Single Honours Geography

GEO3502: Dissertation in Geography with Environmental Management
GEO3503: Dissertation in Geography with Earth System Science
GEO3504: Dissertation in Geography, Environment and Society
GEO3420: Dissertation in Geography

UNDERGRADUATE DISSERTATION HANDBOOK, for Geographers in year 3 during the 2011-2012 academic year.

Department of Geography
University of Exeter, Cornwall Campus
Introduction
It relates to students on the following degree programmes: BA/BSc. Geography; Geography, Environment and Society; Geography with Earth System Science; and Geography with Environmental Management. This guide contains the following main sections:

This guide covers the background information you will need before you start your Dissertation in Geography; Geography, Environment and Society; Geography with Earth System Science; Geography with Environmental Management and Geography with Information Technology programmes. This guide should be of considerable help to you during your Dissertation research and contains the following main sections:

Sections 1 and 2 outline what a dissertation is and what the requirements of a dissertation are. Learning outcomes, formative and summative assessments associated with your dissertation module, as well as how to work with your dissertation advisor are presented in these sections.

Sections 3 and 4 include information relating to the steps of the dissertation that you must undertake in Year 2. This includes details of your dissertation proposal, as well as the required ethics and health and safety forms.

Sections 5 – 7 provide detailed guidance on completing your dissertation, such as formatting and referencing; University regulations and final pieces of advice.

There are several appendices, which contain specific information, including pro formas. See the table of contents for this handbook for specific titles.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>AIMS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>AIMS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>NATURE OF STUDY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>DISSERTATION CONTENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>RECOMMENDED READING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>DISSERTATION REQUIREMENTS, ADVICE AND MONITORING PROGRESS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS OF MY DISSERTATION?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>WHEN MUST I SUBMIT MY DISSERTATION?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>WHAT COUNTS TOWARDS THE FINAL MARK OF YOUR DISSERTATION MODULE?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>WHAT CAN I EXPECT FROM MY DISSERTATION ADVISER?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>WHAT WILL YOUR DISSERTATION ADVISER EXPECT FROM YOU?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>DISSERTATION PLANNING AND THE DISSERTATION PROPOSAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>DISSERTATION PROPOSAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>WHEN MUST I SUBMIT MY DISSERTATION PROPOSAL?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>ETHICAL AND RISK ASSESSMENT FORM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>CAN I CHANGE TOPIC ONCE I HAVE SUBMITTED THE PROPOSAL?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>PILOT STUDIES AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>SUMMARY OF ACTION TO BE TAKEN BEFORE THE END OF YEAR 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>GETTING STARTED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS, SAFETY AND FIELD WORK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN RESEARCH PROJECTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.1</td>
<td>Guidelines for projects involving people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.2</td>
<td>Additional guidelines for research involving young people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.3</td>
<td>Guidelines involving access to private land and property</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.4</td>
<td>Guidelines involving respecting the environment involved in your research</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.1.5 Ethical Assessment Form ................................................................. 19
4.2 SAFETY AND FIELD WORK ................................................................. 20
  4.2.1 Assessment of any potential dangers ........................................... 20
  4.2.2 Preparation for field work ......................................................... 20
  4.2.3 Working alone ........................................................................ 21
  4.2.4 International Distress Signs ....................................................... 21
  4.2.5 Field work locations where special care should be exercised ...... 22
  4.2.6 Disease and immunisation ......................................................... 22
  4.2.7 Overseas Fieldwork ................................................................. 23
5 PRESENTATION AND LAYOUT ................................................................ 24
  5.1 WORD LIMIT AND PAGE FORMAT ..................................................... 24
  5.2 STRUCTURE AND CONTENTS ............................................................. 25
  5.3 CHAPTERS, HEADINGS AND SUBHEADINGS ................................. 26
  5.4 CONTENTS .................................................................................. 26
  5.5 FIGURES AND TABLES ................................................................. 26
  5.6 REFERENCING AND THE BIBLIOGRAPHY OR REFERENCE LIST ...... 27
  5.7 CHECKING YOUR WORK .............................................................. 27
6 REGULATIONS AND PROCEDURES .................................................... 28
  6.1 PLAGIARISM AND COLLUSION ......................................................... 28
  6.2 PENALTIES FOR EXCEEDING THE WORD LIMIT ......................... 30
7 THREE FINAL PIECES OF ADVICE .................................................. 30
8 APPENDIX 1: DISSERTATION MARKING CRITERIA ............................. 32
9 APPENDIX 2: EXAMPLES OF AIMS AND OBJECTIVES .................. 35
10 APPENDIX 3: DISSERTATION PROGRESS REPORT ......................... 36
11 APPENDIX 4: DISSERTATION PROPOSAL PROFORMA (IDENTICAL IN CONTENT TO THAT USED IN GEO2504) ................................................................. 37
12 APPENDIX 5: ASSESSMENT FORMS .................................................... 46
13 APPENDIX 6: EXAMPLE FRONT PAGE ................................................ 47
14 APPENDIX 7: AN EXAMPLE OF A TABLE OF CONTENTS ................ 48
15 APPENDIX 8: EXAMPLE OF LIST OF FIGURES ................................... 49
1 AIMS and LEARNING OUTCOMES

This section discusses the aims, outcomes, and scope of the Dissertation and what makes a good Dissertation.

1.1 Aims
The aim of the Dissertation is to give you an opportunity to display your skills in tackling specific geographical issues in some depth. The essence of the work is that you are able to demonstrate your ability to undertake your own independent and original piece of research. The Dissertation must be independent and original in all its phases including design, data collection, data processing and analysis and data interpretation and project write-up. The aims of the Dissertation are for you to develop:

- Knowledge of a specific geographical topic
- An understanding of the challenges of empirical geographical research
- The ability to deal with practical research problems (e.g. collecting, manipulating and analysing data)
- Skills in designing a project and linking its subject-matter to other bodies of geographical knowledge
- Skills in dealing with the complex inter-relationships of real-world processes
- Transferable skills in inter-personal communication, data collection and analysis, report writing, and effective time management.

1.2 Intended learning outcomes
Your Dissertation will have learning outcomes specific to your degree programme. The Dissertation provides students with the opportunity to undertake their own independent and original piece of research, drawing on the substantive intellectual themes covered in the BA Geography, BSc Geography and Geography with Environmental Management; Geography with Earth System Science and Geography, Environment and Society programmes. Please see module specific learning outcomes for each degree programme on the dissertation ELE pages.

On satisfactorily completing the Dissertation you should be able to demonstrate the following points:

**Knowledge & understanding**
- Explain in depth the nature of your research problem and its relevance to the field(s) of study and to the relevant published literature.
- Describe the results and analyse them in terms of the original aims.
- Present substantive conclusions and indicate directions for future research in the area.
- Discuss critically the shortcomings of the research methods.

**Discipline-specific skills**
- Plan, design and execute a piece of rigorous geographical research, including the production of a final report.
- Undertake effective field work, with due consideration of safety and risk assessment (where applicable).
- Work safely in a laboratory and with awareness of standard procedures (where applicable).
- Prepare effective maps and diagrams using a range of appropriate technologies (where applicable).
- Employ appropriate technical and/or laboratory-based methods for the analysis of spatial and environmental data (where applicable).
- Employ where appropriate social science/geographical survey techniques for the collection and analysis of data.
- Collect, interpret, evaluate and combine different types of geographical evidence and information.
- Recognise the ethical issues involved in debates and enquiries (where applicable).

**Intellectual skills:**
- Define and defend the purpose of the Dissertation.
- Define its place and function within geography.
- Identify, formulate, analyse and resolve research questions/problems.
- Demonstrate the Dissertation’s philosophy and methodology.
- Demonstrate a rigorous pattern of experimental conception and/or data collection.
- Demonstrate an appropriate approach to analysis.
- Provide a critical interpretation of data and text.
- Abstract and synthesise relevant information.
- Demonstrate a rational synthesis.
- Demonstrate a relevant and realistic conclusion.
- Develop and sustain a reasoned argument.
- Judge critically and evaluate evidence/previous research.
- Assess the merits of different theories, concepts, explanations and policies.
- Demonstrate an appropriately high level of literacy, graphicity, numeracy and conceptual sophistication.
- Realise the Dissertation’s limitations within the specific field of research.
- Make clear, logical and appropriate decisions.

**Transferable skills:**
- Plan and execute a piece of primary research.
- Undertake independent research (e.g. in library, laboratory, and field), effectively, responsibly and with consideration of ethical issues.
- Collect, manipulate, analyse geographical data, and communicate findings using numeric and computational techniques where applicable.
- Communicate research problems and ask relevant questions.
- Liase effectively with public and private bodies where appropriate.
- Structure a major piece of research work, and present it competently and clearly (e.g. write coherently, create and use diagrams, figures, appendices using appropriate C&IT).
- Demonstrate competence in working independently (i.e. personal motivation, decision making, awareness, responsibility, and management skills, including setting and work to deadlines).
1.3 Nature of study
Although there are generally no restrictions on the type of geographical study that you can undertake your topic must fall within the remit of the degree you are following. Your dissertation may be carried out within one of the systematic branches of the subject, or on a regional basis, or in the history of geographical methodology. Studies involving first-hand field work or personal inquiry and data collection tend to be suitable in many cases, but original comparative or critical studies based on library material are equally acceptable. The study must be, however, more than a mere compilation of existing information. The sources of data must be made clear (see Section 6.2).

1.4 Dissertation content
Detailed requirements of the dissertation are outlined in Section 2 below. This section provides advice on the academic content of your dissertation:

Your written dissertation should:
- Define and defend the purpose of the Dissertation.
- Define its place and function within geography.
- Demonstrate its philosophy and methodology.
- Demonstrate a rigorous pattern of experimental conception and/or data collection.
- Demonstrate an appropriate approach to analysis.
- Demonstrate a rational synthesis.
- Demonstrate a relevant and realistic conclusion.
- Demonstrate an appropriately high level of literacy, graphicacy, numeracy and conceptual sophistication.
- Realise its limitations within the specific field of research.

