

DIPLOMA IN ECOLOGY AND CONSERVATION – Modular Enrolment (pre-CAS)

(These notes should be read in conjunction with the Regulations for the Certificate and Diploma in Ecology and Conservation (revised June 2007) and with the current General Regulations pertaining to Birkbeck University of London Awards.)

1 Summary.

The Diploma Dissertation is intended to provide the opportunity for you to develop and demonstrate your understanding in Ecology and Conservation by undertaking an individual research project under the supervision of an adviser appointed by the Department. The Diploma is awarded on the basis of a dissertation of not more than 8,000 words reporting the results of independent project work on a subject to be agreed with the Undergraduate Dissertation Coordinator, Paul Watt (p.watt@bbk.ac.uk).

2 Eligibility.

2.1 Admission to the Diploma is normally restricted to holders of the Graduate Certificate in Ecology and Conservation.

2.2 Holders of cognate degrees or of awards of comparable standard may, if they are able to demonstrate that the award adequately covers the syllabus for the Certificate, or if they have been professionally employed in related fields and can demonstrate adequate knowledge of the course material, apply for 'direct entry' to the Diploma.

2.3 Final year Certificate students may request provisional registration for the Diploma which will allow them to start their Diploma project work before completing the third year of the Certificate.

3 Practical Courses.

3.1 In addition to your Diploma dissertation you are also required to have satisfactorily completed at least one approved specialist course equivalent to 40 hours tuition. These courses are normally practically based, involving a significant amount of field work. They may be offered in different modes, for example, as one full- time residential week, or as three linked weekend courses.

3.2 The purpose of these courses is to give you the opportunity to acquire further knowledge and practical skills which are relevant to your chosen Diploma topic. We recommend you should attend as many different courses as possible before registering for the Diploma. This will enable you to gain practical experience in different areas and will give you the opportunity to discuss ideas for your dissertation with different tutors. If you have not already completed this course requirement before registering for the Diploma you should do so as soon as possible.

4 Topics.

4.1 To prepare for the Diploma project, you should begin to think about possible project topics and discuss them with your course tutors as early as possible. You should seek as much advice as possible and consult at an early stage potential project advisers to whom you might wish to be assigned. Once you have some clear ideas regarding your intended dissertation topic you should commit these to paper and seek an appointment to discuss them with the Undergraduate Dissertation Coordinator, Paul Watt (p.watt@bbk.ac.uk).

4.2 No 'rules' (other than to those given in the Schemes of Study) are laid down as to admissible topics (though tutors will be happy to suggest possible topics if asked) but in general it is clear that diploma topics should be related to the course material. The range of possible topics - and approaches - to a dissertation are very broad indeed, but in general it is likely that your project will fall into one of three broad categories;

- a practical ecological investigation of a particular site (habitat) or population (species),
- an investigation of a particular problem to do with habitat management or species conservation, for example, public attitudes, or the policies of a conservation organisation.
- a survey of 'secondary' sources (e.g. published literature) relating to a particular issue in ecology or conservation.

4.3 The best projects tend to be those which combine a broad survey of the existing literature with a practical investigation or case study involving the collection of primary data (which may or may not be numerical). This demonstrates the student's ability to discover and synthesise existing knowledge and also to carry out original research in the chosen area.

5 Equivalence.

The level and standard expected of the dissertation is at least equivalent to that of a final year (honours) undergraduate project where this would constitute one third of the workload for that year. The best way to assess the level expected is to examine past project dissertations which are available for inspection at the Department of Geography, Environment & Development Studies, by arrangement with the administrator, Amanda Inniss. Grades awarded for these dissertations are not made public, but the best of them will have been awarded Merits or Distinctions. Failed dissertations are not retained.

6 Registration.

6.1 Formal registration for the Diploma takes place in September. After registration, if you have not already done so, you should contact the Undergraduate Dissertation Coordinator, Paul Watt (p.watt@bbk.ac.uk), to discuss possible dissertation topic(s) and to whom you should be assigned as your dissertation Adviser. As soon as possible after this, you should arrange a meeting with your Adviser to discuss your project further.

7 Adviser.

7.1 It is expected that the main source of advice and help in the design and execution of the project and in the preparation of your dissertation will be your Adviser, to whom you should submit regular reports. Contact may be letter, telephone or person, as agreed between you and your adviser. In general you may expect a total of around six hours of your adviser's time, so you need to use it well, and plan your contact through the life of your project. Before your first contact with your adviser we strongly suggest you should send him or her a written outline of what you have in mind (with alternatives where appropriate), in as much detail as you can get onto a maximum of 2 sides of A4. This initial outline should include at least tentative ideas on:

- Aims – i.e. in general terms what you want your Dissertation to say
- Objectives – the particular things you want to find out through your project
- Methods – how you intend to do this
- Anticipated problems
- List of sources (references) consulted to date (so that your Adviser has an idea of how much background reading you have done so far).

7.2 It is your responsibility to initiate and maintain contact and to make sure you are content with the advice being given. A good deal of advice will clearly be necessary in the early stages of project planning, and again in the stages of writing up before submission. It is suggested you should begin this as soon as possible so that, with the agreement of your adviser, your draft dissertation may be submitted for comment so that you are both happy that the dissertation meets the required standard.

8 Liability.

Any arrangements made for advice from other sources, access to survey sites, use of libraries etc. are a matter for the student. Neither Faculty nor College can accept any liability (financial or otherwise) in respect of commitments entered into by the student or by the Adviser or for any injury, loss or damage sustained by you or by third parties. You should familiarise yourself with the College and Faculty codes of safety for fieldwork: <http://www.bbk.ac.uk/geds/current-students/health-and-safety>

9 Meetings.

Students who have confirmed that they are undertaking a dissertation will be invited to the general meetings for all finalising students in the GEDS Undergraduate School. These will discuss the different options for dissertations, and how these will be organized and supervised.

10 Submission and examination.

10.1 When your Dissertation is ready for submission, you should hand it at the departmental office for Geography, Environment & Development (MAL 159) – not to your Adviser or to the Course Director. The final date for submission of your dissertation is **30 March 2012** for the academic year 2011/12. You must submit **TWO** unbound copies, with a signed declaration at the front that states that the work is your own and does not exceed the word limit (see 10.4). In addition to these two hard copies, you must also submit an **ELECTRONIC** version by email to a.inniss@bbk.ac.uk, again by the above due date.

10.2 The submission procedure follows the College guidelines contained within the Common Awards Structure. This states that:

- i) No individual academic member of staff can allow extensions.
- ii) Coursework submitted late is given two marks: a penalty mark of the Pass Mark, assuming it is of a pass standard, and the 'real' mark that would have been awarded if the work had not been late. Both marks are given to the student on a cover sheet. If the coursework is not of a pass standard a single mark is given.
- iii) Students submitting coursework late have the opportunity to provide written evidence, medical or otherwise, as to why their work was submitted late. This should be submitted to the Tutor or Programme Director, as appropriate and thence to the Mitigation Sub-Committee (see point v below). If no such documentation is received prior to the meeting of the Mitigation Sub-Committee the 'real' mark will not be considered and the penalty mark will stand.
- iv) An absolute cut off deadline for late submission and accompanying documentation shall be specified.
- v) All requests are held over and considered by a sub-group of the relevant Exam Board prior to a meeting of the full Exam Board. This sub-group should be called the Mitigation Sub-Committee and should meet termly and/or prior to the full Exam Board, as appropriate. All cases on file should be dealt with at that meeting/those meetings, and the results presented to the full Exam Board.

vi) Appropriate procedures should be put in place for students on interdisciplinary programmes. This should normally involve submission of evidence to the relevant module tutor, who should pass it on to the Mitigation Sub-Committee of the School in which the programme is based.

The absolute cut-off deadline for late submission and accompanying documentation is **30th May 2012** (6.00pm).

Your mitigating circumstances claim must be made on the College's form (available here: <http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/services/administration/certificate-exams/mitigating-circumstances>) to Eva Peters, Department of Geography, Environment & Development Studies (e.peters@bbk.ac.uk).

10.3 Title and second page

Example of a front page statement:

<p>Biotic and physical factors determining plant distribution on an abandoned industrial site in Tower Hamlets. John Smith BSc Environmental Science Birkbeck College</p>

Example of a plagiarism and word limit declarations (to go on the second page):

<p>I declare that the work presented in this report is my own and all other published work has been acknowledged. Signature: Date: I declare that the whole report (including the appendices, excluding the bibliography) does not exceed 8000 words. Signature: Date:</p>
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Please note that the text should be typed double-spaced, 10 – 12 font size, on one side only of A4 paper, with a minimum 1" margin on either side; and with illustrated material on paper the same size as the typescript, folded if necessary (separate loose maps and diagrams are not accepted).

10.4 Your dissertation, together with the adviser's report and the original project agreement will be submitted to the Internal and External Examiners for marking. Your Dissertation will be retained by the University. The Diploma is awarded at Pass, Merit, and Distinction standards. Results of the examination will normally be announced in summer.

10.5 A student who fails to submit his/her dissertation by the due date will be marked absent. A student may be permitted to submit in the following year at the discretion of the Diploma Course Director, and subject to the payment of a further examination fee. If further advice from the University or Adviser is required this will require re-registration for the Diploma and payment of a further year's fees. No extension will be permitted beyond the maximum of two sessions from the date of first registration.

11 Note on provisional registration.

In special circumstances (for example, where a student's proposed Dissertation topic involves ecological sampling or practical work over more than one season) and with the permission of the Course Director, students in their final Certificate year who have not yet obtained their Certificate (or in the case of direct entry candidates, who have yet to complete the specified Certificate course work in order to fulfil the conditions for direct entry) may be admitted to provisional registration for the Diploma. A provisionally registered student will be assigned to a project adviser and will be able to start on the project, and will incur similar fees to fully registered students. However a provisionally registered student may not submit a dissertation for assessment until the Certificate has been awarded.

12 Enquiries and further information.

12.1 Initial administrative enquiries regarding registration and submission procedures fees etc. should be directed to GEDS@bbk.ac.uk.

12.2 Appointments to inspect past student dissertations should be made with Amanda Inniss at a.inniss@bbk.ac.uk.