

Programme Specification

BSc (Hons) Environmental Geography

<i>School:</i>	Humanities
<i>Subject area:</i>	Geography
<i>Entry from academic year:</i>	2021-22
<i>in the month(s) of:</i>	September
<i>Awarding institution:</i>	York St John University
<i>Teaching institution:</i>	York St John University
<i>Delivery location:</i>	York St John University
<i>Programme/s accredited by:</i>	Royal Geographical Society (with IBG)
<i>Exit awards:</i>	Certificate of Higher Education Environmental Geography Diploma of Higher Education Environmental Geography BSc (Ord) Environmental Geography
<i>UCAS code / GTTR / other:</i>	FF81
<i>Joint Honours combinations:</i>	Not applicable
<i>QAA subject benchmark statement(s):</i>	Geography
<i>Mode/s of study:</i>	Undergraduate periods of study ¹ for full time / part time
<i>Language of study:</i>	English
<i>Paired with foundation year</i>	Yes
<i>Study abroad opportunities:</i>	Yes
<i>Placement year opportunity:</i>	Yes

Introduction and special features

Environmental Geography has immediate relevance to some of the most pressing issues facing society in the twenty-first century. Concerns such as growing population and resource imbalances, global environmental change and associated ecological pressures, environmental hazards, climate change and how we should respond to it are central to the subject. The BSc (Hons) Environmental Geography offers a challenging and exciting curriculum that enables you to develop an in-depth, critical understanding of such issues, combined with the skills to aid future employment. The critical environmental challenges facing the world cannot be addressed through either physical geography or human geography approaches alone. This degree brings together perspectives from both to examine how the natural environment functions and make sense of the multiple ways that we interact with it.

This programme has been accredited by the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG). Accredited degree programmes contain a solid academic foundation in geographical knowledge and skills, and prepare graduates to address the needs of the world beyond higher education. The accreditation criteria require evidence that graduates from accredited programmes meet defined sets of learning outcomes, including subject knowledge, technical ability and transferable skills.

Teaching emphasises real-world relevance, mixing class-based sessions with field trips, guest lectures from professionals in relevant fields, and opportunity to gain some professional experience for yourself. Fieldwork is an important part of your degree. This includes day visits in the Yorkshire region and

¹ The standard period of study will apply unless otherwise stated

residential fieldwork opportunities at all three levels. The residential trips, which normally include UK and overseas destinations, are a core part of the curriculum, with transport and accommodation costs covered by your University tuition fees. If residential fieldwork is not possible for any reason, or for any student, equivalent modules with non-residential and/or virtual fieldwork are available (noting that virtual fieldwork would only be used in conjunction with *in situ* fieldwork, or in the exceptional circumstances of no *in situ* fieldwork being possible). The *Geographers' Professional Practice* module provides a specific opportunity for you to embark on an individual project or placement relevant to your anticipated career and interests.

While you are learning about the world through the subject content, you will also develop a range of skills through the degree. These include geographical skills such as cartography, the use of Geographical Information Systems, skills in data analysis and interpretation, research and fieldwork. Generic/transferable skills are also important: critical thinking, constructing and argument, decision-making, time management, self-management and interpersonal skills are all developed through the course.

Environmental issues, from conservation to natural resources to natural hazards, are becoming increasingly central to planning, policy-making and development, from local to global scales. Addressing such issues requires people who have a multi-dimensional understanding of the natural world and human interactions with it, and capacity to think for themselves. This is what the Environmental Geography degree is designed to give you.

A degree in geography opens the door to a wide variety of careers. Surveys consistently show that geography is one of the most valued degree subjects by employers because of the broad range of skills and experience that geography graduates can demonstrate. The BSc Environmental Geography is designed to ensure you develop such attributes alongside your specialist knowledge of environmental issues.

Distinctive features

- Combining physical geography and human geography perspectives on the natural environment
- Residential fieldwork at all levels
- Extensive use of non-residential fieldwork in the city of York and surrounding area
- Guest lectures from planners, policy-makers and environmental managers
- A major emphasis on developing personal, study and 'transferable' skills to prepare you for employment or postgraduate study
- This programme has been accredited by the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG)

Admissions criteria

You must meet the University's general entry criteria for [undergraduate](#) study. In addition, you must have:

- A demonstrable interest in, and enthusiasm for, geography. An 'A' Level (or equivalent) in Geography is not essential requirement. You can use your UCAS personal statement to provide evidence of your interest in the subject, along with any relevant past experience.