It is important that you bear the above in mind when designing, implementing, and reporting on your research project. You can use the criteria above and learning outcomes stated in Section 1.2 as a list against which you can check your Dissertation. Does your Dissertation show evidence of, or demonstrate, these features?

What makes a good Dissertation?
- A good problem.
- Set in its scientific, academic context.
- Clear statement of aims, research questions and objectives.
- Logical research programme.
- Clearly defined and appropriate methodology.
- Adequate and appropriate data analysis.
- Adequate and appropriate data for the problem.
- Clear statement of results and your interpretation.
- Well structured and clearly written.
- Intellectual achievement.
- Correct conclusions that relate to the stated aims and research questions.
- Well presented
The assessment of your Dissertation is based on the degree to which your report meets these criteria. Details of Dissertation assessment are provided in Appendix 1: DISSERTATION MARKING CRITERIA.

**Research aims and objectives**

You are required to state your research aims and objectives in your Dissertation proposal. You will also need to state these clearly and succinctly in your Dissertation. Your research aims should set out clearly the main aim(s) of the project; these are research questions, testable hypotheses, proposition or themes. A clear statement of research questions is important because these statements determine the direction of your project; the type of information you require to answer the questions determines the methods you need to use and the way you analyse the data collected. The conclusions should reflect the original aims and research questions. In other words, the conclusions should answer the research questions!

Aims give rise to main research objectives. These are operational steps, or specific tasks by which the aims will be achieved; they are usually measurable (i.e. there is evidence that they've been done!).

The specific aim(s), research question(s) and objectives can be framed within a broad overarching aim/theme; this will give the reader a good idea about the scope of the project. The aim(s) and research question(s) should ideally be capable of leading to the drawing of conclusions. ‘Woolly’ aims and research question(s) often result in overly descriptive rambling discussions that fail to reach any firm conclusions! An example of research aims, questions and the objectives that might arise is provided in Appendix 2: Examples of AIMS and OBJECTIVES.

**1.5 Recommended Reading**

You may find the following books useful guides when planning and executing your Dissertation. Alternatively, search library catalogue using appropriate keywords. * denotes recommended texts.

*How to do a Dissertation and write a report*

**Statistics, Research Design, Data Analysis and Presentation**

Wheeler, D., Shaw, G. and Barr, S. 2006. Statistical techniques in geographical analysis

**Human Geography**

Silverman, David. 1993. Interpreting qualitative data: methods for analysing talk, text and interaction

**Physical Geography**


**GIS**

Stillwell, J. and Clarke, G. Eds. 2004. Applied GIS and spatial analysis
Tate, N.J. and Atkinson, P.M. 2001. Modelling scale in geographical information science

2 Dissertation Requirements, Advice and Monitoring Progress
This section details the requirements of your dissertation, outlines how we will monitor your progress and provides advice on how to carry out your dissertation. It also includes a helpful schedule of the summative and formative assessments associated with your dissertation.

2.1 What are the requirements of my dissertation?

During Year 2:
During your second year, you will be encouraged to develop ideas for your dissertation. You will learn specific techniques and skills that you may wish to use as part of your dissertation research as part of the compulsory year 2 modules: Geo2504 Geographical Research Skills and Geo2502 Fieldtrip. As part of Geo2504 you will be required to complete a dissertation proposal – this counts for 67% of the module mark. This assignment is due shortly after the Easter Vacation. The GEO2504 course convenor and the dissertation coordinator will allocate you a supervisor.

During the week following the last scheduled examination, you will be required to meet with your supervisor. This week is known as “Dissertation Week” and you MUST be present at University during all of Dissertation Week. This year dissertation week is 6 – 10th June 2011. During this week you will refine your research method with guidance from your dissertation supervisor, as well as complete all necessary risk assessment and ethics approval forms. You will thus, need to have a clear understanding of your research design, so that you can complete all necessary paperwork. You will also be able to sign out (or book) field equipment during this week.

During the Summer Vacation and Year 3:
We strongly encourage you to undertake the primary research associated with your dissertation as well as any analysis during the Summer Vacation between Year 2 and 3. You will be expected to provide a formative update on your progress at the start of year 3.

Formative Assessment 1:
At the beginning of the Third Year you will produce a written report on your research. This is due in the first week or two of the term and should be no longer than 400 words. You will meet with supervisor soon after this date to discuss your progress and you present 2 copies of the 400 word progress report to them at this meeting. You need to make arrangements to meet your dissertation supervisors. See Appendix 3: Dissertation progress report.

Formative Assessment 2:
A second progress report is due in at the beginning of term two, when you will need to arrange a further meeting with your supervisor. This report needs to present an outline of the structure of your dissertation, including a sample table of contents. See Appendix
3: Dissertation progress report. You will use this as the basis of your discussion with your supervisor.

**Summative Assessment:** A 10,000 word dissertation which counts for 100% of the module mark. See Section 2.3 for the due date.

**Apart from these reports, we will not read any of your written work, including any drafts of Dissertation chapters.**

The timeline of dissertation requirements is summarised in the following flow diagram:

**TASK**

- Submit Dissertation proposal (50% of module mark) as part of GEO2504.
- Assigned Dissertation Advisor
- Complete forms, reflect on feedback from assessed proposal for GEO2504
- Meet Dissertation Advisor & discuss proposal
- Satisfactory: Proceed  Unsatisfactory: revise & resubmit
- Complete & sign Ethical, working with 3rd parties and Risk Assessment Form
- Undertake Dissertation Research
- Submit Dissertation Progress Report (400 words). Meet & discuss with Advisor.
- Submit Dissertation Table of Contents Report (250 words). Meet & discuss with Advisor.
- Submit Dissertation

**TIMING**

- Week 1 (Summer Term)
- Weeks 2-5
- Summer Term
- Between the 1st – 6th June 2011
- During ‘Dissertation Week’, 6th – 10th June 2011
- By end of Summer Term

**Please note:** You cannot leave the University for the summer term until the first 5 steps are completed.

- Summer Vacation and During Term 1 of Year 3
- Monday of Week 1 of Autumn Term (2011)
- Monday of Week 1 Spring Term (2012)
- Last Thursday of Spring Term
2.2 When must I submit my Dissertation?

Your Dissertation must be handed in to DEPARTMENTAL SECRETARY between 9.00am – 12:00pm on Thursday 29th March 2012. You will need to submit one hard copy of your Dissertation, one electronic copy on CD and a BART submission form.

Failure to do this will be dealt with severely as the Board of Examiners will normally impose a penalty of a reduction by one class of the mark awarded. It is the student’s own responsibility to bring any potentially extenuating circumstances to the attention of the Dissertation Adviser.

2.3 What counts towards the final mark of your dissertation module?

There are two formative assessments and one summative assessment associated with your third year dissertation module; submission of both summative and formative work is required to complete the module. These are in addition to the requirements in Year 2, associated with GEO2504. They are as follows:

Progress Report 1 (Week 1 or 2 of term, October 2011) FORMATIVE ONLY
Progress Report 2 (Week 11 or 12 of term, January 2012) FORMATIVE ONLY
10,000 Word Dissertation – 100% of module mark SUMMATIVE ONLY

Section 5 provides information on how to organise and set out your Dissertation report.

2.4 What can I expect from my Dissertation Adviser?

The Dissertation is your own piece of independent research. You should, therefore, expect to undertake the necessary activities - thinking and doing - independently. Your Dissertation Adviser’s principal responsibility is to monitor your progress.

1. The Dissertation Adviser, or other staff members, can offer technical advice on the Dissertation, e.g. appropriate methodology, logistics, resources.
2. Your Dissertation Adviser will read your Dissertation Progress Reports to ensure that you are making progress.
3. On the basis of your Progress Reports, your Dissertation Adviser will give advice regarding your progress towards your aims and objectives, e.g. tell you that you need to ‘get cracking’.
4. On the basis of your reports, alert the Dissertation Co-ordinator regarding any unsatisfactory progress
5. When required and requested, your Dissertation Adviser will answer direct and specific questions of a technical nature (e.g. is this analytical method appropriate?) - this direction may also be obtained from other staff where appropriate.
6. Your Dissertation Adviser, along with any other member of staff you care to consult, can offer you technical advice at any time during the third year, but this should not include reading any draft chapters.

You cannot expect your Dissertation Adviser to:

- Tell you what to do next.
Tell you what to do with your data.
Think of new projects for you.
Read draft copies of Dissertation materials.

2.5 What will your Dissertation Adviser expect from you?

That you attend formal Dissertation Progress Monitoring Meetings
You must have a minimum of three meetings with your Dissertation Adviser, at which your progress will be formerly monitored and recorded on Dissertation Progress Report Forms (see Appendix 3: Dissertation progress report).

**Monitoring meeting 1:** During Year 2. Dissertation Week (during the week following the last exams). Discuss dissertation proposal and finalise plans.

**Monitoring meeting 2:** Week 1 of Autumn Term (3rd year). Present 400 word progress report and complete Appendix 3: Dissertation progress report. Please note that in this meeting you will be expected to bring along two copies of your written progress report and come prepared to discuss the progress you have made on your dissertation over the summer. It is the opportunity for you to meet with your supervisor and ask questions that will help you progress your project.

**Monitoring meeting 3:** Week 1 of Spring Term (3rd year). Present chapter structure in writing and complete Appendix 3: Dissertation progress report. Please note that this is the final formal meeting where you will be discussing how to format and complete the dissertation; there will be no opportunity to change your dissertation topic at this stage. Please bring two copies of your chapter structure in writing to this meeting.

**NB.** This is only the minimum requirement; you are strongly advised to be pro-active in maximising opportunities for seeking advice. Tutorials may be useful opportunities to discuss the nuts and bolts of Dissertation report writing, organisation and presentation. You are also advised to make use of other resources on campus such as the library and the ASK resource centre who can help you develop skills to improve the quality of your research, analysis and writing.

That you complete and present a satisfactory Ethical and Risk Assessment Form
You should complete an Ethical and Risk Assessment Form (Appendix 5: Assessment Forms) and present it to your Dissertation Adviser for signing. The Department will not support field work undertaken without a satisfactory Ethical and Risk Assessment Form (see Section 4).

