DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY, ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

GUIDE TO COMPLETING AN
INDEPENDENT GEOGRAPHICAL STUDY
(1.0 CU / 30 CAS CREDITS UNDERGRADUATES)
(1.0 CU / 60 CAS CREDITS GRADUATE DIPLOMAS)
ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH PROJECT
(1.0 CU / 30 CAS CREDITS)
(1.0 CU / 60 CAS CREDITS GRADUATE DIPLOMAS)
AND
LITERATURE REVIEW
(0.5 CU / 15 CAS CREDITS)

FOR STUDENTS TAKING:
BA/BSc GEOGRAPHY AND ENVIRONMENT
BSc ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE
BSc ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT
GRADUATE DIPLOMA GEOGRAPHY AND ENVIRONMENT
GRADUATE DIPLOMA ENVIRONMENTAL SYSTEMS SCIENCE
GRADUATE DIPLOMA SPATIAL INFORMATION SCIENCE
GRADUATE DIPLOMA GLOBALISATION, ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT
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### 1. INTRODUCTION

In order to finalise for the BA or BSc degree in Geography and Environment it is compulsory to complete an 8000 word *Independent Geographical Study (IGS)* that counts as 1.0 CU at Higher-level (60 credits under the Common Award Structure).

In order to finalise for the BSc in Environmental Science or Environmental Management, it is compulsory to complete EITHER an *Environmental Research Project (ERP)*, which is an original piece of research, written up in an 8000 word report, counting as 1.0 CU at Higher-level (60 credits under the Common Award Structure); OR a *Literature Review* of a maximum of 8000 words in an area of your choice, counting as 0.5 CU at Higher-level (30 credits under the Common Award Structure). You can also do BOTH, although they must not overlap in subject matter.

Your Independent Geographical Study, Environmental Research Project and/or Literature Review can be based in science, social science, or can be interdisciplinary in nature. This booklet will help guide you through the process of producing your final submission, whether it be an IGS, ERP or Literature Review.

### IMPORTANT NOTE :

The deadline for submission is Monday 3 May 2010 by 5:30 pm.
The submission procedure follows the Birkbeck College guidelines on coursework submission, which state that:

1. No individual member of staff can allow extensions to submission deadlines.

2. Coursework which is submitted late will be given two marks: a penalty mark equal to the pass mark, assuming that the work is of a pass standard, and the ‘real’ mark that would have been awarded had the work been submitted on time. Both marks will be given to the student. If the coursework is not of a pass standard, a single mark will be given.

3. 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 Chair of the BA/BSc exam sub-board (Dr Diane Horn). This written evidence will be provided to the Mitigation Sub-Committee (see point 5 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.

4. An absolute cut-off deadline for late submission and accompany documentation shall be specified for each piece of coursework.

5. All requests for mitigating circumstances 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, the Mitigation Sub-Committee, should meet termly and/or prior to the full Exam Board, as appropriate. All cases on file should be dealt with at the meeting(s) of the Mitigation Sub-Committee and the results presented to the full Exam Board.

The final cut-off date for late submission of an Independent Geographical Study, Environmental Research Project and/or Literature Review and accompanying documentation, is 5:30 pm on Friday 11 June 2010.

a. How the IGS / ERP / Literature Review is organised

- A compulsory meeting is held in June to outline the details of doing an ERP or Literature Review. **It is very important that you attend this meeting.**

- You will then have 2-3 weeks to fill in a form outlining your plans. This form is available at the back of this guide, and should be handed in to the Geography office by **5:30 pm on Friday 10 July 2009** at the latest. This will help the Course Directors allocate an appropriate supervisor for your project. You should make two copies, keep one, and hand one in to the Geography office. At this stage, you are not tied exactly to what you propose, but to the best of your knowledge, this form should indicate your plans.

- You will then be notified who your supervisor is.

- It is then **your responsibility** to contact your supervisor, and arrange a time to meet. It is especially important to meet early, before major data collection, so you can get advice on the suitability and feasibility of the project. Thereafter, you
should aim to stay in contact with your supervisor, providing progress reports and meeting your supervisor (three times at most).

- Individual timetables will differ, but it is expected (and advised) that most of your data collection will take place over the summer vacation.

