence will include not only the text of the dissertation but also the preliminary pages, diagrams, tables, figures, illustrations, appendices, references etc. Roman numerals must not be used for page numbering.
<i>Maps</i>	Maps should be clearly drawn, with sources referenced. See Section 3.5 Graphical Material
<i>Diagrams and tables</i>	These should be clearly presented, properly sourced, and explained in the text. See Section 3.5 Graphical Material
<i>Photographs</i>	See Section 3.5 Graphical Material
<i>Quotations</i>	Direct prose quotation exceeding three lines of text should be set out in a separate inset paragraph in single line spacing (indented about 25mm to the right and left of the main text), without inverted commas. Shorter quotations should be enclosed within the main

text, in double inverted commas. If there are gaps in the quotation use three dots '...' to indicate where the words are left out. For all quotes, the author and page number must be stated. If it is desired to draw attention to a phrase in a quotation do this by italics, but note in the reference whether any italics are in the original or have been added by you as author (e.g. Smith, 2005, *emphasis in original*; or Jones, 2005, *emphasis added*).

Footnotes

These should be used very sparingly, if at all. Where footnotes are deemed absolutely necessary, they should be of direct relevance to the topic. They should be placed at the bottom of the page. They should be numbered consecutively throughout the dissertation as a whole. The font should be 9 point (in Time New Roman or similar). Text should be single spaced.

References

Should be in Harvard style (see information above for further details). All references must be included in the bibliography, which should be arranged by alphabetical order of author surname. Where there is more than one reference by the same author in the same year each should be differentiated by a, b, c, etc (e.g. Jones 2003a, Jones2003b)

3.11 Dissertation Checklist

You need to check your draft for what might be termed continuity errors. Roughly speaking, this means checking that the whole text is consistent with itself from beginning to end. If you have changed some sections, there might be section headings to re-number, for example. To help you eliminate such errors, here is a checklist:

- Are the headings and sub-headings in the contents list the same as those in the text?
- Have you given lists of tables and figures as well as chapters in your contents?
- Are they all numbered consecutively? Numberings from earlier versions may persist and you may have two chapter fours or no chapter six. Using the automated Table of Contents wizard in Word can help enormously in this respect.
- Are all the cross-references to other sections of the study correct?
- Do all the references in the text have a corresponding entry in the bibliography, with the same date as the reference in the text?
- Where you refer to an article within an edited collection, have you included the full book reference, with editors, as well as the chapter reference?
- Are all the references complete, i.e. have you included the publication date and place, as well as the publisher's name?
- Tables: check that their numbers and titles are correct, and that references to them in the text are correct.
- Figures: as for tables
- Have you checked all the calculations in your tables? Have you got correct totals in the tables?
- Is there enough labelling information in your tables and graphs? (e.g. if you refer to percentages, is it clear exactly what they are percentages of? Do you make it clear whether raw scores or percentages are being referred to?)
- Have you calculated all the figures to the same number of decimal places?
- Are you consistent about abbreviations?

None of these proof-checking tasks are the responsibility of your supervisor.

4. Assessment criteria

UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY Postgraduate Assessment Criteria MSc Dissertations

Student work is assessed the basis of:

1. Breadth and depth of knowledge and understanding
2. Synthesis and critical analysis
3. Transferable skills
4. Structure, style and argumentation

Please note that the overall mark is NOT derived from a notional average of the levels of achieved for each of the criteria

		Postgraduate Degree Class	Mark
90-100	Exceptional Distinction Exceptional dissertation of the highest quality attaining all learning outcomes of the unit, all criteria of assessment and displaying significant originality and/or deep insight. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Exceptional dissertation. Asks excellent research questions. Demonstrates in-depth and very advanced understanding of project context and addresses wider issues and interrelationships. Shows significant originality in thought. Literature is drawn from extensive sources. 2. Outstanding critical analysis of literature including theories, principles, techniques and evidence, and integrates reference to this very effectively with own ideas. Excellent critical evaluation and justification of the research approach adopted, with excellent comparison with data/arguments of others. Identifies and uses a range of materials (academic and policy, where relevant) to very good effect, from extensive sources, with outstanding critical analysis and insight and very effective integration with own ideas. Makes a clear distinction between facts and interpretation through its clarity, presentation and originality of analysis. Exercises extensive personal initiative and responsibility. Displays a convincing grasp of complex academic concepts and terminology. 3. Identifies the characteristics of complex problems and uses highly appropriate and innovative methods. Situates analysis very effectively within current academic and/or policy debates. Excellent writing style and accurate grammar and spelling, which clearly communicates key points with no significant errors. Consistently references sources in line with student handbook guidelines. 4. Shows advanced level understanding of the use of methods. Demonstrates sensitivity to and awareness of any key ethical dilemmas. Uses appropriate ICTs and a highly appropriate format/style. 	Upper-range distinction	100
		Upper-range distinction	95
		Upper-range distinction	92