That you make progress on your Dissertation
You should have made substantial progress on your Dissertation during the long Summer vacation. This period should have been used to collect and organise any data you may need. As far as possible you should aim to complete your data collection stage by the end of the Summer vacation.

Remember, if for any reason you have modified (in a substantive way) your topic during the Summer vacation, you must inform your Dissertation Adviser immediately. You
should discuss your progress with your Dissertation Adviser during the Autumn Term. Your Dissertation Adviser will make record of these meetings using a Dissertation Progress Report Form (see Appendix 3: Dissertation progress report).

During the Autumn and Spring Term, you should ideally be processing and analysing any data you have collected and write up your Dissertation. If you are using a computer and have any difficulties, you can consult the duty programmers in the I.T. Services.

**That you keep your Dissertation Advisor informed of any change in direction/topic**

If you decide to change research direction, and focus on a topic different to that of the original Dissertation proposal, you must contact your assigned Dissertation Adviser and the Dissertation Co-ordinator as soon as possible. This is so that you can be assigned a Dissertation Adviser appropriate to your chosen area of research. **You will be expected to submit a new Dissertation proposal** to the new Dissertation Adviser, following the format of the Dissertation proposal guidelines (Appendix 4: Dissertation Proposal Proforma (identical in content to that used in GEO25012504). **NB.** This new proposal is not assessed but is nonetheless extremely important. It will help to ensure that you have thought through the design of the Dissertation project and that it is relevant and feasible. It will enable the Dissertation Adviser to provide advice and monitor your progress.

**That you keep an archive of your research data**

You should keep an archive of all your research information, including, for example, field notebooks, primary data (paper and/or electronic records) such as completed/returned questionnaires, pollen count-sheets, laboratory measurements and calculations, correspondence with subjects, tapes of interviews, and drafts.

*The School Examination Board and/or the External Examiner reserve the right to consider this archive as part of your Dissertation module assessment. Failure to provide or maintain this archive may result in loss of marks.*

*Failure to make satisfactory progress on your Dissertation, including non-attendance at Dissertation Progress Monitoring Meetings, and non-submission of a satisfactory Risk Assessment Form will be reported to the Head of Department.*
3 DISSERTATION PLANNING AND THE DISSERTATION PROPOSAL

This section explains what the procedures are for submitting your Dissertation proposal and assigning of a Dissertation Adviser. Sections 3 and 4 cover the background information you will need to complete the aspects of your dissertation required in YEAR 2 of your degree. It provides advice on writing your proposal, what you need to do to prepare for dissertation week and your expectations during dissertation week.

3.1 Dissertation Proposal

The Dissertation proposal is the first step towards formulating a sound and rigorous methodology and rationale for your Dissertation. Guidelines for completing your dissertation proposal can be found in Appendix 4: Dissertation Proposal Proforma (identical in content to that used in GEO25012504). This is identical to the proforma you already completed as part of GEO2504. It therefore links closely to the second year modules, particularly Geographical Research Skills (GEO2504) and Fieldtrip (GEO2502). It cannot be stated strongly enough that you should begin to plan your Dissertation as soon as possible. During the last two weeks of the Spring Term and over the Easter Vacation you should work on your proposal, checking the ideas, potential literature sources and field areas. You should seek help and advice from academic staff, and expect to gain some advice from your tutor.

3.2 When must I submit my Dissertation proposal?

Your dissertation proposal is submitted as part of a summative assessment in GEO2504. It counts for 50% of the assessment in that module. It does not count towards your year 3 dissertation module mark.

3.3 What happens next?

Once you have submitted your proposals, we will assign dissertation advisors, who will mark your proposals and meet with you during dissertation week. They will give comments on the proposal, as well as guidance on any possible modifications. Your topic may be approved without changes, with some modifications or rejected. In the event that your proposal is rejected, you will be asked to re-work your ideas and re-submit your proposal by the end of the Summer Term. This will give the advisor time to consider the new project proposal and discuss it with you before the end of term. You may be assigned a new Dissertation Advisor.

3.4 Ethical and Risk Assessment Form

Before commencing on your proposed project ‘fieldwork’ (i.e. any research undertaken outside of the University) you must complete an Ethical Assessment and Risk Assessment Form (see Section 4 & Appendix 5: Assessment Forms). This must be counter signed by your Dissertation Advisor, and a copy kept on record. The Department will not support projects that are deemed to pose an unacceptable risk. If you subsequently change topics, you will need to complete a new Risk Assessment Form. Failure to submit a satisfactory Risk Assessment Form will be reported to the Head of Department and the Dissertation research will not be supported by the Department.
3.5 Can I change topic once I have submitted the proposal?

Yes, but there are a series of procedures that must be followed. If you decide to change topic after submitting your proposal, you must contact the Dissertation Coordinator as soon as possible. Any substantial change of topic has to be formally agreed with your advisor. If necessary, a new Dissertation proposal has to be submitted and assessed as soon as possible, following the guidelines used for your summative assessment in GEO2504.

Although this new proposal does not form part of the assessment it is nonetheless extremely important. It will help to ensure that you have thought through the design of the new Dissertation project and that it is a relevant and feasible study. It will enable the Dissertation Adviser to provide advice and monitor your progress. You will also need to undertake a new Risk Assessment.

In exceptional situations you may feel you have a case for changing your advisor. In these situations a written request has to be submitted to Dr Larissa Naylor with details for your request AS SOON AS POSSIBLE to ensure successful completion of your Dissertation. You must talk to your current advisor before requesting a change of advisor. If you file such a request you must not miss any appointments with your current advisor, including filing a progress report. Please note that a change is not guaranteed and that changes of advisors are made only in exceptional circumstances. If you feel that the relationship with your current advisor has irretrievably broken down, see your tutor and/or the Dissertation Coordinator IMMEDIATELY.

3.6 Pilot studies and access to information

It is important that where necessary you seek prior permission for access to land, archives or other sources of data before the field work or research is undertaken. A standard letter will be made available on request to explain that you are carrying out work that is an essential part of your degree course and not related to any official investigation on the part of the University.

It is usually a good idea to carry out a preliminary pilot project. This might involve carrying out a scaled-down version of your methodology (field work, archive or laboratory work) in order to:

- Identify potential bottlenecks in the project, e.g. time taken to collect or analyse data.
- Determine whether or not your data collection technique is viable/feasible.
- Determine how detailed your data has to be.
- How much material (e.g. sample size) you require (e.g. sediment and water sample size).
- What needs to be collected and what it needs to be stored in (e.g. water and sediment samples).
- How long the processing and analysis of sample/data takes (e.g. pollen preparation, water and sediment analysis, questionnaire processing).
- How you extract data from the actual material that you have collected.

Carrying out a pilot project can be an effective means of determining the viability of a project. It can help you to avoid one of the worst problems that may only come to light after you have collected your data, and begin to analyse and interpret it: 'If only I had
recorded/asked/collected X, then I could have carried out Y analysis, and answered question Z.' Often it is too late to rectify this situation.

3.7 Summary of action to be taken before the end of Year 2

Below are a list of required tasks related to your dissertation that you must complete during year 2:

1. Develop your research idea
2. Write your dissertation proposal (assessed as part of GEO2504)
3. Reflect on the comments on your dissertation proposal and rework required sections. Complete all necessary forms.
4. Sign up to see your supervisor during ‘Dissertation Week’ – the week immediately following the last scheduled exam. This year, 6th – 10th June.
5. Complete all required ethics, risk, equipment and safety forms.
6. Ensure that your supervisor is happy with your research design, including questions and the timeframe for completing your work, before you leave for the Summer Vacation.

3.8 Getting started

The purpose of the dissertation is to train you as well as to test your skills in particular forms of geographical research. The dissertation is an opportunity for you to demonstrate your capacity for independent, self-motivated work, your abilities in handling quantitative and qualitative data and your capacity to develop a coherent argument within a long, written project. Because of the multi-faceted nature of the dissertation, and because it is a project initiated and conducted by you working largely independently, there is no such thing as a ‘model’ or ‘ideal’ dissertation. Rather, a successful dissertation will explore a clearly defined topic, using appropriate techniques and methodologies to produce meaningful data that can then be analysed using relevant methods to address the chosen research question. As much as the dissertation is intended as a means for you to demonstrate your knowledge and understanding of geography, it is also intended as a means for you to demonstrate that you are able to discern the techniques, methods, theories and sources relevant to your specific topic. It is important, therefore, that you are selective in what you decide to do and in the manner through which you do it.

Your Dissertation should be framed within a broad area of study (a research topic). Within this you should identify a research problem, this is a more specific, smaller issue within the topic. The research problem should lead to the identification of research questions. These are specific questions that you ask in relation to your problem, i.e. how you approach the problem. For example:

Research topic: Climate change  Research problem: Climate change in Cornwall

Research questions that might arise from this include: Is the climate in Cornwall changing? How did Cornwall’s climate change in the past? How can climate change in Cornwall be detected? How will climate change affect water supply (floods/drought/vegetation/…) in Cornwall? Do the weather records indicate that the Cornish climate has changed already?
In choosing a topic you need to consider:

Is it interesting? Can the topic retain your interest and motivation?
Is it realistic? Is there enough time? Are the data available?
Is it financially viable? Can you afford the transport and materials?
Where can I do it? Can you research at a fixed location, or is there only a limited choice of sites?
What equipment do I need? Does the Department have it? Will it be available?
(aapplies to both field and laboratory equipment).
Is it practical? Is there time available for data collection? What other commitments (work, holidays) do you need to consider?
Do you need permission for access to field sites, or unusual data sources? Do you need assistance in the field? Is the time required for laboratory analysis reasonable and realistic? For example, will there be sufficient access to the laboratory facilities? (Check with advisor and/or technical staff)
Safety? Are there any risks that need to be identified in the field or laboratory work? Do you need assistance in the field?
Ethical considerations? Are there any?

Identifying a research topic

You should choose a Dissertation which reflects your interest in the subject, which attempts to address current debates in geography and which fits within the remit of the degree that you are following. Examples can often be gained from reading recent journal issues (e.g. Progress in Physical Geography and Progress in Human Geography) and from your second year modules.

