**School of Environment, Education and Development**

**Faculty of Humanities**

**SEED Programme Committee:** [PGT Geography]

**Date:** Wednesday 19th March 2025

**Time:** 12:00pm – 14:00pm

**Location:** University Place 5.211 and 5.207

Please send any queries to seed.hub@manchester.ac.uk

**Minutes**

**Staff Attendees:**

Mark Usher (PGT Director for Geography and ), Matthew Tomkins (Programme Lead for GIS), Anna Hughes (Programme Lead for EMMR), Phil Hughes (HoD Geography), Rob Bellmay (Programme Lead for Climate Change, online via Teams) Amy Matthews (Secretary, SEED IAG Team)

**Staff Apologies:**

None reported.

**7 Reps in attendance:**

**MSc Climate Change**

Alice Warrington (AW)

Zhihan Zheng (Ciara) (ZZ)

**MSc EMMR**

Scarlet Smith (SS)

William Davies (WD)

**MSc Environmental Governance**

Brooke Hansford (BH)

**MSc GIS**

Jacob Osito (JO)

Ethel Pondelani (EP)

**MSc Green Infrastructure**

No reps recruited.

1. **Welcome and Apologies for Absence**

MU welcomes all students reps and staff to the committee and thanks all students who have volunteered to be reps. MU emphasised that the programme committee meetings are extremely important, as students can be the student voice for their represented cohorts. MU also emphasised that constructive feedback was extremely important for staff to receive as it is important for the continuous improvement of programmes. MU noted that emphasised, that fieldwork in semester 1 was implemented because of student rep feedback on the course. No apologies were reported.

1. **Introductions**

MU thanked all in attendance once again and introductions were made around

the room.

1. **Minutes/Actions of the last meeting**

MU provided an update since the last meeting and noted he would make several comments across programmes. MU asked PDs to provide comments at any time during this. MU noted the previous minutes commenting on EMMR programme and comments regarding fieldwork timings and connection with Week 7 assessment deadlines noting student had an intense couple of weeks e.g. deadlines and fieldwork. AH noted in terms of EMMR that this has been taken into consideration and planning in terms of future teaching.

AH noted that students commented that they want some more prep level sessions to equipment them. AH noted that they had fed this back at faculty level and discussions had been had about how many sessions to have etc.

MU noted that there was feedback regarding GIS regarding timetabling and fieldwork sessions and when to run these, MU noted that staff are aiming to find a balance with this e.g. to levitate intensity with assessment deadlines etc.

MU noted comments from MT. MT confirmed that the fieldwork component of the course will be split in two and go from 5 days to 3 days so students have more time to work on assessments. MU thanks MT for this confirmation.

MU noted comments regarding the Understanding GIS course. MU noted there were requests from students on course forums being anonymised to encourage discussions e.g. on blackboard pages – this was actioning the unit and was also suggested for other courses as well to implement. MT emphasised that anonymised discussion had been implemented in his taught unit and commented that there was not a massive uptake from students and hopes in the future it will. MT also noted the future move from Blackboard to Canva and that new forums will be available for students to use e.g. discussion boards and these may be used more.

1. **Rep Consultation**

PGT Geography student representatives from all programmes were invited to share their comments.

MU noted that they would like students to provide any comments they had their programmes during their second semester e.g. how they are finding units taken this semester etc.

MU reiterated that wished for students to provide comments on a variety of topics including: returning after Christmas, how unit selection had gone, assessments, seats, communications from staff and university wide etc. MU also asked if students felt a sense of community, integrated and part of the cohort.

**MSc EMMR**

Students reps from MSc Environmental, Monitoring, Modelling and Reconstruction (EMMR) provided comment. MU noted that both Scarlet Smith (SS) and William Davies (WD) were present to provide comment on the EMMR programme.

