Single Honours Geography
GEO2309: Physical Geography Practice
GEO3301: Dissertation

Level 2 in 2009/10 Session
Level 3 in 2010/11 Session

DISSERTATION HANDBOOK

School of Geography
University of Exeter
Introduction

This guide covers the background information you will need for your dissertation in the Single Honours BSc Geography degree programme. It is intended for students who are registered for the GEO2309: Physical Geography Practice module. This guide should be of considerable help to you during your dissertation research and contains the following main sections:

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Please note: if you lose this booklet, you will be charged for a hardcopy replacement
SECTION 1

AIMS, LEARNING OUTCOMES AND REQUIREMENTS

This section discusses the aims and outcomes, and scope of the dissertation, what makes a good dissertation, and how you might come up with, and present an idea for researching.

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:

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

1.2 Intended learning outcomes

On satisfactorily completing the dissertation you should be able to:

Knowledge & understanding

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

Discipline-specific skills

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

**Intellectual skills:**

1. Define and defend the purpose of the dissertation.
2. Define its place and function within geography.
3. Identify, formulate, analyse and resolve research questions/problems.
4. Demonstrate its philosophy and methodology.
5. Demonstrate a rigorous pattern of experimental conception and/or data collection.
6. Demonstrate an appropriate approach to analysis.
7. Provide a critical interpretation of data and text.
8. Abstract and synthesise relevant information.
9. Demonstrate a rational synthesis.
10. Demonstrate a relevant and realistic conclusion.
11. Develop and sustain a reasoned argument.
12. Judge critically and evaluate evidence/previous research.
13. Assess the merits of different theories, concepts, explanations and policies.
14. Demonstrate an appropriately high level of literacy, graphicacy, numeracy and conceptual sophistication.
15. Realise its limitations within the specific field of research.
16. Make clear, logical and appropriate decisions.

**Transferable skills:**

1. Plan and execute a piece of primary research.
2. Undertake independent research (e.g. in library, laboratory, and field), effectively, responsibly and with consideration of ethical issues.
3. Collect, manipulate, analyse geographical data, and communicate findings using numeric and computational techniques where applicable.
4. Communicate research problems and ask relevant questions.
5. Liaise effectively with public and private bodies where appropriate.
6. 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&T).
7. 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**

There are generally no restrictions on the type of geographical study that you can undertake. 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 Requirements

2nd YEAR
You are required to produce word-processed short and final dissertation proposals as part of the GEO2309: Physical Geography Practice module. See Section 2 for further details.

The submission deadlines for the short and final proposals are 17/12/09 and 6/05/10, respectively.

3rd YEAR
You are required to produce a dissertation (GEO3301) of no more than 10,000 words. Your dissertation is important as it counts for more than 20% of your final degree.

The submission deadline for the dissertation is during the Spring Term in the third year at a date to be confirmed.

1.5 Project content

Your written project report should:

1. Define and defend the purpose of the dissertation.
2. Define its place and function within geography.
3. Demonstrate its philosophy and methodology.
4. Demonstrate a rigorous pattern of experimental conception and/or data collection.
5. Demonstrate an appropriate approach to analysis.
6. Demonstrate a rational synthesis.
7. Demonstrate a relevant and realistic conclusion.
8. Demonstrate an appropriately high level of literacy, graphicaity, numeracy and conceptual sophistication.
9. 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?

1. A good problem.
2. Set in its scientific, academic context.
3. Clear statement of aims, research questions and objectives.
4. Logical research programme.
5. Clearly defined and appropriate methodology.
6. Adequate and appropriate data analysis.
7. Adequate and appropriate data for the problem.
8. Clear statement of results and your interpretation.
9. Well structured and clearly written.
10. Intellectual achievement.
11. Correct conclusions that relate to the stated aims and research questions.
12. Well presented.

The assessment of your dissertation is based on the degree to which your report meets these criteria. Details of dissertation reports assessment are provided in Appendix 8.
1.6 Getting started

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 Devon.

Research questions that might arise from this include: Is the climate in Devon changing? How did Devon’s climate change in the past? How can climate change in Devon be detected? How will climate change affect water supply (floods/drought/vegetation/…) in Devon? Do the weather records indicate that the Devon climate has changed already?