Perhaps the most difficult part of the Dissertation process is identifying a problem to address. Once you have identified a suitable research topic, you need to decide what particular aspect of the topic you are going to investigate. This requires you to be familiar with what other research has already been done in the field, and what is of interest. Your project must also be set in the context of this existing research. This means that you need to carry out research in the library, checking journals, review articles, abstracts and databases before starting practical work. The library web pages have helpful information guides to using online databases and electronic search engines (http://www.ex.ac.uk/library). You should familiarise yourself with these as soon as possible when undertaking your research for your Dissertation. If you are having problems using the web based bibliographic resources ask the helpdesk staff in the library. Your personal tutor/module lecturer/Dissertation advisor will also be able to direct you to wider reading.

Flowerdew and Martin (1997) suggests the following tips for generating research ideas:

- Follow up an idea that arose in a lecture.
- Read articles or books on a topic that interests you.
- Be on the look-out for ideas in the media: newspapers, radio, television etc.
- Talk to organisations or individuals working in your area.
- Think about your own outside interests: can they generate a research topic?

Parsons & Knight (1995) outline a series of ways in which a research problem can be identified:
Nobody has investigated this topic... I will!

Bloggs (1990) investigated this topic and questioned the role of X. I'll investigate the role of X.

Bloggs (1990) investigated this topic at site X and found that... I'll investigate whether or not the same is true at site Y.

Bloggs (1990) investigated this topic and suggested that X was controlled by Y and Z. I'll investigate whether or not this is the case.

Bloggs (1990) investigated this topic and found that... Have things changed since then? I'll repeat the study and compare results... if things are different/the same, I'll explain why.

Bloggs (1990) investigated this topic using method X. I'll see if method Y gives different results... compare with X results and explain differences.

**Research questions**

Specific research questions should be directly related to, and arise logically from, the research topic/problem you are addressing.

Only pursue questions that look as though they will have interesting answers i.e. that lead to new knowledge, or solve a particular problem.

Questions are usually good if you can suggest or predict what answers they may have (i.e. set up hypotheses) and what the implications of these answers are. The best questions are relatively easy to answer but make significant steps forward in the investigation!

Research questions can be stated in terms of questions or experimental hypotheses. For example: Is X related to Y? (research question), or X is related to Y (experimental hypothesis). Perhaps one of the most important issues to take note of is the difference between a casual and a causal relationship. Just because two factors may appear to be linked (i.e. statistically, or by observation) it does not necessarily mean that there is a cause-and-effect relationship. It is up to you to interpret the results of your observations and to devise research strategies by which you might establish causality.

When thinking about research questions you may also wish to try to identify an unusual angle on your topic. For example, have recent events altered the geography of your topic? Is your topic something overlooked by the geographical literature? Can you bring a fresh perspective to an established geographical topic?

Your ‘research question’ or the ‘hypothesis’ should encapsulate a set of specific, simple, achievable and clearly stated aims for your topic that will form the foundation of the entire dissertation. One way to focus on your research question is to try to encapsulate the entire range of the dissertation in one sentence. Bear in mind that it can take the full 10,000 words to address the issues arising out of just that one sentence.

**Research aims and objectives**

You are required to state your research aims and objectives in your Dissertation proposal. These are usually included as part of an introductory chapter where you provide an introduction to your topic to help explain why your research question is worthy of study and what the aims and objectives of your research are.

**Is your research question viable?**
Be careful to ensure in advance that data sources required to complete your research are accessible to you. If you are proposing to use particular data-archives, you must ensure that you can get permission to use them. If you are proposing to conduct research using a survey, you must be certain that you have access to the relevant individuals and/or organisations. If you find that you do not have access to these things only after you have committed yourself to a particular topic and without having taken sufficient measures in advance, your dissertation may be severely compromised.

**Tips on completing aspects of your dissertation: literature review, research methodology, flexibility**

Spend time preparing your literature review and be sure you understand its function. The literature review demonstrates your understanding of the ways in which the issues around your topic have been analysed by geographers (and experts in other disciplines where appropriate) and helps both to inform the research methodology and theoretical approach that you will use and to make your particular contribution clear. A literature review is *not* simply a series of summaries of texts about the same subject. Again, if you need to have access to specialist literature that is not available in the library, you must establish in advance that you can get access to it.

Your methodology and your data-collection activities should be informed directly by your research question. Broadly speaking, the research question says what you plan to do, the methodology lays out how you intend to do it and the data-collection is what you actually do. A clear and coherent research question should be used to develop a robust and relevant methodology that should in turn lead to effective and appropriate data collection.

Your methodology (which will form a significant part of an early chapter of your dissertation or, more commonly, a chapter in its own right) must be made clear to the reader. Give details of, for example, how many interviews have been undertaken, questionnaires filled in, samples taken (and the sampling strategy used), rates of response and so on. You should also indicate why a particular site or datasource was chosen, which particular tests were used and why and what, if any limitations you might have encountered in applying your methodology. You must ensure that you collect relevant information and/or evidence to support your central argument or test the hypothesis of your dissertation. This is equally important to both human and physical geographers.

Be flexible. Even professional researchers with years of experience cannot predict every aspect of their research. You may find that other, more pertinent questions arise during the course of the research which significantly alter your perspective. You may find that your data sources reveal something very different from that which you quite reasonably expected to find. People who assured you that they would talk to you might disappear or go quiet when confronted with a survey questionnaire. These and similar circumstances do arise, but do not spell disaster for your dissertation. They may cause you to revise your original topic or your key research question, in which case you must discuss this with your supervisor at the earliest possible opportunity. In all circumstances such events provide you with an opportunity for reflection which can be written in to the dissertation as part of the research process. *A research problem only becomes a disaster if you do not learn from it.*
4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS, SAFETY AND FIELD WORK

Ethics, health and safety and safe fieldwork are all important components of redesigning and executing your dissertation research. It is essential that you consider all of the information in this section and complete all necessary forms by the end of Dissertation Week, in YEAR 2 of your degree.

4.1 Ethical considerations in research projects

Much research in geography involves people, either directly (as subjects who will be interviewed) or indirectly (as members of a broader community in which research in being undertaken). It is essential that you consider the ethical implications of research that you are undertaking and take all possible action to ensure people are not harmed, worried or inconvenienced by your research. You should always ensure that you gain permission to access private land and property and that any investigations that you propose to conduct are fully explained. Good ethical research practice also ensures that the environments involved in your research are not harmed. Due consideration should be placed on behaving in a manner that will not cause harm or adverse transformation to environments involved in your research.

As a broad rule you should ensure that you follow the following guidelines in designing your research and collecting your data:

4.1.1 Guidelines for projects involving people

The student must carry identification including information that allows a potential participant to contact the Department if she/he wishes, in order to ensure that the work is bona fide. Students who require letters of introduction and identification should ask their Dissertation advisor before the last week of term.

All participants must be assured at the outset that information they provide will be treated in the strictest confidence. The student must adhere to this throughout the research process including production of the Dissertation. At no stage should it be possible to link information with individual participants. Participants may, however, give their consent for this confidentiality to be waived so that, for example, quotations may be linked with individual consent.

- Personal and/or sensitive questions should not be asked unless they are directly necessary for the project.
- No data may be stored electronically in a way that allows individuals and their information to be identified. Names and addresses should not, therefore, be placed on computer file.
- All participants in the research must be involved voluntarily. A participant may withdraw at any time and must be allowed to do so. No pressure to continue as a participant must be applied.
- The purpose of the research must be explained to each participant at the outset and she/he must not be misled.

Dissertations involving observation of behaviour without interaction with the people observed (e.g. counting the number of people using a particular service) obviously cannot obtain the consent of all observed. However, such observation could cause suspicion or distress if the observation is unexplained. You should think very carefully about your observation site, and if possible explain and seek consent from someone in
authority for that area – this could be the local police station or the manager of a shopping complex, for example.

4.1.2 Additional guidelines for research involving young people
There are particular considerations for those intending to work with young people (16 years and under). You are advised to think very carefully about undertaking research that involves talking to young people due to concerns about their safety.

You MUST seek advice from your Dissertation Advisor and the Departmental Ethics Officer (geographyhelp@exeter.ac.uk) before undertaking research involving people.

4.1.3 Guidelines involving access to private land and property
Project students must not attempt to conduct investigations on private land/property without the permission of its owners. This applies to land and all other types of property (e.g. shops, leisure services, means of transport). If the property/land is publicly owned permission must be obtained from the relevant authority/management. If requested to do so, a project student must leave the land/property immediately and without protest.

4.1.4 Guidelines involving respecting the environment involved in your research
You should ensure that you carry out your research in a manner that will not cause harm or adverse transformation to environments involved in your research. You should always adhere to the Countryside Code:

Enjoy the countryside and respect its life and work.
Guard against all risks of fire.
Fasten all gates.
Keep your dogs under close control.
Keep to public paths across farmland.
Use gates and stiles to cross fences, hedges and walls.
Leave livestock, crops and machinery alone.
Take your litter home.
Help to keep all water clean.
Protect wildlife, plants and trees.
Take special care on country roads.
Make no unnecessary noise.

4.1.5 Ethical Assessment Form
You should ensure that any ethical considerations that your research entails should be addressed in your Dissertation proposal (see Appendix 1). Prior to meeting with your allocated advisor in the summer term you will have to complete an Ethical and Risk Assessment Form (see Appendix 5). You should use this form to demonstrate that you have thought through the ethical implications of your research. If necessary, you should
outline the steps you will take to ensure that your research is undertaken in an ethical way. If in doubt you should discuss this with your Dissertation advisor.

For further guidance on ethical considerations in research see:


**4.2 SAFETY AND FIELD WORK**

This section explains the safety considerations that you need to take when undertaking any sort of field work. Field work is considered any work undertaken as part of your Dissertation. The Department will not support subjects for Dissertations that involve working situations with unacceptable risks. See the safety handbook on the following page: [http://geography.exeter.ac.uk/currentstudents/undergraduate/handbooks/](http://geography.exeter.ac.uk/currentstudents/undergraduate/handbooks/)

Please read this section carefully and take action on any safety issues that might arise. You must also complete a risk assessment form for your dissertation fieldwork. The forms have are referred to in Appendix 5 and are on the dissertation ELE site.