* WD noted they sent a questionnaire around from students to get general responses.
* WD mentioned how they asked students in the questionnaire how well students have generally settled into Manchester.
* WD noted their responses included that all students felt very comfortable settling in indicating there were– no issues there.
* WD noted they asked students how they felt about their feedback comments from staff, responses form students indicated that they often received positive feedback but the grades they were awarded did not necessarily reflect this.
* WD noted their peers were also asked what they had found particularly interesting this semester– responses included a polcology module and the reconstruction coding module with Matt Tomkins.
* SS noted that students enjoyed fieldwork a lot and the skills they gained.
* WD noted that reconstructing module content helped with the fieldwork.
* WD noted they also asked what students did not find interesting – responses included Understanding GIS with comments from student including that it was not particularly useful for environmental scientist and not relevant in terms of job roles. WD notes students also said that perhaps a rethinking of the GIS modules on the EMMR programme offered could be done.
* SS noted that students had experienced some problems with some of the assessments –noting the final EMC assignment students, many were guessing what they had to do. SS noted that this if this assessment was just after Christmas – could ask questions until close to when the assessment was due. SS emphasised if there was a way to make assessment guidelines clearer– as students had issues about word count, how to structure the report – whether meant to be report quantitative or qualitative etc. if students were supposed to discuss the process of how we got the results – how specific about methods were used – if specific literature also needed to be used. SS emphasised that clearer assessment guidelines would be appreciated by students from the responses they gave on the survey.

AH asked if WD and SS had other comments.

* WD noted none of the cohort have complained or raised anything else in semester 2.
* SS noted a difference in set of mid term assessments from last semester, noting that last semester the schedule was made harder with the fieldwork component. E.g. this Semester 2 had a reduced level of stress – students didn’t feel like had to turn in assignment after assignment – which was welcomed and well received by students.
* SS emphasised that all students seemed to be on good form.
* SS noted that some students not sure of what they want to do their dissertation on – AH noted normal in this semester. SS noted that students had been advised if they want to use lab for their dissertation work that they should be doing it sooner rather than later.
* PH asked AH if dissertation topics had been allocated now.
* AH confirmed they have now all been allocated now.
* MU noted that in previous years dissertation advisors were allocated later e.g. in Week 9 whereas now they are allocated in Week 7 of teaching.
* SS noted this personally really helped them e.g. worked in a good way, able to speak to topic lead about what they were doing, approach them earlier.
* AH noted it is a challenging to maybe approach a person you have not worked with before.
* MU noted the dissertation support workshops have been put in place to support for students e.g. once topics has been allocated, students can now get a clearer idea of how to proceed – can start working on topic etc.
* AH emphasised that realised it is a challenging choosing dissertation topic. AH hopes allocations are close enough to students topics of interests.
* AH noted students can talk to other staff as well as their dissertation advisor. SS emphasised it was the perfect time to be allocated e.g. work can start on the project and creates less stressful than if selected earlier or later in the semester.
* AH thanks SS for their comments and emphasised that it is good that students get thinking about their topics e.g. what is feasible not feasible.
* MU mentioned that in terms of planning dissertation form paperwork – student can change their titles if they want to at this time e.g., not too late. MU noted that ideally have clear idea of their title name when their ethics forms are submitted by 23rd May 2025.
* AH emphasised that everyone should know what they are doing at that time. AH noted that by bringing this forward e.g. from week 9 to week 7 should help would this.

AH commented on WD and SS comments.

Fieldwork

* AH noted with regards to the fieldwork feedback – they are happy that students appreciated the experience.

Understanding GIS being too complex

* AH noted that she can see why EMMR students might find this complex, AH noted in welcome week for students to take Richards GIS module that may be useful.
* AH noted they could do some better signalling on option choices. MT noted if you are doing EMMR – issues covered in this GIS module are all in there and related to environmental monitoring topics that EMMR would think about regularly.
* MT reiterated they get the point in EMC unit that it may be challenging for EMMR students if they had not done such topics before.
* SS asks if GIS can be used in an environmental way. AH noted that lots of staff that use GIS in the department are in environmental contexts.
* AH noted in her module students do a project and can choose what GIS they use. MT noted his unit also has a project option where students can study anything they wanted.
* AH also noted that the remoting sensing unit led by Polyanna might also be of use to EMMR students.
* SS noted personally that using SAR or GIS software is useful, but they didn’t feel the need to do particular units e.g understanding GIS. SS suggested that a more general overview of software would help – using on a more service level rather than just selecting one e.g. and dedicating a module selection to it. AH suggested there should be deferential units.
* Anna noted thanks regarding EMC module comments from the reps and responses from MT.