- The 8000 word Independent Geographical Study, Environmental Research Project Report, or Literature Review must be handed in to the Geography Department by **3 May 2010 by 5:30 pm**.

- 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.

- Your report or review will be first marked by an internal examiner, normally your supervisor. It will also be second marked by another member of staff in the College and, where there is discrepancy between marks or where candidates are on a class boundary, assessed by an examiner external to the College.

**b. The difference between an IGS / ERP and a Literature Review**

The IGS is compulsory for all Geography students and is identical to the Environmental Research Project (ERP). The ERP (1 CU / 30 CAS credits) is an option for environmental students who have performed well in previous courses and have completed the necessary background courses, including those in appropriate techniques and/or data analysis. The aim of the IGS/ERP is to allow students to develop their own ideas through a small piece of environmental research. The end result is an **8000 word report** (not including the bibliography). The project can be based upon the collection of your own research data (such as a large-scale survey, interviews, lab-based experimentation, or a field-based investigation); or an original analysis based on large-scale data sets from other sources, such as government departments and NGOs. **You must discuss the choice of topic initially with the Course Director, and then with your allocated supervisor.**

The Literature Review (0.5 CU / 15 CAS credits) is essentially an extended essay on a particular subject, the title of which must be agreed with your supervisor. It does not require the collection of primary data, but does require original and detailed exploration of existing theories and debates, which must be elaborated in depth. The Literature Review must be a maximum of **8000 words**, and must be logically structured, well-written, and draw on a range of appropriate literature. No part of it may previously have been submitted for assessment. **You must discuss the choice of topic initially with the Course Director, and then with your allocated supervisor.**

**b. Science or Social Science?**

While there are a number of shared principles in science and social science (such as the importance of careful planning, reviewing of the appropriate literature, deploying appropriate research skills and techniques in a rigorous way, and so on), there are also some differences of approach. Social science projects (whether IGS, ERP or Literature Reviews) are unlikely to start off with a hypothesis, whereas this is the basis of scientific investigation. In social science, it is more usual for projects to examine an issue, and draw arguments and conclusions out of the analysis. There are also differences in styles of writing and report production.
Choosing between science/social science/interdisciplinary should be done on the basis of what interests you, and what you want to do, and also on whether you have the necessary experience, particularly in terms of research and analysis skills. Science and social science projects are equally challenging, and are marked according to the quality of the individual project alone.

d. Guidance from the supervisor

During the course of your research, you should arrange three meetings of up to an hour’s duration with your supervisor. The first meeting should be used to map out the project area: the supervisor will normally help you find the appropriate focus or range in your research topic, and suggest appropriate background reading etc. Ideally this first meeting should take place during the summer vacation, before starting on your data collection. You should then arrange another two meetings spread out across the year to discuss the content and structure of the project, methodology, results and their interpretation, and writing the report. If given sufficient time, the supervisor can read the first draft of your report and comment on the report’s clarity, completeness and conformity to conventional presentation format. However, only one of the meetings with your supervisor can be devoted to discussion of a draft of the report. Please note that the final typescript is treated as an examination paper and you cannot expect to receive further advice after the first draft.

2. SAFETY

Please look at the Geography code of practice on field work safety found at the following address:
http://www.bbk.ac.uk/geog/current/health/fieldwork_code
http://www.bbk.ac.uk/geog/current/health/safety_guide

YOU MUST READ THIS, FILL IN THE DECLARATION FORM, AND SIGN IT. BEFORE YOU CARRY OUT ANY FIELD OR LAB WORK. YOU MUST RETURN THIS FORM TO THE GEOGRAPHY OFFICE. You will also need to sign the IGS/ERP/Literature Review Proposal Form stating that you agree to follow the codes of field and laboratory safety. Both forms should be returned to the Departmental Office.

Your safety, and that of any co-workers and respondents is paramount. One of the things that you must discuss with your supervisor is the safety implications of your proposed research.

3. DOING A SCIENTIFIC ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH PROJECT or INDEPENDENT GEOGRAPHICAL STUDY

a. General issues

A field-based and/or laboratory-based project will involve a survey or sampling programme to collect data from one or several field sites, which are then analysed statistically to explore an aspect of the biotic and/or physical environment. Field data may be supported by other data recorded from controlled experiments in the laboratory. The data are normally collected in the summer vacation (often between years 3 and 4) and analysis and the writing of your report undertaken in the 4th/final year. You will need to arrange permission to collect data and/or samples from your chosen study site(s).
You should start your project as soon as possible, and the times that you work should be discussed with your supervisor before you start. As a very rough guide a 1 CU project should be equivalent to 22 nights work with additional time for writing up.