_These notes are intended to alert you to the need to take particular care to ensure your own safety when undertaking project field work. They do not claim to be comprehensive, covering every possible situation, but all students are strongly urged to take careful note of them NOW!_

**4.2.1 Assessment of any potential dangers**

Before commencing any field work, you are strongly advised to make your own assessment of any potential dangers/hazards and decide upon a suitable method of working. This should be discussed with your Dissertation Advisor. It may be necessary to revise your assessment of dangers or hazards as your field work progresses. At the back of this handbook you will find an Assessment Form that considers risk (Appendix 3). You should discuss any foreseeable risks with your Dissertation Advisor, complete the form and both of you should sign it. This form must be counter signed by your Dissertation Advisor, and a copy kept on record. If you subsequently change topics, you will need to complete a new Risk Assessment. **Failure to submit a satisfactory Risk Assessment Form will be reported to the Head of Department, and the Dissertation research will not be supported by the Department.**

_Hazardous:_ Locations where potential dangers may arise _frequently_

_Dangerous:_ Locations where dangers are always _present_

NO STUDENT SHOULD GO INTO A DANGEROUS OR HAZARDOUS LOCATION, OR UNDERTAKE DANGEROUS TASKS.

**4.2.2 Preparation for field work**

Before starting your field work, you must leave information about your intended programme and itinerary with a parent or another responsible person. You should leave a record of:

- Date and time of departure
- Method of travel to the field location, and around the site once there
- Proposed itinerary (give O.S. grid references whenever possible)
- Any potentially hazardous technique or operation to be used and where it is proposed to use it.
- Expected time of leaving the field location and estimated time of arrival home.

**Clothing and Equipment**

You should ensure in advance that you have suitable clothing and equipment for the proposed field work.

Clothing suitable for the work and the time of year should be worn. *Extra* clothing should be carried in climatically unpredictable areas where there is risk of exposure. In hot weather, bear the risk of sun-burn in mind. Wear good walking boots. A *safety helmet* (conforming to British Standard 5240) must be worn when undertaking work near cliff bottoms or quarry faces, or other places where there is a risk from rock or other fragments. Safety goggles (conforming to British Standard 2092) must be worn when chipping rock or wood.

*Equipment* supplies of *food and drinks* should be taken when working in the field over a lengthy period, unless easily available nearby. When working in remote areas, you must carry a *map and compass* (and know how to take a bearing). When working in remote locations, you should also carry a *whistle, a watch and a torch*. When working in remote areas, carry a *first aid kit*, and in remote (potentially cold) environments, you must carry an emergency survival blanket.

If you borrow Department equipment make sure you know how to use it properly – ask for guidance if you need it. You will be asked to complete an Equipment Loan form and you will be held responsible for the replacement cost of any equipment loaned to you which is returned damaged or in poor condition.

**4.2.3 Working alone**

Lone working is strongly discouraged. Although it is recognised that you may undertake field work alone during the summer vacation, wherever possible, it is preferable and strongly advised to go with another person. In the event of an accident befalling a field worker operating in a relatively remote location groups of three or four enable one or two to go for help, while another remains with the injured person. You are strongly urged to take account of this advice when planning any field work in remote locations.

When working on surveys (questionnaires, observations etc) it is the Department’s clear advice to find another person to join you. In any case, you should avoid putting yourself at risk by working in locations or situations which could be hostile or threatening. In urban areas, beware of traffic and observe the Highway Code.

**4.2.4 International Distress Signs**

*Mountains and other terrestrial locations* (ensure that someone else knows in advance of your plans):

Give SIX LONG flashes/blasts/shouts/waves in succession.
Repeat at one-minute length intervals.
At sea (always inform the coastguards of your activities before commencing work):

- Using a whistle or a torch, send the Morse-code SOS signal;
- THREE SHORT blasts/flashes – THREE LONG – THREE SHORT.
- Pause, then repeat, etc.

- Alternatively, use red flares or orange smoke.
- Or, outstretched arms, raised and lowered slowly and repeatedly.
- Or, an oar, with a cloth tied to it, waved slowly from side to side.

4.2.5 Field work locations where special care should be exercised

Potential hazards can be encountered in the following types of location: remote mountainous terrain, remote moorland, cliffs, caves, quarries, tunnels, pot-holes, spoil heaps, tips, land-fill, sludge lagoons, freshwater lakes and pools, rivers, reed beds, bogs and marshes, sea-shores.

You are strongly advised to make a judgement about the potential hazards encountered in your proposed field work location, if necessary to seek expert guidance, and at all times to take appropriate action.

Bear in mind that working near busy roads, near railway stations, or at airports can involve hazards. Any project work undertaken in or near such locations should be carried out with due regard to safety.

Questionnaire surveys can also involve risks and should be undertaken therefore only after an evaluation of these has shown that there is no unreasonable threat to safety. Door to door calling to deliver questionnaires and ‘one to one’ interviews are situations which can sometimes involve an element of risk. If you have any doubts, get someone to accompany you, and always leave clear information about your whereabouts and expected time of return. Make sure the person with whom you leave this information knows that you have returned.

These notes are intended to alert you to the need to take particular care to ensure your own safety when undertaking project field work. They do not claim to be comprehensive, covering every possible situation, but all students are strongly urged to take careful note of them NOW!

4.2.6 Disease and immunisation

Students intending to work with plant material, soils, or near farm animals, must ensure that your tetanus immunisation is up-to-date. Bear in mind that agricultural areas may harbour disease. Also, remember that some plants and animals native to the UK are poisonous. In some overseas locations, this risk can be greater. Freshwater may be a source of pollution and contain bacteria. If in any doubt about a potentially poisonous substance, take advice from the National Poisons Information Service. Always wash your hands when returning from field work where you have handled soil, sediments, vegetation, river/lake water, etc.

In recent years attention has been drawn to the problems of Lymes Disease. This can be picked up from ticks, especially in heath areas of southern England. Details concerning the symptoms and treatment of this can be found on the following NHS

4.2.7 Overseas Fieldwork
Many students decided to undertake fieldwork overseas. Students should ensure that any overseas fieldwork is planned meticulously to ensure that the research aims of their Dissertation can be fulfilled. Students should also ensure that in the planning of overseas research attention is placed on personal safety and health.

Getting local contacts in the field location and establishing a programme of field research prior to your arrival in the field will ensure that overseas research runs as smoothly as possible.

Advice regarding immunisation should be sought from the Student Health Centre/G.P. as soon as the overseas fieldwork is planned. Visas and Immigration papers can take time to process so should be applied for well in advance.

Students should consult and follow the travel information on the Foreign and Commonwealth Office web site and be aware of fast changing situations whilst they are overseas. See www.fco.gov.uk/knowbeforeyougo. Students should also find out from their advisor whether the import of samples (e.g. soils and plants) from overseas may require an import permit.

For further information see Fiona Smith’s chapter “Working in Different Cultures” in Clifford, N. & Valentine, G., (2003) Key Methods in Geography. Sage. Her reference list also provides helpful pointers on undertaking research in overseas locations.
5 PRESENTATION AND LAYOUT

This chapter provides information about how to organise and set out your Dissertation report, as well as when and how to submit it.

5.1 Word limit and page format

Your Dissertation should be arranged as follows and include all of these elements:

1. Title page (see example).
2. Contents (see example).
3. List of figures and tables
4. Abstract. The abstract should not exceed 200 words and should contain the essence of the Dissertation but should not refer to the main body of the Dissertation.
6. Appendices, covering detailed material and date, elaboration of methods and techniques.
7. Bibliography (see Section 5.6).

This is the really important bit – please pay attention. Your dissertation must NOT EXCEED 10,000 words but ONLY item 5 above counts towards the 10,000 words. This means that all text included in 5 (the main body of your dissertation) counts in the 10,000 words, with the following exception: words used in tables, graphs and other forms of data presentation (including titles of figures) in the main body of the dissertation are NOT included in the 10,000 words. Footnotes are only allowed for dissertations where primary archival research material is used, such as historical geography dissertations. Footnotes can only be used to reference archival material; all other references need to be listed at the end of the dissertation. ALL other items (1-4, 6-7) are in addition to the 10,000 word limit. See the School document called ‘Word Count – What’s included.doc’ for further clarification. It is posted on the dissertation ELE site.

Your dissertation (i.e. item 5 above) can be shorter than 10000 words, although you must bear in mind the amount of effort and academic rigour required when submitting substantially less than 10000 words (i.e. less than 9000 words). Dissertations that exceed the word limit will be penalised accordingly (see Section 6.4). The report must be word-processed with 1.5 line spacing on single or double sides of A4 and all pages must be clearly numbered. The binding will require an extra space down the left hand margin of each page (see table below and following sections for details). You must make sure that your margins are sufficiently wide to account for the binding. You will bear the costs of production (illustrations, typing, paper, outer cover, binding).

Details of page setup, spacing and text font size

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Specification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Word Limit</td>
<td>10,000 words (see Section 5.1 above for specific instructions related to these words)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top and Bottom Margin</td>
<td>2 cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left Margin</td>
<td>Minimum 3.5 cm to allow for binding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right Margin</td>
<td>2.5 cm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.2 Structure and contents

The Dissertation should be arranged as follows:

1. Title page (see example).
2. Contents (see example).
3. List of figures (including photographic illustrations).
4. List of tables.
5. Abstract. The abstract should not exceed 200 words and should contain the essence of the Dissertation but should not refer to the main body of the Dissertation.
7. Appendices, covering detailed material and date, elaboration of methods and techniques.
8. Bibliography (see Section 5.6).

There is no definitive structure for a project report. There is, however, such a thing as a clearly and logically structured report. The Dissertation should, therefore, include components 1-8 (listed above) in that particular order. The structure must be clear and logical, include an early statement of the aims and objectives, previous research, methods, results, analysis of results and discussion, and lead to logical conclusions.