80-89	Outstanding Distinction Outstanding dissertation of the highest quality, demonstrating comprehensive knowledge, excellent critical analysis and/or originality, high level of accuracy, relevance, presentation and appropriate skills. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Outstanding dissertation. Asks excellent research questions. Demonstrates in-depth understanding of project context and addresses key issues and interrelationships. Shows some ambition and perceptive originality in thought. Literature is drawn from a wide range of sources. 2. Excellent critical analysis of literature and integrates reference to this very effectively with own ideas. Excellent critical evaluation and justification of the research approach adopted, with excellent comparison with data/arguments of others. Identifies and uses a range of materials (academic and policy, where relevant) to very good effect, from an extensive range of data and/or literature sources, with impressive critical analysis and insight and very effective integration with own ideas. Makes a clear distinction between facts and interpretation. Exercises extensive personal initiative and responsibility. Displays a convincing grasp of complex academic concepts and terminology. 3. Identifies the characteristics of complex problems and uses appropriate, logical and original methods. Situates analysis effectively within a coherent and convincing discussion of current academic and/or policy debates. Very good writing style and accurate grammar and spelling, which clearly communicates key points with few errors. Consistently references sources in line with student handbook guidelines. 4. Shows high level understanding of the use of methods. Demonstrates sensitivity to and awareness of any key ethical dilemmas. Uses appropriate ICTs and a highly appropriate format/style. 	Mid-range distinction	88
		Mid-range distinction	85
		Mid-range distinction	82
70-79	Distinction Excellent dissertation of high quality, demonstrating extensive knowledge, very good critical analysis, high level of accuracy, relevance, presentation and appropriate skills. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Thorough dissertation. Asks very good research questions. Demonstrates in-depth understanding of project context and addresses key issues and interrelationships. Shows independent and critical thought. Literature is drawn from a range of sources. 2. Very good critical analysis of literature and integrates reference to this very effectively with own ideas. Excellent critical evaluation and justification of the research approach adopted, with excellent comparison to data/arguments of others. Identifies and uses a range of materials (academic and policy, where relevant) to very good effect, from a range of sources, with thorough critical analysis and insight and very effective integration with own ideas. Makes a clear distinction between facts and interpretation. Exercises extensive personal initiative and responsibility. Displays a convincing grasp of complex academic concepts and terminology but could have shown 	Lower-range distinction	78
		Lower -range distinction	75
		Lower -range distinction	72

	<p>greater balance in the presentation of academic/analytical information.</p> <p>3. Identifies the main characteristics of complex problems and uses appropriate methods. Shows considerable awareness of current analytical, academic and/or policy debates. Good writing style and accurate grammar and spelling, accurately and clearly communicating key points and containing few errors. Consistently references sources in line with student handbook guidelines.</p> <p>4. Shows good understanding of methods. Demonstrates sensitivity to and awareness of any key ethical dilemmas. Uses appropriate ICTs and a highly appropriate format/style.</p>		
60-69	<p>Merit High quality dissertation, demonstrating very good knowledge and understanding, good critical analysis, accuracy, relevance, presentation and understanding.</p> <p>1. Good dissertation. Asks good research questions. Demonstrates sound demonstration of project context, and of key issues and interrelationships. Shows some independent thought. Literature is relevant and generally of good quality.</p> <p>2. Contains some critical analysis of literature and integrates reference to this very effectively with own ideas. Shows good critical evaluation and justification of the research approach adopted, with good comparison to data/arguments of others. Identifies and uses a range of materials (academic and policy, where relevant) to good effect, from extensive sources, with good critical analysis and insight and effective integration with own ideas. Further analysis of the literature could have been included to provide a more critical analysis. Makes a clear distinction between facts and interpretation. Exercises some personal initiative and responsibility. Displays a good grasp of complex academic concepts and terminology.</p> <p>3. Identifies some key characteristics of complex problems and uses appropriate methods. Comprehensive writing style and accurate grammar and spelling, accurately and clearly communicating key points, with few errors. Mostly references sources in line with student handbook guidelines.</p> <p>4. Uses appropriate academic concepts and terminology. Uses appropriate ICT and an appropriate format/style.</p>	Merit	68
		Merit	65
		Merit	62
50-59	<p>Postgraduate Masters Pass Competent/good and generally accurate dissertation, demonstrating some relevant knowledge and breadth, and sound understanding though undeveloped with limited critical reasoning.</p> <p>1. Fair dissertation, with some omissions. Shows reasonable understanding of the issues, principles,</p>	Postgraduate Masters Pass	58

	<p>theories, evidence and techniques, perhaps with some confusion/inaccuracies. Lacks evidence of independent thought/research.</p> <p>2. Identifies and uses a range of materials (academic and policy, where relevant), but not substantial or restricted to textbooks or of poor quality, with some critical analysis, but mainly descriptive and lacks analytical depth.</p> <p>3. Fair structure and coherent argumentation, but argument may lack focus/depth in some sections. Reasonable awareness of relevant academic and/or policy debates, but with some gaps or minor inaccuracies. Further critical analysis and evidence of independent reading and thought could be incorporated. The dissertation has some methodological issues either in the definition of the methodology or in the application of methods.</p> <p>4. Reasonable writing style and accurate grammar and spelling. Accurately and clearly communicates key points effectively with no significant errors. Consistently references sources in line with student handbooks. Competent presentation skills including use of IT and other resources.</p>	Postgraduate Masters Pass	55
		Postgraduate Masters Pass	52
40-49	<p>Postgraduate Diploma Pass Compensatory Fail for Postgraduate Masters Dissertation of limited quality, but sufficient for a pass at postgraduate diploma level, demonstrating some relevant knowledge and fair understanding with possible errors and omissions.</p> <p>1. Basic or simple dissertation lacking detail, depth and with significant omissions. Superficial understanding of the issues and some confusion/inaccuracies. Regurgitates literature material, and/or information provided by lecturers, with no evidence of independent thought/research.</p> <p>2. Range and use of material (academic and policy, where relevant) is lacking or not relevant to the question or of poor quality. Mostly descriptive work lacking any substantive critical analysis.</p> <p>3. Weak structure and argumentation. Arguments may lack focus/relevance, evidence and coherence in many sections. Limited engagement with relevant academic and/or policy debates, either dated, with gaps, or too many inaccuracies with a lack of balance discussion. The dissertation has important methodological issues either in the definition of the methodology or in the application of methods.</p> <p>4. Writing style and grammar and spelling may be poor, with frequent errors. Inconsistently and/or incompletely references sources, not in line with student handbooks. May use some inappropriate presentation skills including the poor use of IT and other resources.</p>	Postgraduate Diploma Pass	48
		Postgraduate Diploma Pass	45
		Postgraduate Diploma Pass	42
30-39	<p>Fail Dissertation below the standard required for a postgraduate Masters or Diploma. There is insufficient evidence of basic understanding and/or achievement, with errors or other inadequacies.</p> <p>1. Partial answer to the research questions, with major omissions. Weak understanding of the issues, theories, principles, techniques and evidence, and</p>	Fail	38