Assessment of the EMC unit

* MT provided comments regarding the communication of the assessment and the expectations regarding content and word count.
* MT noted that they ensure to provide information that students need with regards to the assessment e.g. word count expected, instructions for assignments. MT questioned what more they could do in terms of this assignment.
* MT asked SS and WD what they would like in the future e.g., what EMMR students would benefit from.
* WD noted that what was provided was a sheet of with guidance with bullet points and what you could talk about within the assignment.
* MT asked if this was too much, WD noted this layout was a bit different to what other students were used to e.g. in terms of assessments and what to do. WD suggested that they could follow other unit handouts e.g. reconstruction unit provided a handout with the following information– aims, assessment criteria, rubrics being used.
* WD reiterated that unfortunately the EMC unit was a confusing for a lot of cohort who had taken it.
* SS noted that in the last session they were working on the practical until the last class, so did not have the time to discuss the results or to get help on the unit e.g. people went home for Christmas soon after,
* SS suggested that there was confusion from students about what they were to write about – Student had questions on whether the the report on water quality or was it on the modules used e.g. and they should be reporting on data quality e.g. should discuss the environmental processes or modelling environmental data.
* MT noted students should talk about both topics ideally– e.g. the make of the models and what it means.
* MT noted there was an assessment rubric on blackboard. MT noted students would benefit from one document with all the information on. MT noted in terms of the assessment timings they could bring this earlier – to prevent panic.
* SS suggested pushing back a week. AH noted another in class session or dop in might also be helpful in terms of interpreting data – SS agreed with this.
* MU thanks WD and SS for their comments on the EMMR programme.

**MSc Climate Change**

MU noted that MSc Climate Change reps AW and ZZ were present. MT confirmed that these were two new reps recruited for the programme for this semester. MU confirmed that previous Fleur Ewing was a part time rep for climate change last semester.

* AW noted they sent out a questionnaire to students and got limited responses. They noted students like the interchangeable and flowable elements of the course.
* AW noted some students felt that science based modules dropped off in Semester 2 and that Semester 1 was more engaging on comparison.
* ZZ noted units about practical climate science in Semester 2 would be a great addition.
* ZZ mentioned that with regards to the GI module in semester 1 there was lots of dissatisfaction about assessments for the unit and that students felt they were not given enough guidance and felt upset about feedback they received. E.g. many students got scores of 48 and 52.
* ZZ personally noted that they got feedback from academic G-MC and the feedback provided was informative noting that they and said if they changed the topic they could have got a 90.
* AW noted comments about unit – Adaptations of Mitigation – noting that the unit lead Claire is not often not there e.g. during lectures and many students don’t feel comfortable approaching teachers after sessions as there are new lecturer every week. AW noted that the TAs in seminars have also not introduced themselves, which is not beneficial for students. AW emphasised that the attendance in lectures in general is not also great e.g. a class size of 50, half the class isn’t there - on a good day approximately 20 people show up.

RB thanked AW and ZZ for their comments and provided responses to points made.

Course Elements

* RB noted that in terms of a science element in semester 1, a new unit is being introduced next year by Will Flecther and that potentially a new member of staff may also be introduced and that was the aspiration.
* RB commented on the Green Infrastructure module and that was unfortunate to hear, noted students to leave feedback at end of unit feedback forms so the unit lead can respond directly e.g. James can response.