The contents page example (Appendix 7: An example of a Table of Contents) provides a standard format for the organisation of a project report. More example Tables of Contents can be found via the dissertation ELE site in the following block: USEFUL INFORMATION FOR BOTH YEAR 2 and YEAR 3. It is a little unexciting, in the sense that many other reports probably follow the same basic structure and headings system. It is, however, logical and clear. It can be adapted to make your report more individual by including pertinent headings.

Title Page

You must put the title of your Dissertation, your name, the date, and a signed acknowledgement on the title page of your Dissertation. See Appendix 6: Example front page, for an example title page.

You are required to sign the following acknowledgement:

“I certify that this Dissertation is entirely my own work and no part of it has been submitted for a degree or other qualification in this or another institution. I also certify that I have not collected data nor shared data with another candidate at Exeter University or elsewhere without specific authorisation.”

…………………………(Your signature).

This acknowledgement must be taken very seriously. Please see Section 6 for information regarding the School and University disciplinary policy towards plagiarism and collusion.
5.3 Chapters, headings and subheadings

Within individual chapters, you may wish to use sub-headings. These should be used in a logical and consistent manner. This will help the reader (i.e. examiner) navigate their way around the report. There is a balance between over and under dividing the report up into sections. Too many sections and subsections may break up the flow and make the report appear bitty or fragmented. Too few sections or subsections will make it more difficult for the reader to work out whereabouts they are and where they are going. Organising the report into sections will also help you to organise and decide where to place various bits of information. It is a good idea to include a brief statement of what each chapter is about at the beginning to help the reader work out where they are going. A short summary at the end of each chapter can be equally valuable in helping navigation and general flow, e.g.:

This chapter discusses the results of....
This chapter has discussed the...and leads onto....

You can number the sections and subsections in order to help navigation. This system will enable you to refer the reader to particular sections in the text (e.g. see Section 5.3). The Table of Contents example in Appendix 8 shows how this numerical system works. If this type of system is used then all tables and figures can be numbered within each chapter accordingly, e.g. table 3.1 and 3.2 correspond to the first and second tables referred to in the text of Chapter 3.

5.4 Contents

Appendix 7: An example of a Table of Contents provides an example of a Table of Contents. In this example, please note that the section headings have been numbered and assigned a page number. The list of contents will help the reader navigate their way around the report. Obviously, your individual chapter headings will vary from those in the example. For example, you may wish to present the site description and previous research as a separate chapter, depending on the amount of material you want to present. Several more example tables of contents are available for viewing on the Dissertation ELE site, which are grouped into Human Geography, Environmental Geography and Physical Geography.

5.5 Figures and tables

Figures include all maps, diagrams, and photographs. Tables are considered and numbered separately from figures. In all cases, an explanatory title should be provided next to the figure or table number.

Figures and tables should, where possible, be integrated into the text. All figures and tables must be numbered. Tables are numbered separately from figures. For example, using the numerical system, Table 4.1 would be the first table cited in chapter 4; Figure 4.1 would be the first figure cited in chapter 4.

All tables and figures should be closely integrated with, and referred to, in the text, using appropriate phrasing, e.g.:

The site is located in the Rocky Mountains (Figure 1.1). Figure 3.1 provides a summary of the results.
NOT The location of the site can be seen in the map below. A summary of the results can be seen in the graph on page 31.

It is not sufficient simply to put text and illustrations side by side hoping that the reader/examiner will make the connection.

Maps
Maps should normally be prepared with one dimension equal to the height of an A4 sheet and if necessary may be folded.

Maps and diagrams must either be drawn by hand in black ink, or be computer generated (in the latter case colour may be used). The photocopying of some material may be possible. Maps should have adequate scales and keys.

Each map or diagram should have a frame, with a figure number and title outside the frame. The source of the information must also be given (and listed fully in the Bibliography); e.g.:

Figure 1.1: Public Drinking Spaces Visited, 1980-1998 (source: Kneale, 1999).

Photographs
Photographs, digitised images and colour photocopies may also be used if required, and these should be given a title and figure number, and suitable referencing), e.g.:

Figure 1.1: An unusual growth from Smith's Head, Devon (photo: author).

Separate lists of figures and tables should be included in the contents. See Appendix 7: An example of a Table of Contents for where these should be located and Appendix 8: EXAMPLE OF LIST OF FIGURES for how to set out a List of Figures and a List of Tables.

NB. Ensure that all your figures are clear and of sufficient size and resolution to be able to make out text and important features, i.e. not small, fuzzy, and difficult to make out.

5.6 Referencing and the bibliography or reference list
You must refer to all references in a consistent and recognised fashion, following the University of Exeter’s, Geography Referencing and Style Guide. This can be found on the dissertation ELE site in the following block: Year 3, Formatting your dissertation.

5.7 Checking your work
Before submission, the whole text of your Dissertation should be checked carefully for typing errors. You should also check that you have listed all your references and that all tables and figures are clearly presented and referenced. It is advisable to get someone else to proof-read your dissertation, such as a friend or family member. A more detached pair of eyes can often ask questions that will help you make your dissertation clearer for readers, particularly your markers. It is worth the time and effort to plan ahead to build in time for proof-reading.
See Section 6 of the Dissertation Handbook for details of late or non-submission procedures.

6 REGULATIONS AND PROCEDURES

This section describes the Department’s and University’s procedures submission of the Dissertation. The section draws attention to regulations concerning late submission, plagiarism and collusion, and penalties for exceeding the word limit.

Your Dissertation will be retained in the Department for three years. After that time you may recover your Dissertation by sending the appropriate postage and packing fee. Otherwise, if space is required, Dissertations may be disposed of. We reserve the right to reveal your Dissertation mark to future student cohorts. If you wish your mark to remain confidential, you must inform the Dissertation Co-ordinator in writing.

You should sign a disclaimer that, except where referenced, the Dissertation is your own work (see Appendix 6 for details). This is to avoid plagiarism and collusion.

Dissertation Archive
You should keep an archive (i.e. portfolio) of all your Dissertation research information for inspection by the School Examination Board and/or the External Examiner. **Failure to maintain and provide this archive on request could result in loss of marks.** This is to assist investigation of suspected plagiarism (See Section 6.1).

6.1 Plagiarism and collusion
You are reminded that the failure to reference the published and unpublished work of other academics may result in a charge of plagiarism. This is effectively passing off someone else’s thoughts, ideas, writings and work as your own. People can be guilty of plagiarism if they copy, without proper attribution (i.e. acknowledging by referencing the author appropriately), from a book, scholarly article, lecture handout, electronically-stored text or another student’s work.

Collusion is aiding or attempting to aid or obtaining or attempting to obtain aid from another candidate in this University or elsewhere or any other person. In the case of a Dissertation project this might include obtaining unauthorised help with preparation of the report or with field/laboratory work. It is not permissible for candidates to collect common data or to share data with others in Exeter or elsewhere without specific authorisation and such practice will be deemed collusion and subject to penalty as academic misconduct.

It is recognised that an important skill developed during the course of your Dissertation research is the forging of contacts with various people within and outside the Geography Department. Some of these contacts may offer you practical assistance. If you are in any doubt you should seek guidance from your Dissertation Adviser on what may be deemed inappropriate aid.
You may seek assistance from parents, siblings, friends or other students in field and other forms of data collection for health and safety reasons (see section 3.2.3 on lone working) or where a technique requires two persons to undertake it, for example when surveying physical features. However, where another student at this University or elsewhere is involved in the assistance, common data cannot be collected and data are not to be shared. As an example of what is and what is not allowed:

Not allowed: Student A and Student B survey River X for channel geometry above and below a reservoir – they collect the data together and base their projects on the same information.

Allowed: Student A helps Student B in surveying River X for channel geometry above and below a reservoir. Student B helps Student A in surveying River Y for channel geometry above and below an urban area. No data are shared and both students use different datasets to underpin different projects.

If you intend to work with any other people in any phase of your Dissertation, you must discuss this with your Dissertation Advisor and outline the nature of this help. If necessary you will be requested to seek written permission from the Dissertation Co-ordinator before proceeding to work with other people. In particular, if you are planning to undertake a Dissertation as part of a programme organized by another company or organization, (e.g. an overseas expedition) the details of your project must be discussed with and authorised by the Dissertation Co-ordinator.

N.B. Failure to adhere to the above guidelines will be taken as evidence of collusion. The Dissertation forms a major part of your degree and any breach of University Regulations will be considered very serious. Please note that both plagiarism and collusion are very serious offences, which can result in the outright failure of your degree. You are directed towards the Undergraduate Handbook for further details of University regulations and procedures concerning academic conduct.

For further details of definitions and procedures concerning plagiarism and collusion can be found in the University’s Teaching Quality Assurance document (web address: http://www.ex.ac.uk/admin/academic/tls/tqa/plag1.htm).

Late or non submission
The procedures for late submission are set out in the Undergraduate Handbook. Late Dissertations, or parts of Dissertations, are not be accepted by Staff and should not be handed to them. Any late work should be handed to DEPARTMENTAL SECRETARY together with a Late Submission form that you must complete. This form will allow you to state any mitigating circumstances that the Department may take into consideration. Where there are no mitigating circumstances the University policy for late submission penalties are applied:

- work up to two weeks late will receive a maximum of 40%.
- work submitted more than two weeks late will receive a mark of zero.

N.B. Late submission due to computer failure, problems with printers or loss of material through mismanagement will not usually be considered reasonable mitigating circumstances.
If events or circumstances beyond your control arise during the course of your final year that will delay submission, a full written account should be given ahead of the submission date to the Dissertation Co-ordinator. The Department will then consider these circumstances.

*In the event of non-submission, you will normally be deemed to have failed this part of the examination.*

6.2 Penalties for exceeding the word limit

Your Dissertation must not normally exceed 10,000 words (excluding appendices, tables and bibliography). Your dissertation can be shorter than 10,000 words, although you must bear in mind the amount of effort and academic rigour required when submitting a dissertation with substantially less than 10,000 words (i.e. less than 9,000 words).