	<p>considerable confusion/inaccuracies. Regurgitates literature or taught or given material with no evidence of independent thought/research.</p> <p>2. Range and use of material (academic and policy, where relevant) are lacking or not relevant to the question or of very poor quality. Uncritical and descriptive, with some sections being derivative of other sources lacking in originality or critical analysis.</p> <p>3. Minimal understanding of structure and argumentation. Argument is poorly focused/irrelevant and/or incoherent/confused in many sections including unsubstantiated arguments/evidence. The dissertation has a weak or unfeasible methodology either in the definition of the methodology or in the application of methods.</p> <p>4. Shows problems in writing style and grammar and spelling may be poor, with frequent errors. Inconsistently and/or incompletely references sources, not in line with student handbooks. Uses inappropriate presentation skills including the poor use of IT and other resources.</p>	Fail	35
		Fail	32
16-29	<p>Fail Dissertation well below the standard required for a postgraduate Masters or Diploma, which is inadequate and does not demonstrate basic awareness of the subject and is deficient in understanding or relevance, weak in execution and/or in presentation.</p> <p>1. Incomplete or largely irrelevant answer to the relevant research questions and does not demonstrate basic awareness of the subject and. Very little understanding and considerable confusion/inaccuracies, although some attempt made. Little relevance to taught material or discussion of key theories, principles, techniques or evidence. Little or no engagement with the literature.</p> <p>2. Range and use of material (academic and policy, where relevant) are lacking or not relevant to the question and/or of very poor quality. Uncritical and descriptive, with some sections being highly derivative.</p> <p>3. Poor structure and argumentation. Argument is poorly focused/irrelevant and/or incoherent throughout lacking independent thought, originality and includes unsubstantiated arguments. The dissertation has a weak or unfeasible methodology either in the definition of the methodology or in the application of methods.</p> <p>4. Shows substantial problems in writing style, grammar and spelling, with many errors. Referencing lacking or inadequate, not in line with your student handbook. Uses inappropriate presentation skills including the poor use of IT and other resources.</p>	Fail	28
		Fail	25
		Fail	22
1-15	<p>Poor Fail Dissertation that is profoundly inadequate in quantity and quality.</p> <p>1. Incomplete, brief and wholly irrelevant research questions. No understanding of the issues and little attempt made to address them. No relevance to taught material, principles, theories, techniques or evidence. Fail to engage with the existent literature on the topic.</p> <p>2. Literature/data/evidence are highly irrelevant to the task/question or of extremely poor quality. No critical</p>	Fail	15
		Fail	5

	<p>analysis, although may regurgitate material that lacks relevance.</p> <p>3. Very poor structure/organisation. Lacks any argument, use of evidence or clear focus and misrepresentative of the evidence illustrating a failure to demonstrate understanding of material. The dissertation has a weak or unfeasible methodology either in the definition of the methodology or in the application of methods.</p> <p>4. Shows substantial problems in writing style, grammar and spelling, with many errors. Referencing lacking or inadequate, not in line with your student handbook. Uses inappropriate presentation skills that are incoherent including the mis-use of IT and other resources.</p>		
0	<p>Zero</p> <p>Absent, work not submitted or unacceptable performance, work of no merit.</p>	Fail	0

The following from the SEED dissertation handbook contains some general guidance on good practice and some guidance on the nature of the judgements which inform the marking criteria.

Dissertations are judged against a set of guiding criteria. The order in which the points are set out below implies no particular weighting; all the criteria listed are potentially of equal importance, though some may be more appropriate than others according to the particular topic covered in any one dissertation.

4.1 Content

- Relevance to policy development in fields associated with the programme of study
 - vii) Is the dissertation relevant to the discipline of the programme and policy development within this specified field? Does the student demonstrate an appreciation of the relevance of the work for policy development, or to deeper academic understanding of the discipline?
 - ii) Does the work deal adequately with relevant theoretical and methodological issues, and where appropriate, highlight the policy implications of the work, within the topic defined? Does it avoid superfluous detail?
- Aims, objectives and purpose of study
 - vii) Does the writer spell out the aims and objectives of the study clearly? Do the objectives substantiate the achievement of the broader aims?
 - ii) Do the research questions or hypotheses set out clearly the analytical path of the study?
- Use and knowledge of literature
 - vii) Where appropriate, does the literature review demonstrate a clear appreciation of broad theoretical perspectives relevant to the topic, and the strengths and weaknesses of these perspectives?
 - ii) Where appropriate, does the literature review demonstrate a clear understanding of public policies relevant to the topic?
 - iii) Does the literature review offer an adequate review of related research, and demonstrate an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of other studies? Does it suggest an understanding of the remaining gaps in the research conducted on the chosen topic?
 - iv) For the research paper option is there a clear understanding of the wider policy / academic context and justification for focusing on one particular policy or academic area?
 - v) Has the writer made use of an adequate range of sources? Is sufficient attention paid to academic and theoretical arguments as well as technical reports and policy documents? Are there relevant references which have been omitted? Are sources acknowledged?
 - vi) Are references listed fully, and in the correct way?
- Methods
 - i) Does the writer set out clearly the adopted research methodologies? Do the research methods used involve original research (e.g. data collection by interviews, surveys or analysis of secondary data).
 - ii) Are the methods selected appropriate to the study topic? Do they flow logically from the literature review?
 - iii) Are the methods selected used effectively?
 - iv) Where case studies are used, is justification offered for selection? Are case studies linked to broader topics?
 - v) For the research paper option, is there a clear rationale for how literature has been identified and accessed? Is there a rationale and method for undertaking comparative analysis?
- Fieldwork
 - vii) To what extent are empirical data relevant to the aims/hypotheses and methods selected for the study? Are there any gaps in data collected?
 - ii) Where relevant, is questionnaire design and analysis adequate?
 - iii) Where interviews are used, has the student given consideration to structuring of questions, transcription methods and range of interviewees selected?
 - iv) Has the writer gone beyond the obvious, showing initiative or imagination in finding relevant data in original places?
 - v) Does the writer show an appreciation of data access difficulties?