Adaptations of Mitigation Unit

* RB noted that Claire was convening, designed the unit so that an assortment of staff delivered the teaching, which was why Claire as unit lead was not always present. RB suggested that the staff in discussions are TAs and that they should introduce themselves. RB asked the reps if students could provided that feedback in the end of semester unit survey that would be appreciated.
* RB asked if attendance has dropped this semester overall, the reps confirmed it has done. ZZ noted that this is a patten across units this semester, noting that Joe Blakey’s – Knowledge Politics class had a very small attendance e.g. a mandatory unit yet only 15 people showed up. ZZ noted as an international student they personally attended all classes. RB asks if this a multiple course wide things e.g. other PGT Geography programmes experiencing the same attendance issue.

Student Rep Recruitment

* AW and ZZ noted as new reps for Climate Change, they unfortunately didn’t get any notifications about faculty meeting and the programme committee meetings. AW noted that they were notified about the semester 2 programme committee due to part time rep Fleur notifying them of the meeting via a screenshot.
* RB noted him an MU are discussing about student reps being led by the student’s union.
* MU noted they were and RB were investigating issues regarding the PGT community space and why Climate Change students were not on this and that they had no idea. MU noted they spoke to the programmes team about this. Errors with the links to the page – links broken. Going forward this will be improved as they will be moving on from Blackboard to Canva next year.
* AW noted in terms of what they would like is more fieldwork and practical elements e.g. trip to a park like in the Green Infrastructure programme. AW noted that this could possibility be delivered in semester 2 to increase engagement.
* AW noted that students could also get involved with initiatives outside of the classrooms e.g. they units including Joe’s class on Knowledge politics, Rob’s on emergency tech – they could sit in a meeting about climate politics in action with members of Manchester City Council, the government etc.
* RB noted they have a number of core units and that is why the climate change course does not have a fieldwork unit. AW and ZZ asked if they could have a small fieldwork element that would be appreciated e.g. a small trip element. Other opportunities such as observing a company, guest lectures, careers preparation etc. would be appreciated.
* ZZ emphasised that careers opportunities would be a good thing to implement e.g. from external companies that aren’t advertised from the careers service. RB thanked the reps for their comments.

Dissertation Support Module

* ZZ commented on the dissertation support module, noting there was disconnect with environmental research module e.g. not a lot of support with international students on about how to access resources, addressing the differences in physical or human geography and also the content that overlapped.
* MU noted that certain masters programmes will do certain modules. E.g. climate change and EG are on some modules but GIS might be on other units.
* ZZ noted that from an international student perspective – they may not find as much guidance that might help them e.g. prepping, writing etc.
* AH noted the modules were designed each week to cover a different part of dissertation e.g. one week dedicated to poster formats, one week dedicated to looking at two examples of dissertation, working through it etc. AH noted that they would look at things – previously taught on this course and the aim is to help support with dissertation. AH reiterated if this was not coming through to provide the feedback in the unit surveys as the intention is there.
* MU noted currently in the dissertation support module they are currently covering environmental research and ethics and that other sessions are to follow (after week 7 content is completed). MU emphasised that by the end of the semester they should have ample knowledge by then for their projects.
* AH noted in terms of posters, these can be created via PowerPoint and that they can also go to media services for their guidance as well, I they have any concerns or issues.
* MU noted they are mirrored units, but they were assessed differently.

**MSc Environmental Governance**

MU noted that the Environmental Governance student rep Brooke (BH) was present.

* BH noted that the university gives students training on the software In Design but students are only offered a 7 day free trail to create a poster. BH questioned why this was not available to use fully. MU noted that is often on a trial level currently and that students can use other software e.g. If not appropriate students can use InkScape or Powerpoint. ZZ noted AH introduced students to InkScape in Past Present, Future. AH confirmed this.
* BH noted they don’t have a license for In Design via the university to access remotely e.g. on a laptop – but they can log into a university computer where it is installed on it.
* MU clarified that this specific training workshop on In Design is not mandatory e.g. it takes place in reading week. BH suggested that a presentation about different methods could be used e.g. alongside In Design.
* BH noted they are currently in the process of designing a research project and they are progressing well.
* MU asked how the peers feel supported. BH confirmed that yes they felt that they are and that technically although it is an independent project, all materials and support are being provided.
* BH noted Semester 1 marks and that several students had issues with marks being incorrect and had to go to SEED hub to get these issues resolved. Issues included students have marks being significantly different e.g. 10 marks difference on Blackboard and Student Centre. MT and AH questioned this comment and suggested that it could be due to a late penalty, or it could be extension related. AH noted initial grades that students get at this point are provisional. AM noted that students could continue to go to the SEED hub if they have any queries and they could assist.
* MU asked BH if they found out what the issue are. BH confirmed there had been issues with students marks from Issues with Key Debates and Urban Transport. MU noted that he can speak to SEED assessment urgently to look into it.
* BH noted mark differences in core modules vs optional units e.g. getting higher marks in optional units. E.g. students had been scoring lower in core modules including Key Debates and Metabolic Manchester.
* BH commented that other than the points mentioned above students are overall happy with the course and its flexibility of its content.
* MU noted they teach on Metabolic Manchester and that students may come from different backgrounds before studying the Manchester.
* MU noted they are responding to these issues, and they are remodelling the programme e.g. to accommodate those students who may have come from more political or social sciences backgrounds etc.

**MSc Green Infrastructure**

No reps have been recruited for this academic year for 2024/25. No comments were provided.

**MSc Geographical Information Systems (GIS)**

GIS reps Ethel Pondelani (EP) and Jacob Osito (JO) provided comments on the MSc GIS programme. MT thanked EP and JO for their hard work noting a survey had recently been created and would be circulated to students. MU noted that they would send this over to AM for minuting taking purposes.

* JO noted students have been really enjoying the courses they have taken this semester e.g. all modules have been inclusive.
* Jo noted there had been some complaints about an assignment submission after Christmas and that students deemed this to not be appropriate. These assignments related to Data Acquisition unit and Remote sensing units being submitted in the first week of January.

Applied Study unit

* JO noted that they received some comments from one student on the programme. Noting that this student had mentioned that they had not been learning much with unit and wished they could take another one.
* JO noted that the dissertation support knowledge gained in the recent sessions could have been applied in semester 1, even though skills may be learnt later in semester 2. E.g. if there was a way to learn before – before working on the dissertation that would help significantly it can help with other assignments etc.
* JO noted other issues about dissertations and submission topics, some students had commented that they had received their dissertation advisor, but noted when they had to initially select their topics of interest they didn’t know what they wanted to do for their dissertation and now they would like to make changes e.g. got allocated to a supervisor that they don’t think was relevant, in terms of topic of interest etc. JO emphasized that some student had still been weighing up dissertation topic options when they made choices and didn’t feel ready.
* EP noted complaints from students about due dates on assessments and that many students noted that they had multiple assessments due on the same day. EP mentioned that students would prefer flexibilty.
* EP noted the unit Spatial Risks, where students had to watch a video before the class and then a seminar class after, not happy about unit format.
* MT asked if students are generally happy with the programme. JO noted who they had spoke to are happy with the course. JO noted that in terms of GIS software - students have used GIS software before and positive about it.