Dissertations that exceed the word limit may be penalised as follows:
- 5 marks if you exceed the word limit by up to 25%
- 10 marks if you exceed it by more than 25%

7 THREE FINAL PIECES OF ADVICE

One specific learning outcome of the Dissertation (see Section 1.2) is to develop competence in working independently, including management skills, such as setting and working to deadlines. Poor management skills frequently result in the rushed production of the final Dissertation report, because important bits of information are lost or destroyed, or there is insufficient time to print out a satisfactory final copy. If you have managed your project effectively, you will have kept back-up copies and left enough time to cope with any problems that might arise during report production. Consequently, late or incomplete submission due to problems with computer failure, printers, or loss of material through mismanagement, are not considered a reasonable excuse.

*The following pieces of advice should help to prevent these problems arising:*

**KEEP AT LEAST THREE BACK-UP COPIES AT ALL TIMES**

Always remember to keep back-up copies of your Dissertation and the data you have collected! You should keep at least three copies of relevant files, e.g. one on hard disc, and two on separate CDs or on data sticks stored in different places. This will reduce the risk of loss of important text and data through carelessness, mismanagement, malfunctioning, theft, fire and so forth.

**STORE TEXT AND DATA IN MANAGEABLE FILES**

The Dissertation text and diagrams are likely to take up a large number of bytes/disc space. Some images may be too large to store on a single floppy disc (e.g. digital camera photographs). In addition, you may have difficulty printing out images stored in certain formats. The entire text of a Dissertation will probably be too big to store or print as one file, or may overload systems when you come to print out. You should store
components of your Dissertation as separate files (e.g. chapter 1, chapter 2, bibliography, tables, figures) and print them separately. Labels should indicate clearly the version of the text on the disc. This will reduce the mistake of printing out superseded versions. Print out draft versions of text and diagrams well in advance, so that you can identify potential problems with production, formatting and printer compatibility.

**ALLOW PLENTY OF TIME FOR EDITING, PRINTING AND BINDING**

Do not leave printing and binding to the last day. Do not underestimate how long it will take to print, check and collate the final version of your Dissertation report. You need to give yourself enough time in case printers and binding are in heavy demand or your printer breaks down. Allow plenty of time (i.e. days not hours) to check over the report and correct any problems with formatting, pagination and so forth.
8 Appendix 1: DISSERTATION MARKING CRITERIA

The aim of the Dissertation is to give you the opportunity to display your skills in tackling specific geographical issues in some depth. The essence of the work is that you should demonstrate your ability to undertake your own independent and original piece of research. The specific aims and learning outcomes of the Dissertation are set out in Sections 1.1 and 1.2. Your overall performance in the Dissertation is assessed on the degree to which these aims and learning outcomes have been fulfilled, evidence for which is provided by your report.

The success of your Dissertation is assessed on evidence of depth of knowledge, understanding and analysis. In essence, you should demonstrate that you know enough about the subject area to understand and identify a worthwhile topic and design an appropriate methodology for its investigation. Your depth of knowledge and understanding determines your ability to analyse, interpret, discuss and draw conclusions from your results. In order to communicate effectively the findings of your research, you need to produce a report that is structured logically, well-written and presented, with appropriate illustrations and referencing. Your goal is to produce a Dissertation that resembles, in terms of methodological and analytical rigour, and quality of presentation, a published academic paper or report in your chosen field of study. It is expected that all Dissertations should be well-written, structured logically, thoughtfully presented, and include effective illustrations, with full and accurate referencing.

Appendix 1, Table 1 provides details of the assessment criteria for the Dissertation. Your Dissertation will be classified according to the extent to which it fulfils the five main criteria. The following words are used to describe fulfilment of criteria: excellent, good, moderate, weak and unacceptable. To gain a given class, your work must be at the appropriate standard for that class, with respect to a minimum of three criteria (i.e. excellent in three criteria for first class, good in three criteria for 2.1 etc.). This system allows some compensation of weaker aspects by stronger elements.

Table 1: Dissertation assessment criteria.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage &amp; degree class</th>
<th>Topic: identification &amp; definition of worthwhile topic</th>
<th>Methodology: appropriateness &amp; implementation</th>
<th>Presentation: communication skills, use of terminology</th>
<th>Analysis: appropriateness; accuracy &amp; depth</th>
<th>Discussion: relating of own findings to other relevant research &amp; drawing of conclusions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>80%+ strong 1st</td>
<td>Excellent all criteria</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-79% sound 1st</td>
<td>Excellent in three criteria, at least good in others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69% 2.1</td>
<td>Good in at least three criteria, at least moderate in others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59% 2.2</td>
<td>Moderate in at least three criteria</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49% 3rd</td>
<td>Weak in at least three criteria</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Unacceptable in three or more criteria

### Detailed marking criteria:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mark range (%)</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Detailed description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90-100</td>
<td>First</td>
<td>Outstanding</td>
<td>Unique, outstanding and insightful work of original research, which is either of publishable quality in a reputable journal or attains the professional standards of scholarship expected for the discipline of Geography without the need for revision. It is difficult to see how it could be improved in any way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-89</td>
<td>First</td>
<td>Exceptional</td>
<td>Exceptional piece of original research, which shows a critical awareness of the principles and practices of Geography, expertly presented data with exceptionally thorough analysis and comprehension of the context and significance of the research, shows exceptional ability and rigour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-79</td>
<td>First</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>Excellent piece of original research, which shows a good deal of initiative and rigour in approach and execution. Interesting, relevant and well-defined research which is critically evaluated within the context of existing literature. The data presented are of high quality, are collected and analysed using a well thought-out and executed methodology. The Dissertation is very clearly structured and presented and eloquently written.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65-69</td>
<td>2:1</td>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>A very good Dissertation that is well thought-out, well organised, shows a secure knowledge of the subject which is well-founded in original research. The research is solid and set appropriately within the literature but may lack critical awareness and rigour. The data are good and are presented appropriately but there may be some shortcomings in analysis which are not fully explored.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-64</td>
<td>2:1</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>A good Dissertation, which shows a firm grasp of most of the material. The methodology used and the data collected are appropriate but may show some limitations in analysis and are not put within a wider context. Dissertation structure, language and organisation is suitable but may lack confidence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-59</td>
<td>2:2</td>
<td>Competent</td>
<td>A competent Dissertation, which shows a reasonable understanding of the material and evidence for original research, including student initiative and effort. Data are sound but routine, and show evidence for some analysis and interpretation although the methodology used may be not entirely appropriate. Results are related to the literature but may lack depth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-54</td>
<td>2:2</td>
<td>Adequate</td>
<td>An adequate Dissertation, which is somewhat pedestrian and routine in nature and lacks imagination both in topic, execution and interpretation. The methodology is satisfactory but the data collected may be flawed. The work is largely descriptive with little evidence for critical analysis. Dissertation structure is adequate but there may be confusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Score Range</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-49</td>
<td>Third</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>A weak Dissertation which is largely relevant to the topic investigated but which shows many flaws and inconsistencies throughout. These may include inappropriate methodology, limited original data of suitable quality, inappropriate or limited analysis, lack of depth of understanding or context and limited use of the literature. The Dissertation structure may be confused or repetitive but which demonstrates some student effort and adherence to Dissertation guidelines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-44</td>
<td>Third</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>A weak Dissertation which is flawed in some fundamental elements but which shows some limited or inconsistent student effort and some low-quality original data. Flawed elements may include inappropriate methodology, very limited amount of data, lack of suitable analysis, and lack of depth of understanding. Writing and presentation are very basic with poor structure and many errors. Statements may be unsubstantiated, thought is naïve and there is no real awareness of the literature or effort to read beyond standard texts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>Fail</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>A poor Dissertation that fails in many aspects. Original research is fundamentally flawed through the use of inappropriate methods of data collection and/or analysis. Data are few and of low quality. The aims and premise of the research are poorly thought out; the Dissertation, although it may be complete, has many basic misunderstandings or misinterpretations, is poorly structured and written with basic errors throughout. Literature may be cited but are clearly a later ‘add on’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>Fail</td>
<td>Unsatisfactory</td>
<td>An unsatisfactory Dissertation that contains little or no original data, no evidence for preparation, thought or awareness of the literature. The Dissertation may be short, unstructured/poorly structured, and show signs of being rushed with no evaluation or reflection. Data are presented but are very brief and unexplained. Student initiative is lacking at all stages of the research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>Fail</td>
<td></td>
<td>A Dissertation that fails to achieve in almost all aspects. It may reproduce data from secondary sources (which may be unattributed) with little or no evidence of original research or thought. The Dissertation may be very short, show little internal coherence, major elements may be missing, presentation and writing may be extremely poor and suggest the Dissertation was quickly thrown together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-24</td>
<td>Fail</td>
<td>Incompetent</td>
<td>Brief, irrelevant, confused, incomplete. A Dissertation that fails in all aspects.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9 Appendix 2: Examples of AIMS and OBJECTIVES

Please note that while this example presents aim and objectives as bulleted lists, you are strongly encouraged to use prose to articulate your research aims, questions and objectives. Lists are only encouraged where additional emphasis is required, such as when stating hypotheses (often used in scientific dissertations), once the aim and objective of your research has been articulated in prose form.

AIM
This project aims to investigate the impact of Trumpton Airport on the water quality of the River Trump.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS
The investigation aims to address the following specific research questions:
- Does runoff from Trumpton Airport contain pollutants that have a measurable impact on the water quality of the River Trump?
- What are the main pollutants and their sources?
- How far downstream can the pollutants and their impact be traced?
- Is there a detectable seasonal variation on pollutant load?
- Do the current clean up facilities at Trumpton Airport meet with statutory requirements?
- What are the implications of the results for environmental management?

OBJECTIVES
These aims and research questions will be addressed using the following objectives:
1. Identify 4 sampling sites on the River Trump in the vicinity of the Trumpton Airport runoff outfall. One upstream, and three progressively downstream of the outfall.
2. Undertake representative sampling of water and discharge levels over 8 month period (sample every 14 days).
3. Undertake laboratory analyses of biological and chemical properties of water samples (N, K, P, Cl, BOD, oil & detergent tests).
4. Survey the biological pollution indicators in the river at these sample points (in summer).
5. Use appropriate statistical techniques to test the experimental hypotheses that there is a significant relationship between:
   - Individual chemical contents of water samples and the distance from the outfall.
   - Composition of the aquatic flora and fauna and the distance from the outfall.
   - Individual chemical contents of water samples and composition of the aquatic flora and fauna.
   - River discharge and individual chemical contents of water samples.
   - Season and river water pollution load.