Supervisors will provide advice about relevant literature, experimental design and, in conjunction with technical staff, guidance about appropriate laboratory and other practical work. You should consult your supervisor at frequent intervals about your work; you are not meant to ‘struggle’ alone. Equally, as it is your project you should be able to contribute your own ideas and be prepared to design your own experiments. As time and money are limited you are well advised to think carefully about and discuss the details of a piece of work before you start.

We suggest that you do the background reading for your project as soon as you have chosen your topic and prepare a detailed experimental design of the work that you are planning to do for discussion with your supervisor. You should also consider at the very beginning whether you will need help from other people in the department, whether the facilities are available and the likely costs.

b. Writing the report

Much emphasis is given to the production of a report in a proper scientific format because this is the main tangible evidence available for assessment. The format should follow that of a serious scientific paper published in a journal like *Earth Surface Processes and Landforms*, *Journal of Ecology*, *Journal of Experimental Biology* or *The Journal of Experimental Botany*, and should contain the following sections.

*i. Abstract or summary*

The abstract or summary should contain an outline summary of the work carried out and any significant results achieved.

*ii. Introduction*

The introduction should contain a brief review of the literature showing a thorough understanding of the background to the problem and why you consider it important. It should contain a statement of the objective and aims of the work. It should conclude with clearly stated hypotheses that are testable and which will be tested using the data collected.

*iii. Methodology*

The materials and methods section should describe in detail the experimental or survey procedures used to collect novel data, or methods used to collect and evaluate published data, indicating an awareness of any likely limitations, pitfalls or problems of the data. Established methods should be referenced. Great importance is attached to the establishment of proper experimental controls and/or the validation of published data. In general sufficient detail should be given so that the reader understands what was done, and could repeat the same experiments/survey if required.

*iv. Results*

The text in this section should outline all of the results, drawing attention to numbered tables and graphs. In this way the reader can interpret and understand the results of the study. Although you should highlight important or interesting results any discussion or detailed conclusions should be left until the next section. The results themselves should be presented in tables or graphs wherever possible, and with the appropriate statistics. Photographs and drawings may be used where appropriate. Data must be presented in ways that make clear the significance of any results.
v. Discussion
The discussion should examine in detail the significance of the results, placing them in the context of other work. An evaluation of the likelihood that the hypotheses are true, supported by the data and analysis, should be included. A realistic evaluation of the failings and shortcomings of the project will be expected and credited. In this section consideration of the greater academic significance of the results should be demonstrated. An outline of appropriate follow-up experiments and future research should be included.

c. Checklist to use when carrying out your project

i. The scientific hypothesis and project design
• Is the project a novel and/or interesting one?
• Does the project include testable hypotheses?
• Are the aims of the project stated clearly?
• Has the project/data collection been designed to collect enough data, in a way which will produce useful/significant results?

ii. Data collection and scientific skills
• What was the level of skill required to collect data?
• What difficulties have been encountered / overcome in data collection?
• Was the design of the experiment/data collection modified in the light of preliminary results?
• Was enough data collected?

iii. The Report

Abstract
• Is the abstract between 200-300 words?
• Does the abstract describe the nature of the work and the results obtained?

Introduction
• Does the introduction contain a clear statement of the aims of the project?
• Does the introduction place the project work in its scientific context with a thorough, but concise, review of the relevant literature?

Methodology
• Does this section describe in detail the procedures followed? Could you carry out this project following the methods reported here?
• Does this section explain clearly the nature and magnitude of errors associated with the experimental measurements or data survey?
• Does the experimental or survey design contain appropriate controls and/or validation of data?

Results
• Does this section contain results in a tabular or graphical form?
• Does the results text draw attention to the salient features of the figures or tables, rather than simply repeat what is already in these?
• Are the tables enumerated, each with a correct description of the contents and a reference to the primary source where relevant? Are the columns and rows correctly labelled together with units of measurement? Is it indicated that the table contains means, standard errors, percentages, frequencies etc.?
• Are the figures enumerated and appropriate for the type of data; e.g. bar histograms for frequencies, line graphs for dependent/independent variables etc.? Does each have a legend containing an accurate description of the contents of the figure and its source where relevant?
Do line graphs have all axes labelled correctly (including units)? Is the scale of the axes appropriate for the data? Do the points have error bars when required? Is it explained how lines are fitted to the data; e.g. by eye, regression etc.?

