



Programme Specification

A statement of the knowledge, understanding and skills
that underpin a taught programme of study leading to an
award from
The University of Sheffield

1	Programme Title	Environmental Change and International Development
2	Programme Code	GEOT50
3	JACS Code	L800
4	Level of Study	Postgraduate
5a	Final Qualification	Master of Science (MSc)
5b	QAA FHEQ Level	Masters (MSc)
6a	Intermediate Qualification(s)	Postgraduate Diploma (PG Dip), Postgraduate Certificate (PG Cert)
6b	QAA FHEQ Level	Postgraduate Diploma (PG Dip), Postgraduate Certificate (PG Cert)
7	Teaching Institution (if not Sheffield)	Not applicable
8	Faculty	Social Sciences
9	Department	Geography
10	Other Departments involved in teaching the programme	Urban Studies and Planning, Sociological Studies, Politics and IR
11	Mode(s) of Attendance	Full-time
12	Duration of the Programme	1 year
13	Accrediting Professional or Statutory Body	Not applicable
14	Date of production/revision	October 2008, June 2010, March 2016, January 2017, February 2022, February 2023

15. Background to the programme and subject area

The **MSc in Environmental Change and International Development (ECID)** provides high quality, in-depth teaching dedicated to preparing students aiming at both further academic studies and careers in environment and development research and practice in the public, private and third sectors. Originally built on the success of a previous ESRC-accredited 'research training' MA in Human Geography in attracting students from the UK and overseas, the ECID programme is one of a suite of masters' courses that the department is offering, demonstrating its excellence in and commitment to teaching within this field. To continue this trajectory of excellence, the programme now expands its interdisciplinary perspective, by joining efforts with Urban Studies and Planning, Sociological Studies and Politics and International Relations, keeping up with the evolution of the development field (in particular in core development modules).

This programme explores contemporary theory, policy and practice within the environmental dimension of international development. The course has an applied emphasis with students encouraged to undertake a research-focussed field class and a research-based dissertation (either independently or with a placement partner) to ensure engagement with the complexities of international development and environmental change as played out in everyday life. The course also has a strong research focus but is organised flexibly to target a range of different audiences including those wishing to acquire specific skills before progressing to a PhD, those interested in research consultancy, or those wishing to embark on a career within a government or practitioner organisation.

The Department of Geography together with the Departments of Urban Studies and Planning, Sociological Studies, and Politics and International Relations, are well placed to provide a programme of this nature. The University of Sheffield has been at the forefront of geography for the last hundred years, and the International Development Masters has been a lead in the sector since its creation 14 years ago. These four departments have a reputation for excellence in teaching and research and Geography and Urban Studies and planning received a grade of 'Excellent' in the HEFCE Teaching Quality Assessment. In the 2021 REF exercise, Geography (93%), Urban Studies and Planning (95%) and Politics and International Relations (94%) returns showed their research as being world leading or internationally excellent.

These four departments have an excellent record of teaching research skills at postgraduate level.

Features of the **MSc in Environmental Change and International Development** include:

- an emphasis on the environmental dimension of international development research and practice in its social and intellectual context, reflecting on its complexities and how these are played out in daily life;
- a focus upon research methods and their application to problem-solving within a professional and academic environment;
- an emphasis upon the development of study in-depth through option teaching and through the submission of a research-based dissertation (based on placements, research collaborations or independent research) which forms the final piece of work students undertake;
- a wide range of specialised study modules which directly reflect staff research interests;
- comparative study as an important ingredient both of core and specialised study modules;
- a variety of teaching techniques, with seminars, workshops, projects and site visits an essential part of the teaching and learning strategy;
- application of specialist study and research methods through a range of specialist modules including optional field class and placement;
- continuous assessment conducted through a range of methods including written work, oral presentations, group project outputs etc.

16. Programme aims

The **MSc in Environmental Change and International Development** aims to provide students with in-depth understanding of the context and process of international development and equip them with the skills for further academic or professional research, or for practitioner careers. Specifically it aims to:

A1 develop interdisciplinary environmental understanding grounded in the physical sciences with the study of the social and economic bases of planning and managing international development.

A2 develop research skills and an understanding of the application of research in public policy-making and development intervention.

A3 develop an ability to critically reflect upon interdisciplinary research and practice and to understand the need for analytical rigour.

A4 develop theoretical and practical awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of research methods and their relevance to different environment and development contexts.

A5 develop interdisciplinary and specialised substantive and research knowledge in relation to a selected field of environmental change and international development.

A6 develop a commitment to self-learning and the development of life skills and foster intellectual curiosity, critical thinking and independent judgement.

17. Programme learning outcomes

Knowledge and understanding

Upon successful completion of the programme, students will have developed:

K1	Experience of applying and translating knowledge and skills learnt from an advanced understanding of the origins and changing paradigms of 'international development', including how the meaning of 'development' varies between disciplines and has changed over time.
K2	Global competence, cultural intelligence and knowledge of key academic debates in the field of development and environmental change and experience of applying these to analyse real-world problems and challenges.
K3	Understanding and recognition of life experiences to guide thinking and behaviour, knowledge production and practice in the field of development and environmental change.

K4	An appreciation of the science of key aspects of environmental change that have significance for international development.
K5	Understanding of the challenges environmental change poses for development and development practice.

Skills and other attributes	
Upon successful completion of the programme, students will be able to:	
S1	Actively participate in and critically appraise different disciplinary, interdisciplinary and stakeholder perspectives on development and the significance of these for policy and practice in local, global and virtual communities.
S2	Critically evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of existing research on international development and environmental change, and reflect on questions of epistemology and methodology.
S3	Design a piece of original academic research in the field of development and Environmental Change, implement this research, and write about it analytically in the form of a dissertation.
S4	Develop self-awareness and reflect upon their learning, applying learning from the course to their own (current or future) professional practice.
S5	Develop skills to communicate confidently in writing, in person and online for different purposes and audiences.
S6	Work effectively with others and in teams, encouraging collaboration and contributing positively to manage and deliver group-based projects and to communicate project findings.

18. Teaching, learning and assessment

Development of the learning outcomes is promoted through the following teaching and learning methods:

Knowledge and understanding is acquired through a series of compulsory and optional modules and delivered primarily through lectures and seminars. Students will have a range of opportunities available to them to develop practical, hands-on experience of research techniques including through an optional field class, and a core independent research-based dissertation with optional placement. Module structure varies according to the needs of each topic, but typically a 15-credit module is made up of 20-30 contact hours, depending on whether practical skills need to be learnt. Blackboard will be used to make outline notes, scenario data, and other information needed for project work available. Independent learning is a key element to developing the independent knowledge (LO5, 6), so that 120-130 hours per module are allocated for assimilation of materials, further reading, completion of practical work and preparation of reports or presentations (S5, S6). Inquiry-based learning will be used to draw on the rich knowledge and diversity that students themselves bring (S4, K3), and to foster independent learning and develop good team-working skills (S6).

Lectures will be largely used for imparting essential knowledge (K1, S1, K4, K5) and, to a lesser extent, knowledge of research design and methodology (S2, S3, K3). They are also used in the specialist option modules (K2). However, no module is solely taught through lectures.

Seminars are an important means of developing students' critical understanding relating to international development research and practice and the links between them. Seminar groups containing small numbers of students provide an effective environment for students to get involved in discussing core issues and developing the ability to critique their own and others' research (K1, S1, K2, S4, S5, K3, K4, K5). Online **interactive student-centred learning activities** mounted on Blackboard will develop students core knowledge and skills base through self-guided readings, videos, and online reading groups, when appropriate and as a way to deliver flipped learning, which is then complemented by in person seminars (K2, S4, S5).

Workshops and **practical sessions** are also used for teaching, particularly of research methods and information management, contributing to students acquiring both knowledge and skills (S2, S3, S4, S5, K3). Workshops with internal and external researchers are crucial in developing insight into research methods and their application (S2) and support students in preparing their own proposals (S3). **Project work** forms an important component of the information and communication skills teaching, contributing to both individual and group skills (S6).

Opportunities for **independent study** are provided in both semesters, providing an opportunity for students to develop important skills in gaining knowledge under their own direction (K2, S4). Within core modules there is considerable flexibility for students to identify topics that particularly interest them. Students are free to choose specialised study option modules in consultation with their dissertation supervisors and much work on the specialised study options is undertaken as independent study.

The **research-based dissertation** (based on placements, research collaborations or independent research) itself is a major piece of work that students must conduct on their own initiative, again, with guidance from supervisors, contributing to development of skills relevant to learning outcomes (K1-5, S1-5). Students' advance to the dissertation following satisfactory progress, including an assessed research proposal. The dissertation also provides students with the opportunity to increase their substantive knowledge, and to synthesize the various elements learned in other core and optional modules. Encouraging students to conduct primary data collection, through placements, research collaborations or on their own independent research, develops students' skills of applying knowledge to real-world situations (S1, K2, S4) as well as developing logistical and professional skills relevant to the workplace (S5, K3, S6). Students will keep a learning journal whilst conducting their research and will have access to some additional learning resources (depending their project). They will have regular emails contact with supervisors and peer support via web community. For those on placement-based dissertations, they will have a placement mentor while those in research collaborations dissertations, if their supervisor is not also the Research Lead, they will have a research mentor.

Individual tutorials are used for the supervision of the research proposal and the dissertation. These are critical to the development of students' ability to identify an area for research, to develop research questions as a preliminary to developing a research strategy, to find appropriate methodologies and to carry out a piece of research of their own (S3, S4, S5, K3).

Opportunities to demonstrate achievement of the learning outcomes are provided through the following assessment methods:

The programme uses a wide variety of continuous assessment methods, organised as a structured mechanism through which skills and knowledge are developed by students. The programme has been designed so that assessments required by different modules fit within the overall structure and progression of the programme. Students may expect to be assessed through some or all of the activities outlined below, depending upon their optional module selections.

Whilst assessments are used to develop all key areas of understanding and skills, there is expectation that students will also develop and demonstrate some skills and understanding outside formal assessment mechanisms, for example, skills in time management and self-motivation as well as self-development.

Essays are used where there is a need to evaluate the students' comprehension of particular concepts or theoretical stand points and how they relate to international development (K1, S1, K2, S4, K4, K5). Essays also help to develop the students' ability to communicate clearly through fluent writing and the construction of well-developed arguments (S5, K3). Essays and papers are also used by some modules in the demonstration of students' specialist knowledge and skills.

Oral Presentations are seen as important part of the assessment strategy. Students are required to present project findings and recommendations to peers and members of staff. Oral presentation particularly allows the assessment of the ability to communicate clearly and effectively (S5, S6).

Policy Briefs will be used as a mean of assessment to test the ability of the students to communicate the results of analysis, research and make recommendations in a written form that are accessible and useful for non-academic audiences (S1, K2, S4, K5).

Critical reflections will be used to assess students' capacity to reflect on and analyse their learning process and skill development, including in relation to positionality, ethics and possible career pathways (S1, S4, S5, K3, K5).

Group-based projects will be used to assess aspects of professional skills development, with respect to teamwork, communication and project management skills (S4, S5, K3, S6).

Presentation of numerical data and analysis will be used to evaluate the students' knowledge and skills in different techniques of analysis (S3). Much of this work will require the application of professional skills which have been developed throughout the programme.

The Dissertation is the culmination of the programme. Whilst it allows specialist knowledge and skills to be demonstrated, it is not intended as an overall assessment for the whole programme. Instead the dissertation is

intended to demonstrate particular understandings and skills. In particular, the dissertation is seen as a key expression of specialist knowledge and skills (K2), the understanding of the research process (S2) and the ability to design, plan and conduct research (S3, K3), and the ability to situate research in a real-world context through the research (S4, K3).

19. Reference points

The learning outcomes have been developed to reflect the following points of reference:

Learning outcomes have been derived from a combination of factors both external and internal to the department.

Externally

The ESRC guidelines on research training were used to inform the planning of the programme. The lead department previously had a ESRC research training recognised programme 'MA in Human Geography Research'. The MSc in Environmental Change and International Development went forward for ESRC accreditation in 2010 through the Development Studies route, opening up a potential new funding source for both departments and strengthen our overall international development profile. The recent changes to ESRC accreditation have changed this status, but our research training remains benchmarked to ESRC standards.

The generic requirements of the QAA for Masters level education have been taken into account. The MSc has been designed to ensure that students' learning is informed by leading-edge research and provides the opportunity for them to make their own contribution, and to learn in an environment which encourages creative and rigorous thinking.

Internally

All five departments, lead by Geography, have a strong commitment to developing an internationally regarded suite of masters' programmes and the **MPH International Development** plays a significant role in raising the University of Sheffield's profile as a leader in international development research and teaching. It will provide students with the opportunity to gain a high quality qualification that will be relevant to a career in academia (via a PhD), the private sector (consultancy), civil society (NGO), or public sector (government department or practitioner organisation).

20. Programme structure and regulations

The programme is offered full-time. All MSc students take modules to the value of 180 credits. Modules to the value of 150 credits (including 60 credits in the form of a dissertation) are compulsory in order to provide a strong, coherent core to the course, with a further 30 credits being drawn from a range of relevant optional modules. Students taking 60 credits will be eligible for a postgraduate certificate award. Students not permitted to proceed to the dissertation (i.e. unsatisfactory progress) will be eligible for a postgraduate diploma award by gaining 120 credits from core and optional modules during Semesters 1 and 2.

The programme is delivered over a twelve-month period. The taught modules are delivered over two semesters (September to February, February to June) and the dissertation is taken across the graduate year, with the primary research activities undertaken between June and September.

Detailed information about the structure of programmes, regulations concerning assessment and progression and descriptions of individual modules are published in the University Calendar available on-line at <http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/calendar>.

21. Student development over the course of study

The core modules form a foundation of substantive knowledge and key research skills (LO1-10). Both the teaching and learning is developmental and there is an increasing emphasis upon student-centred learning as the year progresses. Specifically, students acquire an expertise in international development theory and practice, as well as broader philosophical and theoretical debates (LO1, 2, 9, 10). These skills and understandings are put into practice through dissertation research (LO3, 4, 8). The optional modules provide flexibility for students to study in-depth areas of the subject in which they are particularly interested. Combined, these modules provide an appropriate basis for the preparation of the dissertation.

However, while specific learning outcomes have been associated with stages in this process, it is important to note that the development of knowledge and skills are continuous and that students are expected to continue developing their core knowledge and skills throughout the programme. In parallel there is a coherent development of understanding and increasing engagement in the research process.

22. Criteria for admission to the programme

Candidates would normally be expected to have a minimum of an upper second-class honours degree from a British University (or an international equivalent) in a relevant subject area. Candidates with other qualifications will be considered on an individual basis. The Department recognises the value of experience, and may accept applications from people who have been in practice, or who bring other experience to their studies. International students are also required to offer a suitable English language qualification, such as TOEFL or IELTS.

Detailed information regarding admission to programmes is available at <http://www.shef.ac.uk/geography>

23. Additional information

Students will cover any costs relating to the field class and/or placement themselves.

This specification represents a concise statement about the main features of the programme and should be considered alongside other sources of information provided by the teaching department(s) and the University. In addition to programme specific information, further information about studying at The University of Sheffield can be accessed via our Student Services web site at <http://www.shef.ac.uk/ssid>.