If your first language is not English, you need to take an IELTS test or an equivalent qualification accepted by the University (see <https://www.yorks.ac.uk/international/how-to-apply/english-language-requirements/>).

If you do not have traditional qualifications, you may be eligible for entry on the basis of [Accredited Prior \(Experiential\) Learning \(APL/APEL\)](#). We also consider applications for entry with advanced standing.

Programme aim(s)

The BSc (Hons) Environmental Geography programme aims to enable students to develop:

1. An informed and critical understanding of physical environments and processes
2. An informed and reflective appreciation of the complex and reciprocal relations between humans and the physical environment
3. A range of skills in the collection, interpretation and analysis of geographical data
4. A range of transferable skills to equip them for employment, entrepreneurship and lifelong learning.

Programme learning outcomes

Upon successful completion of the programme students will be able to:

Level 4

- 4.1 Knowledge and understanding of physical environments and processes
- 4.2 Knowledge and understanding of society/environment relations as historically situated
- 4.3 An appreciation of how places are constituted and remade by physical and human processes
- 4.4 Knowledge and understanding of the geography of the local area
- 4.5 Skills in interpreting the characteristics of space, place and landscape in a fieldwork setting
- 4.6 Skills in communicating their understanding and ideas in a variety of ways
- 4.7 A range of transferable skills to equip them for further study and employment

Level 5

- 5.1 A critical appreciation of limits to certainty in understanding the biophysical environment
- 5.2 A detailed and informed understanding of the relationships between society and the biophysical environment
- 5.3 An appreciation of geography as dynamic, plural and contested
- 5.4 An understanding of methodologies for collecting and analysing data, and the ability to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of individual methods
- 5.5 The ability to apply concepts, theories and ideas to different contexts (including, where appropriate, an employment context)
- 5.6 Effectively communicated information, ideas, arguments and interpretations in a manner appropriate to the task and audience
- 5.7 Furthered their transferable skills including organisation, time-management, decision-making and the ability to construct a coherent argument

Level 6

- 6.1 A specialist understanding of human/environment relations, including an engagement with ideas that are at the forefront of the discipline
- 6.2 Capacity to develop their own understanding of complex issues, with a sensitivity to both local contingencies and broader (e.g. national or global) influences
- 6.3 An ability to manipulate, analyse and present geospatial data
- 6.4 An ability to critically evaluate arguments, concepts and data, and communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions for a range of purposes and audiences
- 6.5 Transferable skills to an advanced level that prepares them for employment or further study

In addition to the above, Honours students will have:

- 6.6 Designed and undertaken a piece of independent research on a theme relevant to environmental geography

Programme structure

Code	Level	Semester	Title	Credits	Module status	
					compulsory or optional to take C or O	non-compensatable or compensatable NC or X
GEO4002M	4	1	Ecosystems and Biogeography	20	C	X
GEO4003M	4	1	Mapping the Geographies of Yorkshire	20	C	X
GEO4004M	4	1	Critical Thinking and Academic Skills in Geography	20	O	X
GEO4012M	4	1	Critical Thinking and Academic Skills in Geography (non-residential)	20	O	X
GEO4007M	4	2	Earth Systems and Geomorphology	20	C	X
GEO4008M	4	2	Nature Conservation	20	C	X
GEO4010M	4	2	Environmental Geography Fieldwork Studies	20	C	X
GEO5003M	5	1	Environmental Change	20	C	X
GEO5004M	5	1	Environmental Hazards	20	C	X
GEO5005M	5	1	Geographical Thought	20	C	X
GEO5006M	5	2	Sustainability: Global Environmental Challenges	20	C	X
GEO5008M	5	2	Geographers' Professional Practice	20	C	X
GEO5007M	5	2	Research Project	20	O	X
GEO5009M	5	2	Research Project (non-residential)	20	O	X
GEO6003M	6	1&2	Environmental Geography Dissertation	40	C	NC
GEO6005M	6	1	Applied GIS	20	C	X
GEO6006M	6	1	Nature/Culture	20	C	X
GEO6007M	6	2	Habitat Management	20	C	X
GEO6009M	6	2	International/Environmental Fieldwork	20	O	X
GEO6011M	6	2	International/Environmental Fieldwork (non-residential)	20	O	X

In Level 4 (year 1 for full-time students) you will take six 20-credit modules. Two of these, *Ecosystems and Biogeography* and *Earth Systems and Geomorphology* (one in each semester), are designed to introduce you to key ideas in physical geography, ensuring you have some familiarity with a scientific understanding of the natural environment. In the first semester you will take a module designed to introduce you to the norms and expectations of university-level study. This normally incorporates a residential field trip (UK based), so that you get to know the other geographers (students and staff) early in your degree. You also take a module focused on developing your skills in mapping and cartography.