Are statistical tests used when necessary? Are the correct tests used? Are the summary statistics appropriate for the type of data?

Are photographs and diagrams clearly labelled with a key to abbreviations in the legend and an accurate description of what they are? Is there a scale indicated?

Is the results section structured to make clear the significance of the results and to provide a basis for subsequent discussion?

**Discussion**

Is it clear that the significance of the results is appreciated?

Are the project results discussed in relation to other published work in the field?

Are the hypotheses discussed in detail?

Are the results obtained discussed in the wider environmental context?

Are the limitations of the approach used in this project adequately discussed?

Are any working hypotheses for further testing proposed?

**References**

Are the references in the text referred to in the correct manner; i.e. (Marks 1990, 1992a, 1992b; Marks and Spencer 1992; Marks *et al.* 1991)?

Are the references listed in alphabetical and chronological order?

**4. DOING A SOCIAL SCIENCE ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH PROJECT or INDEPENDENT GEOGRAPHICAL STUDY**

**a. General issues**

A social science-based IGS/ERP will explore some aspect of human-environment relations. It can either be based on primary research (for example, interviews, questionnaires, surveys); or it can be based on your own statistical analysis and discussion of large data sets which you can access from elsewhere (such as government departments or NGOs). In this case, the data sets must be sufficiently large for you to carry out rigorous and meaningful, as well as original, analysis.

The sorts of considerations to bear in mind when thinking about what to do are:

- Does the subject interest you?
- Is the proposed study feasible, in terms of scale and resources? The temptation is often to be too ambitious, but it is better to do a smaller project well than a larger project sloppily.
- Which theoretical debates does your proposed study intersect with and draw upon?
- What methodological and statistical/analytical techniques are best for the proposed study, and are you familiar with them?

Once you have identified an issue that you wish to explore, and you have discussed it with your supervisor, you will need to think about the following:

- Reading as extensively as possible on relevant theoretical debates in the academic literature.
Collecting as much background material as possible on the subject (for example, unpublished booklets, newspaper reports etc).

Sampling and research design. Depending on the nature of your project, you will need to think about how you are going to go about collecting your data.

Most social science studies identify 2/3 research questions, rather than hypotheses as such. If the title of an IGS/ERP was: "The perceptions of UK school children on the causes and consequences of global warming", the research questions might be:

- "What do UK school children (aged 11-16) know about the scientific and political debates over global warming?"
- "What do they identify as the main causes?"
- "What do they identify as the main consequences?"
- "To what extent do they believe that global warming will affect their own future?"

This sets out a series of clearly identified issues that the IGS/ERP will explore and analyse. Obviously, after a review of the wider literature on perceptions of global warming, the next step would be to think about sampling (which school children and where?) and methods (interviews, focus groups, questionnaires?). So, you don't have to 'prove' or 'disprove' anything, but you do have to think and research and write carefully to produce a rigorous and credible piece of research, which locates your analysis and arguments within wider theoretical debates.

Finally, although the goal of objectivity is thoroughly appropriate and should be pursued, it is now widely recognised that it cannot be achieved. You are always aiming to produce a rigorous and robust piece of research, but as Scheper Hughes puts it:

“The [social researcher] is an instrument of cultural translation that is necessarily flawed and biased. We cannot rid ourselves of the cultural self we bring with us into the field any more than we can disown the eyes, ears and skin through which we take in our intuitive perceptions about the strange and new world we have entered. Nonetheless ... we struggle to do the best we can with the limited resources we have at hand - our ability to listen and observe carefully, empathetically and compassionately”. (Scheper-Hughes, 1992:28).

b. Fieldwork issues

Your foremost consideration must be safety (see section 2). Think about bringing someone with you if, for example, you are doing house to house interviewing. If you go overseas, you must take out insurance, and plan ahead in terms of inoculations against specific health risks and so on. You should also take Foreign Office advice on travelling to different parts of the world. One of the aspects of your project that you discuss with your supervisor must be the safety issues that you will confront.