Discuss the factors that are likely to control the observed relationships. Discuss the results in the context of the environmental impact of Trumpton Airport and company’s environmental mission statement.
10 Appendix 3: Dissertation progress report

Name of student: .................................................................

Name of DISSERTATION adviser: ..................................................

Date of meeting: .................................................................

Formative Assessment 1: 400 Word Progress report to be completed by student [October 2011]
Instructions for students: Please prepare a 400 word summary of progress to date on your dissertation, as well as a schedule of activities from now until submission of your dissertation. Present this to your dissertation advisors at the meeting you arrange with them during week 1 or 2 of term. You must submit 2 copies.

Formative Assessment 2: Outline Table of Contents [January 2012]:
Instructions for students: Please prepare a detailed chapter structure and table of contents (up to 250 words), as well as an updated schedule of activities from now until submission of your dissertation. Present this to your dissertation advisors at the meeting you arrange with them during January 2009. You must submit 2 copies. Please note that this is the final formal meeting where you will be discussing how to format and complete the dissertation; there will be no opportunity to change your dissertation topic at this stage.

Topics Discussed:

Action to be taken:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signature of Dissertation Adviser</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Signature of Student</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
11 Appendix 4: Dissertation Proposal Proforma (identical in content to that used in GEO2504)

GEO2504 GEOGRAPHICAL RESEARCH SKILLS
Dissertation Proposal

The dissertation proposal must conform to the layout of the proforma. You should not alter the sizes of the boxes or add further pages.

You must respond to all the sections in the proposal proforma. The amount you write in each section is up to you and will vary somewhat depending on the chosen topic. You should use the size of the boxes to gauge our expectations about how much detail you should provide and which sections we will place most emphasis on when marking.

If you fill up each box entirely your proposal should on average be around 2500 words. You must use **12 point Times New Roman, single spaced, and justified.**

You should not use foot- or endnotes. You should use the Harvard referencing system – author and date in brackets in the text, with a full bibliography on pp6-7. The bibliography is not included in the word allocation.

You may use p8 for diagrams, maps, photographs, tables or illustrations.

The proposal must be submitted on **Wednesday 4 May 2011.** It is worth 67% of the final module mark. You must submit two copies.

1. Name

   

2. Dissertation title

   

3. Project summary

   

37
4. Academic context to proposed research
4. Academic context to proposed research, continued
5. Research methodology

6. Project rationale
6. Project rationale continued

7. Project schedule
8. Ethics statement

9. Risk assessment

10. Bibliography
10. Bibliography continued
Figures (use up to 1 page for figures)

Notes for completion of this proposal

Project summary

This section fulfils the role of an abstract and gives the reader a brief outline of the project’s main components. In particular you must include your research questions or hypotheses. You should also briefly outline your methods and your empirical research area.

Academic context to proposed research

This is the single most important component of this proposal, which is reflected in the space given over to it. When completing this section you should respond to these three questions:

a. What work has been done in this/these particular field(s) before? This requires an up-to-date critical review of the previous research relevant to your intended subject area. While you should give some sense of the broad sub-disciplinary fields that your own project fits into (for instance coastal geomorphology; climate-change adaptation; or rural geography) you should also focus your discussion around particular areas of research that have a more direct bearing on your own questions (for instance, coastal erosion; carbon trading; rural poverty).

b. What are the main consensus views coming out of the literature as well as the main areas of disagreement or uncertainty? Which arguments will you align your own research with and why?

c. How will you build on the issues outlined in 1 above to contribute to understandings of the subject? In other words, how will your own dissertation improve understandings, try new techniques, applying existing techniques in new areas, or reduce error factors? How does your research question relate to the wider literature?

Research methodology

This section should provide a detailed account of how you will go about collecting the data required for your project. It is not a simple list of what you will do; rather, it is reasoned examination of the methods that you will use and a discussion of their limitations. Your methodology should be a concise and clear statement of what you will do and how. It should be designed specifically to address your aims and research question(s). It must be realistic in terms of the type, quality and quantity of information you intend to collect and the appropriateness of these data, the sampling scheme, and analytical techniques for addressing your intended topic. The methodology should include:

a. How and where information will be collected.

b. If applicable, what sampling scheme are to be used.

c. How the information you collect will be analysed.

Project Rationale
This section should outline your empirical project and provide a justification for why you are undertaking your particular investigation, and the methods adopted. This might include explanations for selection of:

_The particular site(s), groups, visual or textual sources:_ Why have you selected a particular site for investigation? What are its or their specific qualities which make it/them particularly suited to carrying out the work you plan to do?

_The adoption of particular approach/techniques:_ Why are you using a particular approach (e.g. pollen analysis, interpretation of visual sources, in depth interviews) for examining the proposed subject, rather than some other technique (e.g. diatoms, questionnaire survey, census data). What are the challenges you might face when trying to gain access to your data?

_What makes your dissertation original?_ Novelty and originality may arise from the intended subject area/research question, site and sample selection, or the methodology and techniques adopted.

**Project schedule**

Precisely when is the work going to be done? A realistic schedule should be prepared for:

a. Field work / data collection.
b. Data treatment (laboratory sample analysis, questionnaire coding and so on).
c. Data analysis.
d. Writing up.

In answer to this you should provide a month-by-month breakdown of the project until the hand in date in March 2012.

**Risk assessment and Ethics statement**

See the ELE site under the Year 2 block, header called: FORMS where the risk and ethics forms can be found.

**A final word of advice**

A good project proposal is one where you already know, prior to undertaking the research itself, what is achievable and even what some of the project outcomes might be. Therefore, before completing this proposal it is worth doing some preliminary research over the Easter vacation. Check that you will actually be able to gather the data you are planning to use by carrying out a pilot study, doing some laboratory analysis, speaking to user groups or checking the availability and extent of source materials. This should all then be incorporated into your proposal.
12 Appendix 5: Assessment Forms

See the ELE site under the Year 2 block, header called: FORMS where the risk and ethics forms can be found. An example risk assessment is provided. The vast majority of you will only need to complete the outline ethics assessment – please check with your tutor before starting a detailed ethics assessment. The ethical considerations, working with 3rd parties and risk assessment involved in the project should be discussed with your Dissertation Adviser and you should both sign the form.

Working with 3rd parties

Are you planning on working with a 3rd party or getting help with your Dissertation in any form?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

If yes, outline the nature of this help:

Advice given by Dissertation Advisor and/or Co-ordinator concerning issues arising from this help:

Please refer to Section 6.1. Authorisation may be needed from the Dissertation Co-ordinator.
13 Appendix 6: Example front page

<TITLE> The Nature of Geographical Dissertations

Your Name

Word Count

I certify that this Dissertation is entirely my own work and no part of it has been submitted for a degree or other qualification in this or another institution. I also certify that I have not collected data nor shared data with another candidate at Exeter University or elsewhere without specific authorisation.

<<insert your programme, e.g. BSc with Honours in Geography and Earth System Science) at the University of Exeter .........................(your signature)>>

<<INSERT MONTH YEAR>>
### Appendix 7: An example of a Table of Contents

Please note that several more example tables of contents are available for viewing on the Dissertation ELE site, which are grouped into Human Geography, Environmental Geography and Physical Geography.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Heading</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contents</td>
<td>i</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of figures</td>
<td>iii</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of tables</td>
<td>iv</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>v</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Aims and objectives</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>Saltmarsh ecology and communities</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>Saltmarsh management</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>Saltmarshes of the Blackwater Estuary</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4.1</td>
<td>Location and characteristics</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4.2</td>
<td>Management history</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Field sampling</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.1</td>
<td>Sample site selection</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.2</td>
<td>Sediment sampling</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.3</td>
<td>Vegetation community sampling</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Laboratory analysis</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.1</td>
<td>Particle size</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.2</td>
<td>Organic content</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.3</td>
<td>Sodium, Potassium, Phosphate and Nitrate content</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Results and analysis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Vegetation community composition</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.1</td>
<td>Within sample site variation</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.2</td>
<td>Inter site variation</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Substrate characteristics</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.1</td>
<td>Particle size</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.2</td>
<td>Organic content</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.3</td>
<td>Sodium, Potassium, Phosphate and Nitrate content</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.4</td>
<td>Within sample site variation</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.5</td>
<td>Inter sample site variation</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Relationship between substrate characteristics</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Relationships between substrate and community composition</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>DISCUSSION</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Characteristics of salt marsh vegetation communities</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>The importance of tidal regime</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>The role of tides and sediment substrate in determining community composition</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Soil 'ripening' and physicochemical evolution</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Comparisons between ‘undisturbed’ and ‘managed retreat’ sites</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>Why are key species missing?</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>The implications for managed retreat and saltmarsh conservation</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. Conclusions
5.1 Principal relationships between saltmarsh vegetation and geomorphological processes
5.2 Saltmarsh management
5.3 Further research

APPENDICES
Appendix 1: Glossary of terms
Appendix 2: List of taxonomic and common names
Appendix 3: Vegetation community survey results
Appendix 4: Sediment analysis results
Appendix 5: Results of statistical analyses

BIBLIOGRAPHY

15 Appendix 8: EXAMPLE OF LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FIGURE</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Location of field work site.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>Schematic representation of vegetation communities within a saltmarsh.</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>Coastal management zonation within the Blackwater Estuary.</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Location of sampling transect sites within the Blackwater Estuary.</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Location of sampling sites along individual transects.</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>View across saltmarsh at transect site 3.</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>Sampling saltmarsh substrate at sample site 3(a).</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Vegetation quadrat at sample site 3(a) comprising typical upper saltmarsh species.</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Dendrogram indicating summarising between vegetation community composition at sample sites.</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Summary of within sample variance in vegetation community composition at sample site 1(a).</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Summary of within sample variance in vegetation community composition at sample site 2(b).</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A separate List of Tables should be formatted as above.