In choosing a topic you need to consider:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Consideration</th>
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<tr>
<td>Is it interesting?</td>
<td>Can the topic retain your interest and motivation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is it realistic?</td>
<td>Is there enough time? Are the data available?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is it financially viable?</td>
<td>Can you afford the transport and materials?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where can I do it?</td>
<td>Can you research at a fixed location, or is there only a limited choice of sites?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What equipment do I need?</td>
<td>Does the School have it? Will it be available? (applies to both field and laboratory equipment).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is it practical?</td>
<td>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).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety?</td>
<td>Are there any risks that need to be identified in the field or laboratory work? Do you need assistance in the field?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical considerations?</td>
<td>Are there any?</td>
</tr>
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Identifying a research topic

You should choose a dissertation which reflects your interest in the subject and which attempts to address current debates in geography. Examples can often be gained from reading recent journal issues (e.g. Progress in Physical Geography) and from your second year modules, including GEO 2309 Physical Geography Practice, where Staff will also introduce potential topics.

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 (e.g. Progress in Physical Geography), abstracts and data bases 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:

1. Follow up an idea that arose in a lecture.
2. Read articles or books on a topic that interests you.
3. Be on the look-out for ideas in the media: newspapers, radio, television etc.
4. Talk to organisations or individuals working in your area.
5. 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:

1. Nobody has investigated this topic…I will!
2. Bloggs (1990) investigated this topic and questioned the role of X. I’ll investigate the role of X.
3. Bloggs (1990) investigated this topic at site X and found that….I’ll investigate whether or not the same is true at site Y.
4. 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.
5. 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?
6. 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.

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 project report. 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 4.

1.7 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

Methods & analytical techniques

SECTION 2

DISSERTATION PLANNING AND THE DISSERTATION PROPOSAL

This section explains what the procedures are for submitting your dissertation proposal and assigning of a Dissertation Advisor.

2.1 Final Dissertation Proposal

The dissertation proposal forms part of the second year practical module GEO2309 (Physical Geography Practice). By the end of term 1 of your second year, members of Physical Geography Teaching staff in the School will have introduced their areas of research and potential dissertation topics. Before Christmas, you will have submitted a short dissertation proposal, identifying a topic for dissertation research you are interested in. Based on the topic you choose, a dissertation advisor will have been assigned. In the second term, the preparation of the final proposal will be supported by the assigned advisor through individual and group meetings. These meetings include the discussion of your short proposal, including the work required to develop it into a feasible project, the development of a sampling plan, and the necessary data analysis skills. It cannot be stated strongly enough that you should take this process seriously, because it will define your dissertation project and thus form a large and important part of your third year and your degree.

2.2 When must I submit my final dissertation proposal?

TWO hard copies of your dissertation proposal and one submission via Turnitin have to be handed in to the School Office on the 6th May 2010 in the Second Year.

2.3 What happens next?

Your Dissertation Advisor will assess the final draft proposal, and also arrange to meet with you during weeks 4 and 5 of the Summer Term. The Dissertation Advisor will give comments on the proposal, guidance on any possible modifications, as well as ensure that you are prepared for the work you have to do over the summer (e.g. reading, sampling). You may conduct a pilot study to test the methods and familiarise yourself with the research work during this time. Your dissertation advisor will agree on a work plan covering the summer and beginning of the first term of year three. During this time you also have to discuss and book your laboratory requirements in the autumn with the technicians, Jim Grapes, Sue Franklin and Angela Elliott.

2.4 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 3 & Appendix 2). This must be counter-signed by your Dissertation Advisor, and a copy kept on record. The School 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 Geography-Exeter and the dissertation research will not be supported by the School.
2.5 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 fieldwork 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:
1. Identify potential bottlenecks in the project, e.g. time taken to collect or analyse data.
2. Determine whether or not your data collection technique is viable/feasible.
3. Determine how detailed your data has to be.
4. How much material (e.g. sample size) you require (e.g. sediment and water sample size).
5. What needs to be collected and what it needs to be stored in (e.g. water and sediment samples).
6. How long the processing and analysis of sample/data takes (e.g. pollen preparation, water and sediment analysis, questionnaire processing).
7. 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.

2.6 The Myrtle Murray Award

Students carrying out fieldwork abroad can apply for financial support through the Myrtle Murray Award. This is a significant cash award to assist travel abroad for the purpose of study. It is usually awarded during the Autumn Term and you are advised to consult the noticeboard on the third floor of the Amory Building for details regarding the application procedure and closing date (usually during the Spring Term).

2.7 Summary of action to be taken

Before the end of Spring Term of your second year:
Individual and Group meetings with your dissertation advisor: discussion of short proposal, development of sampling design plan and identification of data analysis requirements and presentation of your proposed project.

Submission of final dissertation proposal:
This is on 6th May 2010.

Weeks 4 to 5 of the Summer Term:
1. Meet with your Dissertation Advisor and discuss your proposal.
2. Agree on summer and early autumn work schedule with Dissertation Advisor.
3. Ensure that you are familiar with practical work involved in your project, conduct pilot study if required.
4. Discuss and book laboratory requirements in the autumn term with technicians.
5. Complete a Risk Assessment Form and counter sign it with your Dissertation Advisor (see Section 3).
3.1 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 is 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. For more details on ethical considerations see http://www.ex.ac.uk/sogaer/EthicsGuidelines.pdf

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

3.1.1 Guidelines for projects involving people

- The student must carry identification including information that allows a potential participant to contact the School 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 supervisor 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.

3.1.2 Additional guidelines for research involving young people

There are particular considerations for those intending to work with young people. 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 Supervisor and the School Ethics Officer, Prof. Steve Hinchliffe (Stephen.Hinchliffe@exeter.ac.uk), before undertaking research involving people.
3.1.3 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.

3.1.4 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

3.1.5 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 supervisor in the summer term you will have to complete an Ethical and Risk Assessment Form (see Appendix 2). 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 supervisor.

For further guidance on ethical considerations in research see:


3.2 SAFETY AND FIELD WORK

This section explains the safety considerations that you need to take when undertaking any sort of fieldwork. Fieldwork is considered any work undertaken as part of your Dissertation. The School
will not support subjects for dissertations that involve working situations with unacceptable risks. You should read this section carefully and take action on any safety issues that might arise. You are advised to consult the School of Geography Safety Handbook on the Geography Dept. website for further information on Health and Safety (website: http://www.sogaer.ex.ac.uk/geography/handbooks/Safetyhandbook%20mar05-1.pdf)

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

3.2.1 Assessment of any potential dangers

Before commencing any fieldwork, 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 a Risk Assessment Form (Appendix 2). 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 Geography-Exeter, and the dissertation research will not be supported by the School.

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.

3.2.2 Preparation for fieldwork

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

a) Date and time of departure.
b) Method of travel to the field location, and around the site once there.
c) Proposed itinerary (give O.S. grid references whenever possible).
d) Any potentially hazardous technique or operation to be used and where it is proposed to use it.
e) Expected time of leaving the field location and estimated time of arrival home.
f) Carry a mobile and get local and national emergency telephone numbers. Ensure that your mobile phone works (roaming, reception) in the fieldwork area.

Clothing and Equipment

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

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 drink* 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 School equipment make sure you know how to use it properly – ask a technician for guidance if you need it.

### 3.2.3 Working alone

Lone working is strongly discouraged. Although it is recognised that you may undertake fieldwork 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 fieldwork in remote locations.

When working on surveys (questionnaires, observations etc) it is the School’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.

### 3.2.4 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.

### 3.2.5 Fieldwork 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 fieldwork 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 fieldwork. They do not claim to be comprehensive, covering every possible situation, but all students are strongly urged to take careful note of them NOW!

You are advised to consult the School of Geography Safety Handbook on the School of Geography website for further information on Health and Safety (website: http://www.sogaer.ex.ac.uk/geography/handbooks/Safetyhandbook%20mar05-1.pdf).

3.2.6 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 fieldwork where you have handled soil, sediments, vegetation, river/lake water, etc.

3.2.7 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. 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.
SECTION 4

PROGRESS MONITORING AND ADVICE ON YOUR DISSERTATION

4.1 What can I expect from my Dissertation Advisor?

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

1. The Dissertation Advisor, or other staff members, can offer technical advice on the dissertation, e.g. appropriate methodology, logistics, resources.
2. Your Dissertation Advisor will read your Dissertation Progress Reports to ensure that you are making progress.
3. On the basis of your progress reports, your Dissertation Advisor 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 Advisor 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 Advisor, 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 Advisor to:

1. Tell you what to do next.
2. Tell you what to do with your data.
3. Think of new projects for you.
4. Read draft copies of dissertation materials.

4.2 What will your Dissertation Advisor expect from you?

- That you complete and present a satisfactory Ethical and Risk Assessment Form

You should complete an Ethical and Risk Assessment Form (Appendix 2) and present it to your Dissertation Advisor for signing. The School will not support field work undertaken without a satisfactory Ethical and Risk Assessment Form (see Section 2.4).

- That you attend formal Dissertation Progress Monitoring Meetings

You must have two meetings with your Dissertation Advisor, at which your progress will be formerly monitored and recorded on a Dissertation Progress Report Form (see Appendix 3).

Monitoring meeting 1: By end of Week 3 of Autumn Term (3rd year). Present a 1 page (A4) progress report and complete Dissertation Progress Report Form.
Monitoring meeting 2: By week 3 of Spring Term (3rd year). Present a 1 page (A4) progress report and complete Dissertation Progress Report Form.
• That you attend Group Meetings with your Dissertation Advisor

During the first term of your third year there will be two tutorial meetings with your Dissertation Advisor and the other Level 3 students that he/she is advising. At these there will be generic information about how to progress your dissertation (e.g. nuts and bolts of dissertation report writing, organisation and presentation) as well as an opportunity to raise general questions about how to make progress.

Early in the second term of your third year, you will have to give a PowerPoint presentation to your Advisor and the other students in your advisee group in which you detail your progress and provide a schedule for finishing your dissertation on time.

• 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 Advisor immediately. You should discuss your progress with your Dissertation Advisor during the Autumn and Spring Terms. Your Dissertation Advisor will make record of these meetings using a Dissertation Progress Report Form (see Appendix 3).

During the Autumn and Spring Term, you will analyse and process samples and 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 an archive of your research 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 Geography-Exeter.

4.3 When must I submit my dissertation?

Your completed dissertation must be handed in on the during the Spring Term in the third year at a date to be confirmed.

Submission of any work (including the dissertation) that is late without the existence of appropriate extenuating circumstances will lead to the maximum mark being capped at 40, if the period of lateness does not exceed 14 days and at zero if submission is later than 14 days. As in the case of
all assessed work, students may apply for an extension to the hand-in date on the basis of serious medical or personal circumstances (N.B. such circumstances do not include computer problems and extensions are only granted if students have serious problems). (See Section 6.3).

Chapter 5 provides information on how to organise and set out your dissertation report.
SECTION 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 not exceed 10,000 words (including figure captions and references in main text, but excluding title page, acknowledgements, contents page, lists of tables / figures, appendices, tables within the main text and bibliography).

Dissertations that exceed the word limit will be penalised accordingly (see Section 6.4). The report must be word-processed with double line spacing on single sides of A4 and all pages must be clearly numbered in the top right-hand corners. 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).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Details of page setup, spacing and text font size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Word Limit</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Top and Bottom Margin</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Left Margin</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Right Margin</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Line Spacing</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Font (main text)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Page Numbers</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Printing</strong></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.
6. Main body of the dissertation – your various chapters.
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 6) provides a standard format for the organisation of a project report. 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 5 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 in. 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 6 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 6 provides an example of a Table of Contents. 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 (Appendix 6). 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.

**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; please seek advice in the Drawing Office or computer unit as appropriate. 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 6 for where these should be located and Appendix 7 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

You must refer to all references in a consistent and recognised fashion. Our preferred practice is as follows:
There is only one detailed book on the subject of dissertations (Ravenhill, 1954), although more recent research papers have touched on the subject (Simon Turner, pers. comm.). Williams (1990, p.10) for example claims that 'all good dissertations should contain some element of tourism research in a warm country'. Adams and Ray (2001), Brown (1991a; 1991b; 1999), Brown et al. (1994) and Robinson (1991) do not mention dissertations.

In this example, the references are listed alphabetically in the bibliography as:

**Bibliography**


**Internet resources:** these citations (e.g. Adams and Ray, 2001) should comprise the author(s) (if known), the full title of the work (i.e. page header), the title of the complete work (if applicable) in italics, the full http address, and the date of visit. The aim is to provide the information necessary to enable the reader to appreciate the theme of the page and to access it directly from the address provided in the reference.

**Paper resources:** Ravenhill (1954) and Brown (1991b) shows the form used for books/theses; Robinson (1991) shows the form for referring to chapters in edited volumes, and Williams (1990), Brown (1991a) and Brown et al. (1994) shows the format for journal articles. The Brown et al. (1994) reference indicates the format for multi-authoured papers. If there is more than one paper by the same first author they should be listed with single authored and oldest papers first, followed by progressively more recent single authored papers. Multi-authored papers should come after the single authored papers (and in chronological order, i.e. oldest first). Note that all the authors names of multi-authored papers are listed in the bibliography (the et al. abbreviation is restricted to use in the text.)

**Personal communications:** Simon Turner (pers. comm.) refers to information gained from a personal communication (e.g. a letter, email or verbal conversation) with someone.

**Quoting**

Note that if you quote material in your text you should give the page numbers in the reference, as is given for Williams (1990) above. You should also place parentheses around the quoted section.
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.

5.8 Handing in your completed dissertation

Your dissertation must be submitted during the Spring Term of the third year at a date to be confirmed.

You will receive information early in the spring term detailing the exact procedure. It is your responsibility to ensure you read any emails and notices displayed on the Dissertation Notice Board (Level 3 corridor, Amory Building) for announcements regarding the hand-in procedure.

You will need to submit one bound hardcopy of your dissertation, and you will also be required to submit an electronic copy via Turnitin. Please see the notices circulated for specific information.

See Section 6 of the Dissertation Handbook for details of late or non-submission procedures.
SECTION 6

REGULATIONS AND PROCEDURES

This section describes the School'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.

6.1 Your dissertation must be submitted during the Spring Term of your Third Year at a date to be confirmed. You will receive information beforehand detailing the exact procedure.

Your dissertation will be retained in the School for one year. 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. 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.

6.2 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 School of Geography. Some of these contacts may offer you practical assistance. If you are in any doubt you should seek guidance from your Dissertation Advisor 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).

### 6.3 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 the School Office. 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 problems with printers or loss of material through mismanagement will not usually be considered reasonable mitigating circumstances (see Section 7).

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

### 6.4 Penalties for exceeding the word limit

Your dissertation should not exceed 10,000 words (including figure captions and references in main text, but excluding title page, acknowledgements, contents page, lists of tables / figures, appendices, tables within the main text and bibliography). Dissertations that exceed the word limit will be penalised as follows:

- **5 marks for up to 2500 words over the limit.**
- **10 marks for more than 2500 words over the limit.**
6.5 Summary of dissertation process and timetable

Assigned Dissertation Advisor, development of final proposal

Submit dissertation proposal (2000 words)

Meet Dissertation Advisor & discuss proposal, complete and sign ethical, working with 3rd parties and risk assessment form, book laboratory is required

Satisfactory: Proceed

Unsatisfactory: revise & resubmit

Have workable project ready to begin over summer vacation


Submit Dissertation Progress Report (400 words). Meet & discuss with Advisor.

Submit Dissertation

Spring Term (Yr 2)

6th May 2010

Weeks 4 & 5
Summer Term 2010 (Yr 2)

By end of Summer Term 2010 (Yr 2)

By Week 3 Autumn Term (Yr 3)

By Week 3 Spring Term (Yr 3)

Spring Term (Yr 3) Date to be confirmed
SECTION 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 printers, or loss of material through mismanagement, are not usually 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 floppy discs 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.
Appendix 1

DISSERTATION PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

The dissertation proposal must be submitted on the 6th May 2010. Details of the hand-in procedure will be announced before the Easter break. Three copies are required, two of which can be black and white photocopies. The work will be marked and one copy returned to you with comments. A grade will be awarded which will count towards the Physical Geography Practice module (GEO2309). The proposal should be no more than 2000 words in total. There should be four clearly identified sections:

1. Project Identifiers

**Title:** no more than 10 words

**Your name:**

**Aims and research questions/problems:** no more than 100 words setting out the research problem(s) or question(s) you will address.

**Principal objectives:** no more than 100 words indicating the steps that will be taken to address/answer the research problems/questions.

6. Supporting statement

This section leads logically to a justification for your project and the methods that you will employ.

**Previous research on this particular topic**

*What work has been done in this/these particular field(s) before?* This requires an up-to-date critical review of the previous research specifically relevant to your intended subject area, and the types of research methods used, including an assessment of their strengths and weaknesses. This does not mean a general review on the broad topic. i.e. palaeoenvironmental evidence for the impact of climate and humans in upland Britain during early prehistory NOT a general history and use of pollen analysis; the construction and portrayal of identity in marginal groups, especially rural youth NOT everything to do with rural issues.

*What are the main consensus views coming out of the literature?* What are the main areas of debate or uncertainty in the subject area?

*How will you build on these to contribute to our understanding of the subject?* Where is there room for improvement, for trying new techniques, or applying the same technique elsewhere, for reducing the error factors etc.?

**Project Rationale**

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

*The selection the particular site(s), groups, visual or textual sources:* Why have you selected a particular site for investigation? What are 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). You should evaluate the suitability of the different methods used by previous workers for your intended
study, giving an explanation (i.e. rationale) for how you intended to undertake your study. You should attempt to use an appropriate range of quantitative and qualitative techniques

*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.

### 7. Description of Methodology

This section should provide a detailed account of how you will go about collecting the data required for your project. It should be a specific and clear statement of what you will do and how. Your methodology 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**: location of sample sites, sampling techniques, equipment that will be used (e.g. both field and laboratory measurement of variables).

b) **If applicable, what sampling scheme are to be used**: sampling strategy and intervals (e.g. random, stratified sampling, quadrat size, number of sample points).

c) **How the information you collect will be analysed**: details of statistical tests (e.g. specify tests and data to which they will be applied), discourse or content analysis, interpretative methods.

### 4. Schedule

**Precisely when** is the work going to be done? Detailed and realistic schedules should be prepared for:

1. Field work/data collection (normally completed over Summer Vacation).
2. Data treatment (e.g. laboratory sample analysis, questionnaire coding, etc.) should be finished by first week of Spring Term, Year 3.
3. Data analysis.
4. Writing up (allow 6-8 weeks) including diagrams etc.

### E. Bibliography

A bibliography of the work you have cited in the proposal. Obviously, this should be comprehensive and include up-to-date papers specific to your intended area of research.
Appendix 2

Assessment Forms:
- Ethics
- Working with third parties
- Risk, health and safety

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The ethical considerations, working with 3rd parties and risk assessment involved in the project should be discussed with your Dissertation Advisor and you should both sign the form.

1. Ethical Assessment

Do you consider that your research raises any ethical issues?

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

If Yes, what are the ethical issues you have identified and how are you going to ensure that you respond to these issues during and after your dissertation research?

Advice given by dissertation advisor concerning ethical issues arising from the research proposal

2. 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 6.2. Authorisation may be needed from the dissertation co-ordinator.

3. Risk Assessment

Dissertation Advisor should identify areas of work in the following risk categories:
A. Those in which work may not be undertaken without senior supervision.
B. Those in which work may not be started without Dissertation Advisor’s advice.
C. Those with risks (other than categories A or B) where extra care must be observed, but where it is considered that workers are adequately trained and competent in the procedures involved.

RISK CATEGORY APPLIED: 

NATURE OF WORK:

LIST HAZARDS AND ADVICE (The nature of any risks must be defined, e.g. toxicity, and reference made to any instructions and/or safety notices, e.g. COSHH assessments. Advice should include any safeguards):

Signature of Dissertation Advisor

Signature of Student

Date
Appendix 3

Dissertation progress report

NAME OF STUDENT: .................................................................

NAME OF DISSERTATION ADVISOR: .............................................

DATE OF MEETING: ....................................................................

400 WORD PROGRESS REPORT TO BE COMPLETED BY STUDENT:

TOPICS DISCUSSED:

ACTION TO BE TAKEN:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signature of Dissertation Advisor</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Signature of Student</td>
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Appendix 4

EXAMPLES OF AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

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:

1. Does runoff from Trumpton Airport contain pollutants that have a measurable impact on the water quality of the River Trump?
2. What are the main pollutants and their sources?
3. How far downstream can the pollutants and their impact be traced?
4. Is there a detectable seasonal variation on pollutant load?
5. Do the current clean up facilities at Trumpton Airport meet with statutory requirements?
6. 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.

6. 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.
Appendix 5

EXAMPLE OF TITLE PAGE

The Nature of Geographical Dissertations

*Your Name*

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, i.e. Arts, Science) with Honours in Geography at the University of Exeter

..........................(your signature)

April 2010
Appendix 6

AN EXAMPLE OF A TABLE OF CONTENTS

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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.

The Table below, which is reproduced from the Generic Mark Scheme for Geography (Exeter), (http://www.sogaer.ex.ac.uk/geography/students/GMS.pdf) gives a detailed description of the criteria used for assessing dissertations.

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<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 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>
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<tr>
<td>60-64</td>
<td>2.1 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>
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<tr>
<td>55-59</td>
<td>2:2 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>
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<td>40-54</td>
<td>Adequate</td>
<td>A 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 and cross-over of information in the text. Writing and presentation contain mistakes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Third</td>
<td>45-49</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>Third</td>
<td>40-44</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>
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<tr>
<td>Fail</td>
<td>35-39</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>
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<tr>
<td>Fail</td>
<td>30-34</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>
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<tr>
<td>Fail</td>
<td>25-29</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>
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<tr>
<td>Fail</td>
<td>0-24</td>
<td>Incompetent</td>
<td>Brief, irrelevant, confused, incomplete. A dissertation that fails in all aspects.</td>
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