Another priority must be the ethics of your project. Will it upset, harm or offend your respondents? Should you maintain anonymity, for example, if you interview someone about ways of avoiding the congestion charge? (Whatever your personal view on a topic, if someone agrees to talk to you, you must not compromise their confidentiality.) You can find more details and guidelines on ethical research at:

http://www.york.ac.uk/res/ref/kb.htm
In addition, many of the books suggested in the bibliography offer discussions and suggested codes of ethical research practice.

c. Writing the report

There is a little more flexibility in the format and order of a social science report compared to a science report. You are also encouraged to write in the first person ('I' 'me'), especially in the methodology section, which describes how you went about your research.

A 'standard' order would be the following:

- Title page
- Plagiarism declaration
- Abstract (100-200 words succinctly describing what you studied)
- Acknowledgements ('thanks to my friends, my partner, my cat …’ etc)
- Contents page (with page numbers), list of figures, maps, diagrams, photos etc
- Introduction and research questions
- An overview and discussion of the relevant theoretical debates
- Background to the study (not always necessary, but it may be that you need to describe the NGO you are studying, or the place you were working in)
- Methodology - what methods you used and why; some of the strengths and weaknesses etc
- Analysis of the data collected
- Conclusions
- Bibliography

Some tips:

- Keep a record of all your bibliographic sources, and start putting your bibliography together from day one. It is very frustrating when, 8 months after you started, you have to scrap a quote because you can't find the source or page number.
- Make sure you have a good bibliographic range of material, with sufficient academic sources.
- Leave yourself more time than you would expect to finish off the report well - designing it, checking for spelling mistakes, and getting the pagination right on the contents page. It is surprising how long this can all take, but you do earn marks for presentation.
- Take photos of your work (e.g. you in a classroom of school kids asking about global warming). A few photos liven up a report, and in some cases can be a very important resource (for example, if you were looking at garden design and ideas of nature).
- Do stay in regular contact with your supervisor.

5. DOING A LITERATURE REVIEW

a. General issues

You can do a science, social science or interdisciplinary Literature Review. A Literature Review is an 8000 word extended essay, which examines a particular area of interest critically, originally and in depth. Given that you are drawing on secondary sources, it must be a subject that has attracted academic debate (e.g. you could not do an extensive Literature Review on the environmental consequences of the decline of the spotty aardvark if only one paper had been written on it). On the other hand, some subjects may be too big for an 8000 word essay to make much headway (e.g.
the science of global warming). In this case, you would be advised to choose an aspect of the larger issue, and pursue that in more depth.

b. Writing a Literature Review

Before starting your Literature Review, you should discuss the title and focus with your supervisor. You will then need to read as widely as possible around your chosen subject. As well as academic material (books and journal articles), you may also be able to get some useful material for discussion from the web and other sources. However, the balance should favour academic sources, and also bear in mind that journal articles are generally more up to date than books. You should aim to review the relevant arguments, drawing out particular positions and themes, and discussing their strengths and weaknesses.

The final Literature Review should be divided up into sections, and would certainly include an introduction, conclusions and a bibliography. The other sections would depend on the subject that you were examining. The introduction should clearly outline the issue(s) that you are proposing to examine (and perhaps those you are not, so that the reader is clear on the focus of the report). Just as with the IGS/ERP, the temptation is very often to pick up a subject that is too large and unwieldy, and which would not allow you to develop a deeper analysis. It is better to narrow down a subject and do it well.

The final Literature Review must not exceed 8000 words in length (not including the bibliography).

5. GENERAL INFORMATION

a. How to reference

Please use the following as a guide to referencing. You are reminded that for both an IGS/ERP and a Literature Review, a substantial, accurate, complete and neat bibliography is extremely important. You should check your report before you hand it in to be sure that all of the references that you cited in the text are included in the bibliography, and that everything included in the bibliography has been cited in the text.


For web sites, give the URL for the web site, and the date that you last accessed that site. If the web site is a link to a document, give the full reference for the document as well as the web site. For example,
b. Title and second page

Example of a front page statement:

Biotic and physical factors determining plant distribution on an abandoned industrial site in Tower Hamlets.