MT provided comments on the rep’s feedback

* MT noted the Spatial Risks unit with Sarah Lindley and that is a new unit. MT asked the reps if students would prefer in-person content and then the practical. Rather than an asynchronous teaching style e.g. an online video. WD noted they also take this unit and they find it redundant and not beneficial. WD mentioned that some students are not listening to the content before e.g. so a 30-minute summary is done before the practical session. MT noted the asynchronous teaching was designed to allow students to view at flexible time. MT emphasised that the summary 30 minutes is done as an overview and if not students might complain as a result.
* MT commented on the overlap of assessment deadlines and that staff can try and stagger these as much as possible. ZZ from Climate Change masters noted that staff are flexible, they noted in the case they were considerate with them when they had clashes etc.
* MT noted there is some flexibility but this needs to be done in advance as possible.
* MT noted in terms of dissertation projects, there is flexibility in terms of topic/title and they have allocated people to everyone who gave preferences as requested.
* ZZ noted that it would beneficial for students to spend the first few weeks shopping e.g. take time to shop for supervisors. ZZ noted that Emma Shuttleworth did an informative and interesting presentation about staff and their research interests and possible dissertation topics.
* MU emphasised staff drop-in’s hours, for both staff and students to use e.g. so staff can speak to students about their interests and topics – so students could speak to multiple staff members to get a feel for what topics they would be interested in.
* ZZ noted that if they investigated the topics, they were interested in they could essentially create their project and poster e.g. not waiting to be allocated, could be enjoyable – shopping for supervisors etc.
* MT emphasised for staff to get the word out regarding in office hours. AH noted one and one time with staff in these hours is great way for students to engage and investigate topics of interest.
* MT also noted the applied study unit for students to take as an option. MT mentioned that this unit was available across all programmes, can be taken in Semester 1 and then a placement can be secured in Semester 2. MT asked if any students have had issues with this applied study unit for them to get in contact with them directly and they can advise.
* MT commented on assessment submissions after Christmas – that this is a wide discussion needs to be had amongst staff e.g. should there be more clustered assessments at end of semester or should these be staggered at the beginning of January after returning after Christmas.
* JO mentioned that many students appreciated being able to access to lecture recordings and that students use these unit recordings after the teaching as they find them useful.
* JJ emphasised how useful the referencing workshop by MU was. JO noted that the library team also developed a useful session of that nature as well.
* MT noted the department wide email link of the Geography community page has been circulated and that there were previous issues with students having access to this. ZZ noted if information – such as the referencing workshop could be included on the Geography community page that would be greatly appreciated.
* MT noted this will be signposted again. MT reiterated that has also been mentioned by hub team as well.
* BH commented on referencing, noting that they had seen discrepancies in terms of referencing e.g. in terms of Manchester and Havard referencing. MU noted they will check this for consistency and report back.

**Action:** Mark Usher (MU) to check the Harvard Referencing and Manchester Referencing.

WD asked about course unit evaluations and why was the CUE surveys sent out before Christmas and not after the assessments were submitted. MT confirmed that course unit evaluations are asked for students to provide by the end of week 12 and appraisal should be after teaching and not after assessments are submitted or when marks and feedback have been given. AM noted that this is often done centrally via the central surveys team, so schools have no control over this. MU emphasised this.

MU noted in terms of the dissertation support unit is delivered in Semester 2 and not Semester 1 as students would have not seen all the topics yet that they could approach in their projects.

AW also asked why the ethics lecture that is related to dissertation projects is delivered so late as well into Semester 2, noting if it was presented earlier it may have influenced students dissertation topics e.g. what they chose to do. MU noted topics are discussed e.g. analytics, methods beforehand as ethics deadline is 23rd May 2025.

AW mentioned educational colonialism and the impact of vulnerable groups being overlooked e.g. not addressing group issues. MU emphasised to AW that students are not discouraged to look at these groups and that if you want to you can look at these groups but in different ways. MU noted you could speak to NGOs who represent these groups, with less ethical implications. AW thanked MU for this comment.

1. **Any other business (AOB(**

MU thanks all the representatives and staff in attendance for their comments provided during the meeting and for their overall attendance.

MU reminded staff and students that they will next all meet on Friday 9th May 2025 for their annual poster exhibition event at 2-4pm taking place on campus and followed by a social event from half 4 to half 6pm at YES Bar in Manchester afterwards.

MU passes on thanks to all attendees.

1. **Date of next meeting**

N/A.

**Summary of Actions List**

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| **Action Number** | **Agenda Item** | **Action** | **Lead** | **Deadline** | **Status/Notes** |
| 1 | 4 | MU to check Manchester/ Havard Referencing Guidelines | Mark Usher | 2025 |  |
| 2 |  |  |  |  |  |
| 3 |  |  |  |  |  |