- Quality of argument
 - vii) Does the work distinguish between 'facts' and 'values'? Has the writer avoided imposing his or her values upon the work, so far as possible, or is there a reasoned justification for these values?
 - ii) Is there an appropriate balance between description and analysis? Is each piece of description supported by an appropriate piece of analysis, demonstrating the meaning, significance, or implications of the events or phenomena which have been described?
 - iii) Is the line of argument presented clear and justified, or, conversely, does it tend to be incoherent, unstructured and repetitive?
 - iv) Are conclusions drawn adequately supported by empirical evidence, by statistical information, by appropriate quotations or by relevant examples or case studies? Does the work avoid assertion and unsubstantiated inference? Where the available evidence does not enable clear conclusions to be drawn, is there a clear appreciation of this?
 - v) Does the work show an appreciation of the implications of arguments presented in one portion of the dissertation, for material covered elsewhere? Do arguments flow in a logical fashion and avoid contradiction?
 - vi) To what extent is there an imbalance between refracting other complementary analyses, on one hand, and offering isolated interpretations (insufficiently linked to the wider body of research), on the other?
 - vii) Do the conclusions offer original interpretations and novel lines of argument, or merely rehash the findings of other studies?
 - viii) For a research paper, does the paper add to our understanding of a policy or academic field?
- Conclusions
 - i) Are empirical findings used to highlight policy or theoretical implications?
 - ii) Are the conclusions reached at the end of the dissertation clearly related to the questions posed at the beginning?
 - iii) Does the writer show an awareness of the limitations of the research and provide suggestions for future research?

4.2 Structure

- Is the division into sections, parts, or chapters clear and logical? Does it help the reader to understand the method of enquiry or the structure of the argument which the writer has adopted?
- Does each chapter contain a clear (but brief) statement of its purpose in relation to the aims for the study as a whole?
- Does each chapter end with a summary of the implications of material covered for the study as a whole? Does it lead logically into the next chapter?
- Is appropriate use made of appendices, so that material which is vital to the structure of the dissertation is in the main text itself, and only contributory or supplementary material relegated to the appendices?
- Is there a clearly explained, logical relationship between the argument presented, and any diagrams, tables, maps, or other illustrations? Are the latter placed in the text at the right points, so that their relationship to the argument is made as clear as possible?
- Are paragraphs structured in clear and logical fashion? Are sentences structured concisely to convey points clearly? Are vital points buried in over-long and poorly structured sentences, inappropriately placed in footnotes, or otherwise lost? Is it obvious what the writer thinks is crucial and what he/she thinks is subsidiary?

4.3 Presentation

- Is the dissertation written in comprehensible, plain English, unencumbered by pretentious, obscure language, and ill-understood jargon?
- Does citation of other work seem to have been done mainly to help, or to impress? Has work

been cited to help the reader follow the argument, to understand its intellectual origins, and to check on points which may be of interest?

- Does the dissertation look reasonably professional and presentable? Or is it badly laid out, grubby, messy or untidy?
- Have supporting photographs, charts, tables and maps been used in an effective way?
- Has the dissertation been carefully proof read, or are errors left, apparently unnoticed.

Appendices

Appendix 1

School of Environment, Education and Development

Postgraduate Dissertation Timetable

For Geography MSc programmes

Semester 2	
February	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Potential topics are advertised to students early in the semester. Students are also encouraged to think about independent research projects. All students are encouraged to identify potential supervisors.• Students submit proposed titles/topics via the online 'Dissertation Planning Form' on or before Wednesday 6th March 2024. The form is available at https://www.qualtrics.manchester.ac.uk/jfe/form/SV_1z8qzP221n7tQ2y• Allocation of supervisors – by end of March 2024
March/June	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ethical Applications, confirmation of title and risk assessments. You will be asked to complete an online form; the link will be sent to you by your Administrator, on which you should confirm your proposed title and that you have discussed any ethical and risk considerations with your supervisor: on or before Friday 24th May 2024• See 2.3 Ethical Application, Confirmation of title and risk assessment for more information.
September	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• SUBMISSION You should submit an electronic copy of your dissertation in the approved format by Thursday 29th August 2024.• Dissertations must be submitted via Blackboard and not to your supervisor. Details of the submission process will be communicated by your Programme Administrator in the final weeks before submission is due. See 1.3 Submission arrangements and 3.0 on Submission format for more information.• Notice of submission: on submission of your dissertation, you are also required to complete an electronic Notice of Submission form, which will be sent to you via your Administrator on receipt of your dissertation title form.