John Smith       BSc Environmental Science
                   Birkbeck College

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

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:

c. College guidelines on plagiarism

All work submitted by a student as part of the requirements for any degree must be expressed in the student’s own words and must incorporate his or her own ideas and judgments. This applies as much to coursework, including the IGS/ ERP / Literature Review, as to examinations. Plagiarism - the presentation of another person’s thoughts or words as one’s own - in essays, dissertations, or other assessed work, violates all principles of sound academic practice and is a serious disciplinary offence.

What is plagiarism?

Plagiarism, the act of taking somebody else's work and presenting it as your own, is an act of academic dishonesty, and Birkbeck takes it very seriously. It is dishonest and undermines the entire basis for the academic awards given to students: the award of a degree, and its class, should be conferred on the basis of the recipient’s own work, not the work of others. In addition, if you knowingly assist another student to plagiarise (for example, by willingly giving them your own work to copy from), you are committing an examination offence. Recourse to the services of ‘ghost-writing’ agencies (for example in the preparation of essays or reports) or of outside word-
processing agencies which offer ‘correction/improvement of English’ is strictly forbidden, and students who make use of the services of such agencies render themselves liable for an academic penalty.

Examples of plagiarism include (but are not restricted to):

- copying the whole or substantial parts of a paper from a source text (e.g. a web site, journal article, book or encyclopaedia) without proper acknowledgement
- paraphrasing another's piece of work closely, with minor changes but with the essential meaning, form and/or progression of ideas maintained
- piecing together sections of the work of others into a new whole
- procuring a paper from a company or essay bank (including internet sites)
- submitting another student's work, with or without that student's knowledge
- submitting a paper written by someone else and passing it off as one's own
- representing a piece of joint or group work as one's own.

Another form of plagiarism is submitting work which you previously submitted before for another assignment. While this is obviously not the same as representing someone else’s ideas as your own, it is a form of self-plagiarism. If you want to re-work a paper for an assignment, ask your lecturer whether this is acceptable, and acknowledge your re-working in a preface.

It is important to understand that plagiarism encompasses a broad spectrum of offences and is more than the wholesale use of others’ exact words as your own: summaries, précis and paraphrases, as well as shorter quoted passages, should all be acknowledged as such with appropriate references. Copying someone else's form of words, or paraphrasing another’s argument, or presenting someone else’s data or line of thinking, without acknowledging the author or source, are all regarded as plagiarism. This form of plagiarism is not difficult to detect, for even if the source of the text is not known to the marker, the written style of the plagiarised text is likely to indicate that the work is not the student's own. The subtlety and cohesiveness of argument, the structure of the text, and the general standard of English usage, generally differ substantially from the usual output of the student. It is, of course, possible to commit a deliberate fraud by hiding the source and restructuring the pirated text, but this is much more work than referring to the text chosen with full attribution of authorship.

Plagiarism may be unintentional, caused by making notes from sources such as books or journals without also noting the source, and then repeating those notes in an essay without acknowledging that they are the data, words or ideas belonging to someone else. Guard against this by keeping careful notes that distinguish between your own ideas and researched material and those you obtained from others, and identifying the source.

Direct quotations from the published or unpublished work of others must always be clearly identified as such by being placed inside quotation marks, and a full reference to their source must be provided in the proper form. Remember that a series of short quotations from several different sources, if not clearly identified as such, constitutes plagiarism just as much as does a single unacknowledged long quotation from a single source. Equally, if you summarise another person’s ideas or judgements, you must refer to that person in your text, and include the work referred to in your bibliography. It is acceptable to use the words and thoughts of another person, or
data that another person has gathered, in your work, but the borrowed material must not appear to be your creation. If you cite the words or ideas of others you must reference the source. This includes all source material; that is, journal articles, books, and internet sources, as well as essays, practical reports and research reports written by other students, including those from previous years, whether you have their permission or not. It also applies to both ‘hard-copy’ material and electronic material, such as internet documents. You should consult your tutor or course director if you are in any doubt about what is permissible.