In the second semester the *Nature Conservation* module will introduce you to the history of nature conservation and the environmental movement, and provide you with an understanding of current nature conservation policies and practices in the UK. Fieldwork is a central component of the year. Induction week includes fieldwork within the City of York, introducing you to each other and the city. During both semesters you will find yourself on day trips in the local region. The second semester also includes the *Environmental*

Geography Fieldwork Studies module, through which you will learn more about geography's fieldwork traditions and further develop your own field research skills.

In Level 5 you again take six 20-credit modules. Here the emphasis moves to understanding human/environment relations, with modules on *Environmental Hazards* and *Sustainability: Global Environmental Challenges*. You will also develop your knowledge of *Environmental Change* and how we assess it, learning methods of quantitative data analysis. Alongside these modules there is an emphasis on developing your understanding of research and your own research skills. The *Geographical Thought* module introduces you to a range of approaches to geographical research. In the *Research Project* module you will work in small groups on a research project of your own design (under the guidance of a tutor). This normally involves residential fieldwork (in the UK or Europe), although a non-residential version of the module is available. In the second semester you will undertake a period of professional practice with an appropriate environmental geography theme or setting (which you will be expected to arrange yourself, with the support and advice of a tutor), or a project related to professional environmental geography practice.

In Level 6 you take five modules. For the 40-credit *Geography Dissertation* you will work independently (guided by a tutor) on a piece of original research on any appropriate topic of your choosing. You will also take four 20-credit modules. *Habitat Management* is oriented towards applied physical geography, while *Nature/Culture* furthers your understanding of how society views and values nature. A module on *Applied GIS* develops your specialist technical skills and understanding of the applications of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) to real-world problems and issues. Finally, the *International/Environmental Fieldwork* module, normally involving residential fieldwork outside the UK, is intended to be the culmination of your studies. This will take you somewhere remote from the major centres of population, to an environment different from the others studied during your degree. The emphasis here is on enabling you to demonstrate a high level of skill in interpreting the natural environment and understanding human/non-human interactions. (Note that a non-residential version of the module is available.)

Learning, teaching and assessment

For all of our geography degrees, our aim is to get you *doing* geography for yourself from the outset: collecting and analysing data, applying theories for yourself, and developing your skills and abilities – generating your own knowledge. We use a range of teaching styles and settings to support you in this. This includes lectures and seminars (small groups of students with a tutor), tutorials (one-to-one meetings with a tutor), fieldwork, ICT workshops, independent study outside of formal teaching sessions, collaborative learning (working with your fellow students) and using online resources through the university's Virtual Learning Environment. Teaching sessions include discussions, problem-solving exercises, group work, debates and data analysis exercises. Throughout your degree you are encouraged to take an active part in teaching sessions, rather than just being a passive receiver of information. Sometimes students are even asked to take the lead in sessions.

Assessment of this degree is entirely through coursework, with no exams. This is to ensure that the kinds of work you are doing through the degree reflect the kinds of work geographers undertake after graduation, in professional employment. You will experience a wide range of assessment methods, including essays, reports (including fieldwork reports), verbal presentations and portfolios (potentially with some multimedia elements in them) Many modules are assessed through one piece of coursework, with development of this work supported throughout the course of the module. Feedback on assignments is designed to support you in your future learning, at the same time as assessing what you have already learned.

By your final year, you will be ready to take control of your learning for yourself. The dissertation involves you undertaking an independent research project (guided by a tutor) on an environmental geography topic of your choice, demonstrating self-reliance and developing skills of project management. The fieldwork module in your final semester brings together all that you will have learned through your degree, giving you plenty of scope to demonstrate your knowledge, abilities and creativity.

Progression and graduation requirements

The University's general [regulations](#) for undergraduate awards apply to this programme.

Any modules that must be passed for progression or award are indicated in the Programme Structure section as non-compensatable.

Internal and external reference points

This programme specification was formulated with reference to:

- [University Mission Statement](#) [see page two]
- [Strategic Plan 2015-20](#) [see page four]
- [QAA subject benchmark statement](#)
- [Framework for Higher Education Qualifications](#)
- QAA Subject Benchmark Statement for Geography (revised December 2014)
- QAA UK Quality Code: Chapter A1

Date written / revised: July 2017

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