Appendix 2
University of Manchester
School of Environment, Education and Development

Appendix 2



UoM Template for **Research Participant Information Sheets**

This is a template Participant Information Sheet which includes all essential information that you are obliged to provide to participants. **Important note:** the information described in this template **should be adapted, where necessary**, where the participant is a child, adult with learning difficulties or a non-English speaker. We have provided guidance notes in **red** for you to consider, please ensure you replace these with your own text or delete sections if not appropriate to your project (e.g. DBS checks). In all example text provided below you **must change the wording in red** to reflect the details of your specific project. **You should also delete this guidance section.**

Please ensure you also **adjust the footer to the correct version number and date for your project.**

Title of Research

Participant Information Sheet (PIS)

This PIS should be read in conjunction with [The University privacy notice](#)

You are being invited to take part in a research study [as part of a student project – **participants should be told about the overall aim of the research and whether it will be for a degree**]. Before you decide whether to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being conducted and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for taking the time to read this.

Who will conduct the research?

Insert the name of the researcher(s), the School/Academic unit address, University of Manchester and name any other collaborating institutions.

What is the purpose of the research?

Provide a brief and simple to understand explanation of what you, the researcher, are hoping to achieve by the research

Why have I been chosen?

Provide a statement explaining how and why the participant was chosen and how many other participants will be involved.

What would I be asked to do if I took part?

Provide an explanation of what is going to be done by you, the researcher, to the participant and a clear explanation of what the participant is expected to do during the research. Also include an explanation of the risks, if any, that the participant may experience.

What will happen to my personal information?

In order to undertake the research project we will need to collect the following personal information/data about you:

List the personal information you will be collecting about the participant in bullet point format.

For audio/video recordings you must state:

- how the recordings/photographs will be obtained (e.g. during a focus group discussion or interview session, asking participants to take images or recordings of their lives, etc)
- what the recordings/photographs will consist of (e.g. voice only, facial features, full body, surrounding environment, other individuals, etc)
- how the recordings/photographs will be used in the research, if they will be used for other purposes or if they will be reused in future for other purposes, other purposes must be compatible with your initial research.

[Only] the research team will have access to this information. If others will have access to this information then you must say who.

We are collecting and storing this personal information in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018 which legislate to protect your personal information. The legal basis upon which we are using your personal information is “public interest task” and “for research purposes” if sensitive information is collected. For more information about the way we process your personal information and comply with data protection law please see our [Privacy Notice for Research Participants](#).

The University of Manchester, as Data Controller for this project, [If UoM is not the sole Data Controller this will need to be revised and the other data controller added. An explanation provided in the ethics application] takes responsibility for the protection of the personal information that this study is collecting about you. In order to comply with the legal obligations to protect your personal data the University has safeguards in place such as policies and procedures. All researchers are appropriately trained and your data will be looked after in the following way:

You must tell participants exactly who will have access to their identifiable information, if, and when, you will be anonymising the data, if you will be sharing the data with any other organisation and if you will be retaining the data (or their contact details) for use in future studies. You must adjust the example to match the specifics of your research project. Please note we require identifiable data to be anonymised as soon as the objectives of the project allow. The standard retention period for data once anonymised is 5 years unless funders or regulators have specified longer retention requirements.

Example: The **study team** at the University of Manchester will have access to your personal identifiable information, that is data which could identify you, but they will anonymise it **after X amount of time/as soon as practical**. However your **consent form, contact details, etc** will be retained for **X years (describe where and how)**.

In this section you must inform participants where their data will be held (including how it will be transferred to the University from the site it was obtained), if you are using third party software like an app, for how long it will be stored, whether it will be transferred outside of the University and how, including the involvement of transcription services. It must be noted if the data are to be transferred outside the EU (or to any cloud services) and what will happen to the data at the end of the study. You must include the following information regarding participant's rights.

You have a number of rights under data protection law regarding your personal information. For example you can request a copy of the information we hold about you, **including audio recordings or photographs**. This is known as a Subject Access Request. If you would like to know more about your different rights, please consult our [privacy notice for research](#) and if you wish to contact us about your data protection rights, please email dataprotection@manchester.ac.uk or write to The Information Governance Office, Christie Building, University of Manchester, Oxford Road, M13 9PL. at the University and we will guide you through the process of exercising your rights.

You also have a right to complain to the [Information Commissioner's Office](#), Tel 0303 123 1113

Will my participation in the study be confidential?

Your participation in the study will be kept confidential to the study team and those with access to your personal information as listed above.

For audio/video recordings or photographs you must state the following:

- if the recordings will be used to create transcripts, who will be performing the transcribing (including if they are a member of the research team, another UoM employee or a third party who is a UoM approved supplier. If they are another UoM employee, ensure they are reminded of the guidelines regarding confidentiality and ask them to sign a copy of the Confidentiality Agreement). <<link to be inserted for Confidentiality Agreement>>
- whether the personal information will be removed in the final transcript
- how the audio/video/photographs will be protected and kept secure
- how long they will be kept in accordance with the UoM retention schedule if different to the retention for the personal information listed above
- when and how the recordings/photographs will be destroyed or digitally altered to remove personal information (Pixellation / voice masking software)
- who will have access to the recordings/photographs (if different to the rest of the personal information)
- **REMINDER:** you are **not permitted** to use personal devices (e.g. iPhones, iPads, tablets, other personal, portable devices) to capture audio/video recordings or photographs. Any devices used must be encrypted by UoM and be exclusively for research use.

If there are circumstances where you need to inform/disclose information to individuals outside of the research team this should be made clear and **ethical consent** sought.

You need to consider who will need to be informed of their participation or need to review their information as part of the routine management of the study. For example:

- Individuals from the University, the site where the research is taking place and regulatory authorities may need to review the study information for auditing and monitoring purposes or in the event of an incident.

There may be other circumstances that mean that you need to inform participants the circumstances which may lead to disclosure and to whom it would be disclosed, for example:

- in the event that there are concerns about the participant's safety or the safety of others you may need to contact their GP/care team/family member

- where there is a professional obligation to report misconduct/poor practice you may need to inform their employer/professional body
- reporting of current/future illegal activities to the authorities

There should be a description of the steps taken to ensure confidentiality e.g. de-identifying the data and linking to the individual via an assigned participant ID only known to research team (also referred to as pseudonymised or coded data). Ensuring the reporting of the data is done in such a way that individuals cannot be readily identified.

What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without detriment to yourself. However, it will not be possible to remove your data from the project once it has been anonymised and forms part of the dataset as we will not be able to identify your specific data. This does not affect your data protection rights.

For audio/video recordings you must explicitly state whether participants are free to decline the recording or whether it is essential to their participation in the study. You must also state that participants should be comfortable with the recording process at all times and they are free to stop recording at any time.

Will my data be used for future research?

When you agree to take part in a research study, the information about your health and care may be provided to researchers running other research studies in this organisation. The future research should not be incompatible with this research project and will concern <<insert research field>>. These organisations may be universities, NHS organisations or companies involved in health and care research in this country or abroad. Your information will only be used by organisations and researchers to conduct research in accordance with the [UK Policy Framework for Health and Social Care Research](#).

This information will not identify you and will not be combined with other information in a way that could identify you. The information will only be used for the purpose of health and care research, and cannot be used to contact you regarding any other matter or to affect your care. It will not be used to make decisions about future services available to you.

Reminder: If you are intending to add their contact details to a database for newsletters or about other research etc., you must provide a mechanism for them to opt out of this in each communication. Also consider how long you will keep contacting participants to take part in other research, if they have not responded. Document when you have told the participant that they will be on the database and the purpose, what they are expecting to receive.

Reminder: Social group: tell them the use of the group and you should not contact them directly (DM or tagging), writing on the "wall" / newsfeed is fine). Ensure that the messages are in line with original purpose and not about other research if they have not been informed of this.

Will I be paid for participating in the research?

Provide a clear statement of payment arrangements for compensation for the participant's time and inconvenience and any out-of-pocket expenses, course credits, if applicable.

What is the duration of the research?

Provide details on the duration of the study (e.g. 3x ½ hour interviews; 1x 30 minute questionnaire etc) including how long in total the participant will be involved in the study (from consent to final visit). Remember to also include time for checking processes or taking part in follow up interviews or multiple processes.

Where will the research be conducted?

Provide details of the location and venue.

Will the outcomes of the research be published?

Provide details of anticipated outcomes and if participants will be informed of the findings or if they will be published.

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Check (if applicable)

Provide a statement declaring that the researcher who may have access to children or vulnerable adults has undergone a satisfactory DBS check. If this paragraph is not relevant to your research delete it.

Who has reviewed the research project?

Indicate that the project has been reviewed by the University of Manchester Research Ethics Committee 1/2/3/4/5/University of Manchester Proportionate Research Ethics Committee or the name of the Division/School Ethics Committee.

What if I want to make a complaint?

You must include a way for the participants to contact someone if they have any complaints. The first point of contact should be yourself or **your supervisor if you are a student**, and the PI and then the University using the paragraphs below:

Minor complaints

If you have a minor complaint then you need to contact the researcher(s) in the first instance. **PROVIDE CONTACT DETAILS IN LARGE BOLD PRINT** contact details must include email and telephone numbers these contact points should be professional or project specific email and phone numbers not personal ones. Please ensure they are live and that phone numbers have voicemail that is regularly checked.

Formal Complaints

If you wish to make a formal complaint or if you are not satisfied with the response you have gained from the researchers in the first instance then please contact

The Research Governance and Integrity Manager, Research Office, Christie Building, University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PL, by emailing: research.complaints@manchester.ac.uk or by telephoning 0161 275 2674.

What Do I Do Now?

If you have any queries about the study or if you are interested in taking part then please contact the researcher(s) **PROVIDE CONTACT DETAILS IN LARGE BOLD PRINT** contact details must include email and telephone numbers these contact points should be professional or project specific email and phone numbers not personal ones. Please ensure they are live and that phone numbers have voicemail that is regularly checked.

This Project Has Been Approved by the University of Manchester's Research Ethics Committee [ERM reference number]

Appendix 3

**University of Manchester
School of Environment, Education and Development**

[insert title of dissertation/project/research]

[remove questions 3 and 4 if not relevant within your research]

Consent Form

If you are happy to participate please read the consent form and initial it:

- | | Please
Initial
Box |
|---|---|
| 1. I confirm that I have read the attached information sheet on the above project and have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions and had these answered satisfactorily. | <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 70px; height: 70px; margin: 0 auto;"></div> |
| 2. I understand that my participation in the study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without detriment to any treatment/service | <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 70px; height: 50px; margin: 0 auto;"></div> |
| 3. I understand that the interviews will be audio/video-recorded | <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 70px; height: 25px; margin: 0 auto;"></div> |
| 4. I agree to the use of anonymous quotes | <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 70px; height: 30px; margin: 0 auto;"></div> |

I agree to take part in the above project

Name of participant	Date	Signature
Name of person taking consent	Date	Signature

Appendix 4

School of Environment, Education and Development

Risk Assessment

This information can be found on the student intranet at
<http://www.seed.manchester.ac.uk/studentintranet/healthandsafety/>

- **Generic Risk Assessment – UK**
(<http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=25623>)
- Generic Risk Assessment - Low Risk Overseas Destinations
(<http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=25624>)
- Generic Risk Assessment - Normal Office Work on Campus
(<http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=25625>)

Notes to accompany General Risk Assessment Forms

These forms are the ones recommended by Health & Safety Services, and used on the University's risk assessment training courses. It is strongly suggested that you use them for all new assessments, and when existing assessments are being substantially revised. However, its use is not compulsory. Providing the assessor addresses the same issues; alternative layouts may be used.

- (1) **Date:** Insert date that assessment form is completed. The assessment must be valid on that day, and subsequent days, unless circumstances change and amendments are necessary.
- (2) **Assessed by:** Insert the name and signature of the assessor. For assessments other than very simple ones, the assessor should have attended the University course on risk assessments (link to STDU)
- (3) **Validated by:** Insert the name and signature of someone in a position to validate that the assessment has correctly identified hazards and addressed the risks. This will normally be a line manager, supervisor, principal investigator, etc.. who should be competent to identify the hazards and assess the risks. This person should have attended the University's risk assessment course, or equivalent.
- (4) **Location :** insert details of the exact location, i.e. building, floor, room or laboratory etc
- (5) **Assessment ref no :** use this to insert any local tracking references used by the school or administrative directorate
- (6) **Review date:** insert details of when the assessment will be reviewed as a matter of routine. This might be in 1 year's time, at the end of a short programme of work, or longer period if risks are known to be stable. Note that any assessment must be reviewed if there are any significant changes – to the work activity, the vicinity, the people exposed to the risk, etc
- (7) **Task / premises:** insert a brief summary of the task, e.g. typical office activities such as filing, lifting and moving small objects.
- (8) **Activity:** use the column to describe each separate activity covered by the assessment. The number of rows is unlimited, although how many are used for one assessment will depend on how the task / premises is sub-divided.
- (9) **Hazard:** No specific hazards
- (10) **Persons in danger:** insert everyone who might be affected by the activity. Remember those who are not immediately involved in the work, including cleaners, young persons on work experience,

maintenance contractors, Estates personnel carrying out routine maintenance and other work. Remember also that the risks for different groups will vary.

- (11) **Existing measures to control the risk:** list all measures that already mitigate the risk. Many of these will have been implemented for other reasons, but should nevertheless be recognised as means of controlling risk.
- (12) **Risk Rating:** the simplest form of risk assessment is to rate the remaining risk as high, medium or low, depending on how likely the activity is to cause harm and how serious that harm might be.

The risk is **LOW** - if it is most unlikely that harm would arise under the controlled conditions listed, and even if exposure occurred, the injury would be relatively slight.

The risk is **MEDIUM** - if it is more likely that harm might actually occur and the outcome could be more serious (e.g. some time off work, or a minor physical injury).

The risk is **HIGH** - if injury is likely to arise (e.g. there have been previous incidents, the situation looks like an accident waiting to happen) and that injury might be serious (broken bones, trip to the hospital, loss of consciousness), or even a fatality.

Schools or administrative directorates may choose to use other rating systems. Typical amongst these are matrices (of 3x3, 4x4, 5x5 or even more complex) which require the assessor to select a numerical rating for both “likelihood that harm will arise” and “severity of that harm”. These may give a spurious sense of accuracy and reliability – none are based on quantitative methods. There are methods of estimating risk quantitatively, and these may be appropriate for complex design of load bearing structures and the like. Advice on methods of risk assessment is available from HSS. Whatever system of assessment is adopted, it is **essential** that the assessor has received suitable training and is familiar with the meaning of the terms (or numbers) used.

- (13) **Result:** this stage of assessment is often overlooked, but is probably the most important. Assigning a number or rating to a risk does not mean that the risk is necessarily adequately controlled. The options for this column are:

T = trivial risk. Use for very low risk activities to show that you have correctly identified a hazard, but that in the particular circumstances, the risk is insignificant.

A = adequately controlled, no further action necessary. If your control measures lead you to conclude that the risk is low, and that all legislative requirements have been met (and University policies complied with), then insert A in this column.

N = not adequately controlled, actions required. Sometimes, particularly when setting up new procedures or adapting existing processes, the risk assessment might identify that the risk is high or medium when it is capable of being reduced by methods that are reasonably practicable. In these cases, an action plan is required. The plan should list the actions necessary, who they are to be carried out by, a date for completing the actions, and a signature box for the assessor to sign off that the action(s) has been satisfactorily completed. Some action plans will be complex documents; others may be one or two actions that can be completed with a short timescale.

U = unable to decide. Further information required. Use this designation if the assessor is unable to complete any of the boxes, for any reason. Sometimes, additional information can be obtained readily (e.g. from equipment or chemicals suppliers, specialist University advisors) but sometimes detailed and prolonged enquiries might be required. E.g. is someone is moving a research programme from a research establishment overseas where health and safety legislation is very different from that in the UK.

For T and A results, the assessment is complete.

For N or U results, more work is required before the assessment can be signed off.

- (14) **Action Plan.** Include details of any actions necessary in order to meet the requirements of the information in Section 11 ‘Existing measures to control the risk’. Identify someone who will be

responsible for ensuring the action is taken and the date by which this should be completed. Put the date when the action has been completed in the final column.

Appendix 5

Previous Masters Dissertation Topics

Some of the following dissertations and research papers can be found in the Kantorowich Library. Note that the quality of these papers varies so be cautious in treating any of them as 'models'.

2021-22

- Recycling the waste crisis: A study on the impacts of second-hand clothing trade in Ghana and its colonial relations
- To what extent does gender mediate access to green infrastructure? Perspectives from the Fallowfield Loop, Manchester
- Shoot-to-kill in the war over wildlife: An analysis of green militarization and the production of transnational 'natures' in Tsavo, Kenya
- Reporting on zero: An investigation into the discursive politicisation of net zero within the news
- Evaluation of the implementation of walkable and cycle-friendly neighbourhoods in typical cities: A comparative case study of Paris and Portland
- The struggles of 'unvalued' wildlife in the Anthropocene: The political ecology of green peafowl conservation in China (Yunnan)
- Terrain vague and brownfield development: Urban political ecology and novel ecosystems in post-industrial Manchester

2020-21

- Consumer perspectives of sustainable fashion on Instagram
- The affective (post)politics of climate emergency declarations
- Climate debt: The use and evolution of a contentious term
- Maximising profits or policing greenwash: What can EU Sustainable Finance Regulations achieve?
- Urban boosterism and post-politics in Greater Manchester: Tracing the development proposal in Turn Moss
- 'We needed thick curtains to keep the heat in': The impact of community energy on energy vulnerabilities
- Evaluate the feasibility of establishing an Emission Trading Scheme in Shaanxi, China
- The household as a gendered space: A critical feminist analysis of domestic energy policy in Greater Manchester, UK

- Can rewilding be convivial? Examining rewilding in Northern Europe through convivial conservation theory
- An evaluation of environmental justice within the imaginaries for the Irish dairy sector

2017-18

- Experimenting with cohabitation: An investigation into public perceptions of the River Otter Beaver Trial
- Experiencing disaster: Risk perception and community resilience in Hebden Bridge
- Finding solutions to food surplus and waste issues in the UK: Perspectives from the Food Surplus Redistribution Organisation Fur Clemt
- Parks for people: Investigating public-private nature-based solutions and social cohesion, a case study from Liverpool, UK
- Environmental Damage Assessment and Compensation System of marine oil spill pollution in China

2013-14

- Multi-actor Partnership for Environmental Governance: An Investigation from the Perspective of Bangladesh
- Transition Impossible? A Post-Political Analysis of the Transition Movement
- Representation of Nature in Environmental Campaigns: The Visual Case of Greenpeace's #SavetheArctic Polar Bear
- Exploring the (post)political nature of urban climate change governance: a study of Manchester: A Certain Future
- From government to governance in an age of austerity: an evaluation of new land management partnerships to fit a new economic era for the Peak District National Park
- The urban commons and the scalar politics of climate activism
- Manchester Certain Future Forum: Success of network partnerships in promoting sustainability behaviour change

2012-13

- What do Environmental Activists want? A study of opposition groups surrounding the new 'Dash for Gas' in the United Kingdom.
- Attitudes towards onshore wind farms; Understanding the influence behind opposition. A case study of Yorkshire.

- How and why are local communities excluded by market-led environmental conservation strategies
- Anti-recycling politics in post socialist Budapest, Hungary
- Consumer debt in the UK water industry: A governance approach
- The mining company and the local community: From conflicts to resolution
- Market Based Strategies of Conservation: Ecotourism and the Annapurna Conservation Area of Nepal
- The Resurrection of the Nuclear Storage Debate in West Cumbria: Constructing Consent Through the Production of 'Scientific' Realities
- Civil society organisations on social aspects of product in at the Roundtable on Sustainable Biomaterials
- How Resilient Are Cities To Climate Change? Compare how five UK cities prepare for future pluvial flood events.
- The Common Agricultural Policy Reform 2003 and its Impacts on Bavarian Small- and Medium-Scale Dairy Farmers

2010-11

- Why do so few affluent households adopt microgeneration technologies? An assessment of the barriers to adoption and the implications for wider society
- Environmental innovation in the commercial office building: extending the socio-technical perspective
- A Socio-Economic Analysis of Fairtrade: Exploring the value-action gap
- Healing the divide: Forging an industry-friendly discard management strategy under the 2012 Common Fisheries Policy reform
- The Role of Environmental NGOs in China
- Tackling urban air pollution through local air quality management: A new stakeholder perspective of the Air Quality Action Plan in Greater Manchester
- Re-Governing the Conditions of Production: Kew Gardens' Millennium Seed Bank and the Crisis of Biodiversity
- To what extent do universities use their academic expertise to enhance their own sustainability?
- How Have Media Representations of Fur Affected Women Fashion Consumers' Views on Fur in Fashion?

Appendix 6

Common problems in the past

Problem: Lack of prior experience conducting research.

Solution: Take research training module – as advised in semester 1

Problem: Poorly structured work

Solution: Make sure write-up begins early enough to consult with supervisor before end of July cut-off

Problem: End up producing hybrid between dissertation options 1 and 2

Solution: Be clear that the option you are choosing is appropriate for the research question

Problem: Work placement with external organisation takes up too much time

Solution: Clarify with external organisation in advance exactly what you will be expected to do (down to the number of hours, if possible) and whether they will make time for you to work on your dissertation. Also clarify the format of the deliverables they expect from you.

Problem: Failure to focus topic in advance

Solution: Start early and contact people!

Problem: Poor quality of written language

Solution: English language writing courses and proof reading! (as advised in semester 1)

Problem: Potential interviewees do not respond

Solution: Clarify your topic, and methods as early as possible. Contact individuals as soon as you know you will be needing to interview them. Key informants are likely not to respond immediately, or even not to respond at all. Make sure you have alternative interviewees on your list, in order not to compromise data collection.