Example:

Original source:

“The flexibility of the UK and US labour markets has been identified as a key explanation for the high growth rates of these two economies in recent years, and there is increasing pressure on other countries to reduce perceived labour market rigidities. While the assumed benefits of labour market flexibility receive much attention in public discussion, little is known, with some exception in relation to employee training, about its effect on the use by firms of new work practices, or of the results on corporate performance.” (Michie and Sheehan-Quinn 2001)


Plagiarised version:

Labour market flexibility in the UK and US economies provides an explanation for the high rates of economic growth observed in these economies. This has put increasing pressure on other countries to reduce labour market rigidity. However, little is known about the effects of labour market flexibility on the use of new work practices and corporate performance.

Acceptable version:

A recent paper (Michie and Sheehan-Quinn 2001) on labour market flexibility has argued that, although labour market flexibility has been identified as a possible explanation for the high rates of growth observed in the in the UK and the US, little is known about the effects of labour market flexibility on the adoption of different types of work practices and the impact on corporate performance.

There are two main differences between the plagiarised version and the acceptable version above. First and foremost, the inclusion of the authors’ names acknowledges whose ideas these originally were (not the student’s) and the reference refers the reader to the full location of the work when combined with the bibliography. Note that in the plagiarised version, the argument was paraphrased - but without acknowledgement of the source of the idea and original text, this is plagiarism. The second difference concerns the style of paraphrasing. The plagiarised version merely repeats the same points as the original version, but with minimal rewording, making the sentences very derivative. The acceptable version, on the other hand, summarises the point that is relevant to the essay being written in a way that means it can easily be developed into the student’s argument in the next sentence.

In writing any work, therefore (whether for assessment or not), you should document everything that you borrow - not only direct quotations and paraphrases but also information and ideas. There are, of course, some common-sense exceptions to this, such as familiar proverbs, well-known quotations or common knowledge. However,
you must indicate the source of any appropriated material that readers might otherwise mistake for your own. If in doubt, cite your source or sources.

How can you avoid plagiarism?

This section is intended to help you avoid unintentional plagiarism. The mistaken belief that plagiarism is limited to the wholesale reproduction of entire papers or long passages of text is widespread, but these are only its most spectacular forms. While penalties are generally much more severe where the plagiarism is flagrant, no case of plagiarism that is uncovered will be ignored. You could, therefore, find yourself in difficulties as a result of too close a reliance on sources that are not properly acknowledged. Even if it was clearly unintentional, plagiarism will, if detected, lead at the very least to a low failure mark for that piece of work. It is therefore very important to know just what is and is not likely to get you into trouble.

• Always attribute quoted words. It does not matter if the quote is long or short, every quoted passage taken directly from the work of another should be clearly marked as such by the use of quotation marks. The full reference should be given for each quotation.

• Always give full references for paraphrases of others’ ideas or judgements. Simply rewriting a passage in your own words rather than the author’s does not avoid plagiarism. Paraphrases or summaries of the ideas or judgements of others should be referenced fully.

• Give references to support purely factual claims where necessary. Plagiarism is mainly about the appropriation of others’ ideas and judgements. Factual references are less sensitive. You certainly do not need to include (as some students do) references for facts that are well established and can be found in any number of places (don’t bother with a reference telling the reader where you found the date of the Enron collapse, for example). However, where the facts are less well known and some other investigator has persuasively established some claim of fact, you should acknowledge this in your references, as well as the sources for any quantitative data you might use.

• Include a reference to any source used in a sentence at the end of that sentence. Including a single reference at the end of a long passage of more than one paragraph that gives the source for the entire passage can give the reader the impression that the reference refers only to the last paragraph, rather than the whole passage. If for some reason you wish to avoid repeating references to the same source, include a statement or footnote early on indicating that the discussion that follows is drawn from such-and-such a source. For example: ‘Except where indicated otherwise, the description of EU policy-making set out in this section is drawn from Kassim (1997).’ You should also attempt to paraphrase ideas rather than text as in the acceptable version above. You then need only provide additional references for those points in the description of EU policy-making taken from sources other than Kassim (1997). Direct quotations from Kassim (1997) should still be in quotation marks.

• Remember that a full bibliography is necessary but not sufficient. You should be at pains to include every source on which you have relied in your bibliography. However, mere inclusion in the bibliography is not enough. If you have drawn on a source in ways that are not acknowledged in the text, its inclusion only in the bibliography is insufficient (though omitting it from the bibliography altogether would generally be an even more serious offence).

Ultimately, the golden rule should be: when in doubt, give the reference. This not only protects you from unintended plagiarism, it is also good manners: credit
should be given to sources where and when they are used. That is why it is not unusual to find academic articles of 10,000 words or so that have anywhere from 50 to 150 references. Students sometimes worry that giving full references throughout will make it appear as though their papers are just compilations of other people's views. However, even if there are 100-odd references to a medium-length article or chapter, the author's own contribution to the discussion should be clear to the reader. If it is not, then the paper is probably not a very strong one. This means that thorough referencing will provide a good check on the substance of your essays and dissertations: if the finished product looks like nothing more than a cut-and-paste job full of others' ideas and data, it probably needs to be rewritten.

The above guidelines apply to essays, other coursework, dissertations and theses. You do not need to worry about punctilious acknowledgement of sources when writing unseen written examinations. Generally, it helps in an exam to show familiarity with the major writers in a given field, but examiners do not expect to find references to all the items relied on. Exams are meant to test your understanding of the material, not your memory.

d. Some useful reference books

Independent Geographical Study/Environmental Research Project/Literature Review Proposal Form

Name:

Course:

IGS, ERP or Literature Review:

Working title:

Research question/hypotheses:

Module(s) to which the IGS/ERP/Literature Review most closely relates:

Proposed methodologies:

Academic sources: (Name 2-3 main texts that you will be drawing on):

Suggested ERP/Literature Review supervisor:

I have read, understood and agree to observe the codes of fieldwork and laboratory safety.

☐ (tick here)

SIGNATURE               DATE

This form should be submitted to the Geography office by 5:30 pm on Friday 10 July 2009.
## Summary: Environmental Research Projects and Literature Reviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>IGS/ERP</th>
<th>LR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Word length</strong></td>
<td>8000 words (excluding bibliography and appendices)</td>
<td>8000 words (excluding bibliography; no appendices)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focus</strong></td>
<td>The IGS/ERP must set out either a hypothesis or specific research questions, which it then aims to investigate and analyse. It must be more than descriptive.</td>
<td>The LR should outline an area of contemporary academic discussion or debate which it will then outline and evaluate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Methodology</strong></td>
<td>Must be based upon original, primary research and/or original statistical analysis of a large-scale data set. The research should be located within theoretical debates.</td>
<td>No original methodology – an extended essay.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Information sources</strong></td>
<td>Academic material (books, journal papers), secondary material (web pages, magazines, newspapers) and own research findings.</td>
<td>Primarily based upon academic sources. Case studies and illustrative material welcome, but the LR should be focussed on academic material.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hand-in date</strong></td>
<td>3 May 2010</td>
<td>3 May 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year</strong></td>
<td>4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; year</td>
<td>3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt; or 4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supervisor</strong></td>
<td>A supervisor will be allocated – it is your responsibility to arrange 3 meetings for guidance.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supervisor’s role</strong></td>
<td>Your supervisor can read and comment on draft material once.</td>
<td>Your supervisor cannot read drafts, but can advise on content and structure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marking</strong></td>
<td>The ERP will be marked for the formulation of the research questions/hypothesis; the depth and sophistication of the theoretical background; the methodology (appropriate techniques, awareness of safety and ethical issues); the analysis (logical, drawing on the material); the conclusions and the overall presentation (including diagrams, maps, photos, typing).</td>
<td>The LR will be marked for the formulation of the area of interest; the content; and the presentation. See mark sheet (below)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Environmental Project/IGS Marking Form

Student’s Name:

Programme of Study:

Title of the Project:

Comments on:

1. Formulations of questions/problems/topic

2. Appropriate introductions, contextualisation and knowledge of the relevant literature.


4. Analysis/examination of information
5. Quality of interpretation. Clarity of conclusions.


7. General comments. Difficulty of the project. Supervision.

Examiner:
Signed:
Date:

Recommended mark:
Agreed mark:
School of Geography, Environment and Development Studies
Birkbeck College

Literature Review Marking Form

Student’s Name:

Programme of Study:

Title of the Literature Review:

Comments on:

1. Topic selected - relevance to the Programme of Study and general timeliness

2. Appropriate introduction, contextualisation and knowledge of the relevant literature

3. Depth and detail of the discussion of the topic

4. Analysis/examination of published debates/issues relevant to the topic
5. Clarity of conclusions


Examiner:
Signed:
Date:

Recommended mark:
Agreed mark: