Masters
Postgraduate Diploma
Postgraduate Certificate
in
GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SCIENCE (GISc)
by
Distance Learning (GISc DL)
Evening Taught (GISc ET)

2010/2011
HANDBOOK
1. Who and What is this Handbook for?

This handbook is for students studying a PG Cert, PG Dip, MSc in Geographic Information Science by evening taught or distance learning student modes.

It contains all the essential details of the curriculum and what is required from you to successfully complete your programme. Here you can find out about coursework, theory examination requirements, marking schemes and what to do if something goes wrong.

There are several other sources of information. For example,

- a Topics, Discussion Board and Portfolio Guide provides details about the content of a topic, how the discussion board works and completing, submitting and returning portfolio feedback (available from the start of your studies)
- an Assignment Guide provides information about completing, submitting and returning assignment feedback (available from the release of the first assignment)
- an Examination Guide provides details about preparing for examinations in May and returning examination feedback (available from the start of term 2)
- a Dissertation Guide provides information on completing your dissertation and returning dissertation feedback (available from the start of term 2)
- a Study Skills Guide provides details of the study skills programmes available in the college, as well as tips for studying specific to the GISc programme (available from the start of your studies)
- the college web site at http://www.bbk.ac.uk
- the college regulations at http://www.bbk.ac.uk/reg
• the Common Awards Scheme regulations at http://www.bbk.ac.uk/reg/regs/cas
• the Students’ Union provides information on several kinds of facilities and pastoral care available.

Every effort has been made to be as up to date and accurate as possible in this handbook. However, some errors may have crept in. If you spot any please let the Course Director know.

In addition, due to changing academic staff, staff going on sabbatical or other reasons, topics may not be offered or may be superseded by new topics. As a result the timetable may change slightly from the one advertised in this guide. We will endeavour to keep you informed of changes that will affect your programme, but we reserve the right to make appropriate changes to the programme content where necessary. We also do this from time-to-time in response to advice from students. If you have any comments about how the programme might be improved please inform the Programme Director.

2. Finding Help

Should you need further help or advice, please contact:

• the Programme Director, the Course Administrator or the Distance Learning Support Officer
• the Topic Tutor
• The Assignment Tutor
• The Registry
• Fees/Finance
• Examinations Office
• International Students’ Officer
• IT Services (ITS)
• Library

The Course Administrator
If you have a simple enquiry about administration, ask:
The Administrative Assistant Malet Street Extension Building Room 159
+44 (0)20 7631 6473 secretary@geography.bbk.ac.uk
The administrative assistant works part-time, but someone should normally be available in the Geography office (room 159) from 10.00-17.30.

The Distance Learning Support Officer
If you have a question about accessing course materials, ask:
The Distance Learning Support Officer Malet Street Extension Building
+44 (0)20 7631 6473 gis-admin@bbk.ac.uk
The Distance Learning Support Officer works part-time (MWF 9.00-15.00) mostly from home.
The Programme Director
The current Programme Director is:  Dr. Joana Barros  
School of Geography, Environment and Development Studies  
Malet Street Extension Building  
Room 362  
+44 (0)20 7079 0644  
j.barros@bbk.ac.uk

The Programme Director oversees the academic content of the whole degree. Each year, following the examinations, you will be advised in writing of your progress. If you are having any problems with learning, keeping up or understanding the content of the modules you should contact the Programme Director. At any time, if you want to discuss your progress, change programmes or withdraw from your programme, it is essential that you contact the Programme Director. The Programme Director can be contacted by email to arrange a meeting by phone, Internet or face-to-face.

Topic Tutor
If you have any problems understanding the content of a specific topic you should contact the Topic Tutor for that topic.

Assignment Tutor
If you have any problems understanding the assignment you should contact the Assignment Tutor for that assignment.

School of Geography, Environment and Development Studies (GEDS)
GEDS Office, Room 159  
Birkbeck College  
University of London  
Malet Street  
Bloomsbury  
London, WC1E 7HX  
UK  
Tel: +44 (0)20 7631 6473/6475  
Fax: +44 (0)20 7631 6498  
Email: secretary@geoq.bbk.ac.uk  
Web: http://www.bbk.ac.uk/geds/  
School Administrator: Harriet Smith  
Administrative Assistant: Eva Peters

The Registry
If you are having any problem with your enrolment, registration, entry in the examinations (except withdrawal and break in studies/interrupt which must be discussed with the Programme Director first of all), or the payment of fees, contact the Registry.

The Registry  
http://www.bbk.ac.uk/reg  
registry-enquiries@bbk.ac.uk  
Tel. +44 (0)20 7631 6390  
Fax. +44 (0)20 7383 3729

If you find it impossible to pay your fees, contact the Registry immediately to discuss possible alternative arrangements for paying. If you fail to do this, you will have your studies suspended until payment is forthcoming.

Fees/Finance  
http://www.bbk.ac.uk/reg/finance  
s.lomas@bbk.ac.uk  
Tel. +44 (0)20 7631 6295
3. GISc Tutors

**Internal Tutors**

**Dr Joana Barros**  
MSc GISc Programme Director (Evening Taught and Distance Learning) 
Email: j.barros@bbk.ac.uk  
Tel: +44 (0)20 7079 0644  
Further links: Joana’s web page, CASA  
Her area of expertise is geocomputation, more specifically agent-based and cellular automata models applied to urban systems. She is also interested in complexity theory, representation of dynamics in GIS, and urban development in developing countries. Most of her research applies dynamic models to urban development of cities in Latin America.

**Prof Martin Callingham**  
Visiting Professor at Birkbeck  
Email address: m.callingham@geography.bbk.ac.uk  
Martin Callingham was formerly Group Market Research Director at Whitbread where he ran the Market Research, the Spatial Analysis and the Direct Marketing departments. He was for some time a Council Member of the AGI and won the Best Paper Award at the 1996 Conference. He was a founding member of the Demographic Users' Group, which works for greater access to government information and data. He was a member of the Business Advisory Group to the Office of National Statistics and sat on their Area Classification Working Party. He has contributed a chapter (concerning the future use of census information) to a TSO book.  
His research interests are about developing better ways of classifying areas possibly using a combination of geographical primitives and demographics and also in extracting higher level information from migration data by the application of spatial interaction models in reverse using linear programming.

**Jillian Eldridge**  
PhD Student  
Email: j.eldridge@geography.bbk.ac.uk  
Tel: +44 (0)20 7631 6478  
Further links: Jillian’s web page  
Jillian Eldridge is currently a PhD student with the School of Geography, she joined the School in 2008 and her research subject is entitled 'Flood risk, vulnerability and planning policy in the Thames Gateway'. The project aims to quantify and understand flood risk to
development areas in the Gateway with a particular emphasis on planning policy and how it can work to reduce the impact of flooding on development sites. The project is an EPSRC CASE studentship and is being conducted with the Willis Research Network.

Paul Elsner  Lecturer - on sabbatical in term 1
Email: p.elsner@bbk.ac.uk  Tel: +44 (0)20 7631 6479
Further links: Paul's web page
Paul's research interests lie in the broad field of the application of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and Remote Sensing methodologies in environmental management and aquatic research.

Dr Martin Frost  Reader and Interim Programme Director in term 2 (January – April)
Email: m.frost@bbk.ac.uk  Tel: +44 (0)20 7631 6470
Further links: Martin's web page
Martin's research activity is dominated by involvement in two major research projects that apply geographical understanding of processes of socio-economic change to the monitoring and development of public policy. His research interests include deprivation, labour market structure and public policy as informed by large-scale, and numerically-based analysis of geographical data using GIS.

Dr Maurizio Gibin  Lecturer
Email: m.gibin@bbk.ac.uk  Tel: +44 (0)20 7631 6485
Further links: Maurizio's web page
Maurizio's research interests are: GIScience, Spatial analysis, Geographic Data Analysis of socio-economic and population data, Health geography, Geodemographics, methods to deploy Geographic Information effectively, Cartography and Analytical design in thematic mapping.

Dr Shino Shiode  Lecturer
Email: s.shiode@bbk.ac.uk  Tel: +44 (0)20 7631 6473
Shino is a spatial analyst and GIScientist with an active interest in the quantitative interpretation of the spatial-temporal changes of urban, criminal and epidemiological phenomena. Her long-term aspirations are (1) to make an original academic contribution to the field of spatial analysis and GIS, both theoretically and methodologically, and (2) to contribute to the betterment of the society by rendering her expertise to improve public safety and social welfare. She intends to achieve the former by proposing a series of new spatial analytical and statistical methods to describe and confirm spatial distributions or spatial-temporal changes of the urban, criminal and epidemiological phenomena from a quantitative perspective. The latter will involve collaborations with local governments and practitioners on the introduction of practical and appropriate measures for the intervention and prevention of health and crime risk and traffic accidents.

Sam Waples  PhD Student
Email: s.waples@bbk.ac.uk  Tel: +44 (0)20 7631 6494
Further links: Sam's web page
Sam is tutoring some GISc topics. He has been responsible for mapping and spatial and statistical analysis of geographical datasets for a variety of research projects in the School of Geography. He has also begun a PhD in the School of Geography, Environment and Development Studies.

External Tutors

Stewart Berry  GIS Specialist, Caliper Corporation
Email address: stewart@caliper.com
Further links: Caliper Corporation
Stewart Berry is Head of the UK GIS Division, is GIS Training Director, and is Desktop GIS Product Manager for Caliper Corporation. He is also a Sessional Lecturer in the School of Geography, Birkbeck College. He has degrees from University College London (BSc, MSc). His research interests are focused around the principles and techniques of geographic information science (GISc), geodemographics, transportation GIS (GIS-T), urban remote sensing, and GIS retail and marketing analysis. His recent publications include:

Ezio Crestaz Geologist, ENI
Email address: ezio.crestaz@giscience.it
Ezio is a geologist, working at the Italian Oil Company ENI since late 1986, as geophysicist for geothermal and mining prospecting and since 1991 as GI analyst and groundwater modeller focused on regional and local scale water management projects, for water supply and environmental remediation; among others, he has taken part in many large scale projects in Italy and abroad, including Ecuador, Colombia, Tunisia, Turkey, Tibet (China), Brazil, Dominican Republic and Kazakhstan, funded by Italian Ministries and International Organizations, as UNDP and EU.
He also holds a MSc Dist in GISc from Manchester Metropolitan Un., currently completing a MSc in Computer Science at Hertfordshire Un.; he has been teaching groundwater flow modelling, GISc and programming for long time, and cofounding the Italian GISc initiative www.giscience.it
His research interests span through Spatial Databases, SDSSs for environmental management, spatial analysis, advanced visualization and groundwater modelling, with specific focus on 3D density-dependent applications in coastal areas and water management integrated policies assessment.

Claire Ellul Research Fellow, UCL and London Met
Email: clairee@ge.ucl.ac.uk
Claire graduated as an Electrical Engineer at the University of Malta, and worked as a GIS Consultant and Software Developer for ten years in Malta, the Sultanate of Oman, the United Kingdom and mainland Europe. She also completed an MSc in Geographic and Geodetic Information Systems from University College London around half way through this period, and chose to return to UCL for her PhD.
Her research relates to the efficient querying of three-dimensional topological relationships in spatial databases, along with applications of these queries in the wider context of 3D GIS.
As well as lecturing part-time at Birkbeck, Claire is also employed as a Research Fellow at UCL and at London Metropolitan University.

Matt Foote Senior Risk Analyst, Intermediary Systems Limited
Email address: footem@willis.com
Matt is currently completing his PhD in the School of Geography at Birkbeck College. He has expertise in Risk Analysis.

Andrew Hudson-Smith Research Fellow, Centre for Advanced Spatial Analysis (CASA)
Email address: asmith@geog.ucl.ac.uk
Further Links: CASA, working papers, personal web page
Andrew Hudson-Smith has worked on a range of Internet related projects at CASA including the recent award winning Hackney Building Exploratory Interactive. He is currently working on the Virtual London project having completed his PhD in Internet Based Communications: The Impact on Town Planning at the Centre for Advanced Spatial Analysis, University College London.

He has a Bachelors Degree in Geography from Plymouth University and a Masters Degree in City and Regional Planning from University of Wales, Cardiff. His research interests are concentrated in the field of World Wide Web based Virtual Reality in relation to the urban form. He is also the author of the Online Planning site at CASA and Editor in charge of Online Planning.
Kate Jones  Researcher, UCL
Email address: kate-emma.jones@ucl.ac.uk
Kate (sometimes known as Catherine) has been a researcher at University College London for three and a half years following the completion of her MSc in GIS. Kate's first degree is in Environmental Geochemistry from Royal Holloway after which she went to work in the city as a reporting analyst and project planner. After a few years she enrolled at UCL to complete a GIS Masters.
On completing her Masters she joined the Centre for Advanced Spatial Analysis where she worked within a Knowledge Transfer Partnership with Camden Primary Care Trust (PCT) implementing Geodemographic and Geographic Information Systems technology within the PCT. She is also completing an Mphil/PhD degree exploring applications of health survey data and geodemographic technologies for informing social marketing practice.
Kate is currently working on an EPSRC funded project exploring Successful Suburban Town Centres within London. The project is a joint collaboration at UCL between the Bartlett School of Graduate Studies and the Department of Civil, Environmental and Geomatic Engineering. The project is combining Space Syntax and GIS techniques to analyse the way in which suburban space is being utilised by people and to integrate the social and economic data with information about urban form.

Dr Yang Li  Research Fellow, University of East London
Email address: Y.Li@uel.ac.uk
Further links: Personal Webpage, Centre for Geo-Information Studies
Dr Yang Li is a Research Fellow in the Centre for Geo-Information Studies, University of East London. His research interests are in GIS and environmental simulation modelling, spatial data quality, location-based services and agent-based spatial simulation modelling. He is also working on spatial data mining, modelling and analysis for crime, education, utility, NHS, local development and local community.

Dr Stephanie Mills  Lecturer, Kingston University
Email: s.mills@kingston.ac.uk
Further links: http://www.geog.qmul.ac.uk/staff/milss.html
Her research focuses on the examination of evidence for, and the implications of, Late Quaternary glaciation of southern Africa. Glaciation of southern Africa has long been considered controversial, and her PhD research focused on the development of a multi-method approach, to discriminate between landforms and deposits of glacial origin in the Lesotho highlands and Drakensberg Mountains of southern Africa.

Guillermo Toyos  National Space Agency, Buenos Aires
Email address: wtoyos@hotmail.com
Completed PhD in Geography at Cambridge University in the research area of vulcanology. Now working for the National Space Agency in Argentina.

Naru Shioide  Lecturer in spatial analysis and GIS, Cardiff University
Email: shioden@cardiff.ac.uk
Further links: http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/cplan/contactsandpeople/stafflist/s-z/shiode-narushige-dr-overview.html
Naru was previously a research fellow at University College London (2000-2003) and later an assistant professor of geography at the State University of New York at Buffalo (2003-2009). He has degrees in Urban Engineering from University of Tokyo and a PhD in Architecture from UCL. Naru’s research is focused around the development of spatial analytical methods and their application to the urban environment. He currently pursues three research directions: (1) Spatial Analysis & Simulations (developing quantitative methods on spatial optimisation, spatial tessellation, network analysis and spatial-temporal analysis); (2) GIScience & Geo-visualisation (developing GIS tools and spatial-temporal 3D GIS models for visualising urban growth, GIS applications in healthcare, archaeology and other social-science subjects); (3) Urban & Regional Analysis (identifying
the underlying mechanism of urban growth dynamics, urban hierarchy and urban life cycle).

Your Current Contact Details

It is imperative that the College, School Administrator and Distance Learning Support Officer are kept informed of any change in your contact details (address, email and phone number). Please make changes to your contact details on the ‘My Birkbeck Profile’ link on the My Birkbeck web pages at http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck. Also, please email your change to the Geography administrator (secretary@geography.bbk.ac.uk) and the Distance Learning Support Officer at (gis-admin@bbk.ac.uk) to ensure our distribution lists are up-to-date.

4. GISc @ Birkbeck

Welcome GISc Students

We would like to extend a warm welcome to all GISc students and hope you enjoy your time with us.

We are delighted you have chosen Birkbeck for your studies. Birkbeck College offers a very different kind of learning experience, focusing on professional development and transferable learning across sectors, services and countries. As a result, our graduates have an outstanding record of achievement and we are sure you will maintain this tradition.

What is Geographic Information Science?

For more than a decade, one of the most active fields within the IT industry has been the development of Geographical Information Systems (GIS). A GIS is a software system for the capture, storage, analysis and display of geographical information in which the element of location is an important variable. GIS find applications in all sciences that have a spatial content (geology, archaeology, social science, ecology, geography), but in addition have applications in the utilities industry, in retailing and so on. In summary, GIS is a realization of a particular set of representations, concepts or methods at a particular time (Fisher and Unwin, 2005).

GIS are based on what has been called an emerging geographical information science (GISc) involving elements of geography, spatial statistics, computer science and cartography. GISc arises out of the interdisciplinary focus on mapping, monitoring, modelling and visualization using geographical information technologies such as GIS, GPS, image processing tools, simulation tools, and spatial multimedia to manipulate and analyse geographically referenced data. Therefore, GISc includes areas that are engaged with the theory of representations, concepts and methods associated with spatial data.

This separation between Science and Systems is overlooked by some contributors. Arguably, GISc and GIS involves elements of geography, spatial statistics, computer science, cartography, social science etc. Birkbeck is well known around the world for its leadership in these endeavours.

The enormous growth of GISc and GIS and the Internet has raised questions of theory and practice which are theoretical, technological and political, yet there are few degree programmes directed at professionals and researchers who have to tackle these issues. In addition, governments and corporations are engaged in the widespread collection and commodification of geospatial information with implications for copyright, data pricing and
privacy. Successful implementation of GIS almost always involves additional management skills and an appreciation of their position within the wider information economy, yet there are few degree programmes that address these issues. These GISc programmes, which are driven by world class academics and professionals, have, as their theme, this emerging GISc and GIS. This is because GISc and GIS have become indispensable tools for public and private organizations. As a result, the demand for skilled GIS professionals with a strong theoretical background has never been greater.

Why study at Birkbeck?

- Our GISc degrees build on over 20 years of experience.
- The Birkbeck School of Geography is one of the UK's leading geographical information research centres, hosting large GIS projects for several government departments.
- Our GISc teaching team is composed of a number of external collaborators, such as researchers, private GISc consultants, and GISc professionals working in private industry and public bodies.
- As part of the University of London, Birkbeck is ranked among the leading UK universities for research in the humanities, social sciences and natural sciences.
- We specialise in part-time degrees. All our programmes and courses are tailored for part-time mature students, who want to further develop their knowledge in an area or simply give continuity to their lifelong learning experience.

GISc programmes @ Birkbeck College University of London

We offer a Postgraduate Certificate, Postgraduate Diploma and MSc in GISc by distance learning and evening taught study modes. The evening taught programme is tailored for people without previous experience with GIS as well as those who have had some experience but want to further develop their theoretical and practical knowledge in GIS. The distance learning programme is ideal if you are a professional working with spatial data, but would like to develop more advanced theoretical knowledge and high level practical skills. As a student, you will work on spatial theory, the evaluation of modern GI systems and practical work on implementation strategies in research, professional practice and management solutions. Our graduates originate from more than 25 countries. They complete our programme to obtain career advancement or to change careers within the private or public sectors. Careers range from consultancy, private industry, higher education, government agencies to local government.

5. Programme Overview

Programme Aims and Objectives

The programme aims to:

- introduce students to the principles and applications of GISc at an advanced level through the development of scientific knowledge, technical expertise and practical experience;
- provide students with relevant theoretical background knowledge and a conceptual understanding of GISc;
• provide the social and political context of geographical data and the implications of its use; and
• enable students to develop new skills that have real world applications for their work and careers.

6. The Curriculum

Programme Structure

The MSc curriculum consists of:

Module GISc 01

• **Fundamentals of Geographical Information Science:** Introduces the fundamental principles, concepts and techniques of GIS through theoretical and practical exercises. Students gain experience with two commercial GIS software packages (ArcGIS 9.3 and IDRISI Tiaga).

• **Data Capture and Database Management:** Develops methods of data capture including remote sensing, database design and maintenance, and data integration using desktop GIS software.

Module GISc 02

• **Spatial Statistics:** Introduces spatial statistical analysis methods and techniques for the analysis of spatial data.

• **Programming for GIS:** Develops fundamental programming skills, focusing on customizing GIS.

Module GISc 03

• **Advanced GIS Analysis and Modelling:** Focuses on advanced GIS analysis issues as well as spatial modelling techniques. Includes topics on visualization, interpolation, quality and error in GIS, as well as the latest advances in GIS such as web-based and distributed GIS. Introduces spatial modelling through the investigation of strategies and methodologies for model development and application, such as transport modeling, flood and environmental modeling, spatial interaction and geocomputation techniques.

Module GISc 04

• **Advanced GIS Analysis and Applications:** Consists of a portfolio of different real-world applications using GIS, including risk assessment, retailing, health, environmental hazards, 3D GIS, and archaeology. It also includes topics on social issues in GIS such as public participation, data privacy, project management and the latest advances in participatory GIS.

Modules GISc 05 (Spring and Summer)

• **MSc Dissertation in GISc:** Students agree a dissertation project with the programme director. The project will be carried out under supervision and will usually be of an applied nature in GIS or spatial modelling so that you may gain
experience in data acquisition, problem formulation, GIS practice and report writing. You will be required to submit a dissertation of 8,000-10,000 words.

Programmes of Study and duration

The Postgraduate Certificate (PG Cert) in GISc

If you successfully complete the first two taught modules of the MSc curriculum (GISc 01 and GISc 02) you would be eligible for the award of Postgraduate Certificate in GISc. Duration: 1 year, part-time.

The Postgraduate Diploma (PG Dip) in GISc

If you successfully complete all four taught modules of the MSc curriculum (GISc 01, GISc 02, GISc 03, GISc 04) you would be eligible for the award of Postgraduate Diploma in GISc. Duration: 2 years, part-time.

The MSc in GIS

If you successfully complete all four taught modules of the MSc curriculum (GISc 01, GISc 02, GISc 03, GISc 04), you will proceed to complete a research dissertation studying a specific problem in GIS (module GISc 05). Duration: 1 year (only in distance learning study mode) or 2 years, part-time.

It is possible to transfer between programmes.

Some students take longer to complete their programme of study, if they fail modules or have a break in study.

All modules taken must be confirmed online when you are asked to do so by Registry at the end of the first term (see ‘Entry into the Examinations’ below), regardless of whether the assessment is in the form of a written examination.

The academic year runs from late September to May. There are three terms: Autumn (term 1), Spring (term 2) and Summer (term 3). Summer term is largely taken up with revision, examinations and dissertation work. We also include a half-term reading week in most taught modules. There are breaks at Christmas and Easter.

If you are a distance learning student you are not normally expected to attend the college (with the exception of sitting your examinations if you live within 100 miles of London).

If you are an evening taught student, you are normally expected to attend Birkbeck one evening a week. Your attendance will be monitored by a class register. Some modules may not require attendance in a practical week. You will be advised accordingly. Classes normally run between 18.00-21.00.

Workload/Hours of study

MSc, PG Dip and PG Cert students study one topic per week. One-year MSc distance learning students study two topics per week. Each topic requires 16-30 hours of study per week, including reading, directed web browsing, practical work, and discussing the topic on the message board. Most students are in full-time employment and therefore complete the programme over two years.
7. Teaching and Assessment Overview

In general, each of the 4 taught modules is made up of 11-12 weeks of learning materials released in the virtual learning environment on Fridays in term 1 (for modules GISC 01 and GISC 03) and term 2 (for modules GISC 02 and GISC 04), in advance of the teaching session for evening taught students.

- Each week you will download a weekly topic from the VLE (and attend the teaching session for evening taught students). For up to 10 days, using a corresponding thread on the discussion board, you take part in a structured discussion of the topic, moderated by the topic tutor. At the end of the term, using the VLE, you will submit your topic discussion board contributions in a module discussion board portfolio for assessment. You will find more information in the Topics, Discussion Board and Portfolio Guide available from the start of your studies.
- Periodically you will download a practical instead of a topic, and put to practice some of the concepts discussed in the topics, with a corresponding discussion board thread for discussions.
- You will also download an assignment concurrent with other learning materials, and have at least 4 weeks to complete and submit via the VLE a 3000-word (max or otherwise specified length set out in the assignment brief) submission for assessment. Again, a discussion board thread will be available for student and tutor interaction. You will find more information in the Assignments Guide available near the release date of the first assignment.
- A reading week will also be incorporated into each module for students to catch up, do some supplemental reading or work on dissertation ideas.
- Annually, you will sit a seen written examination paper (at an agreed examination centre) for each of the taught modules you are enrolled on. For each module an exam question set of 8 exam questions will be published in late March/early April. From each question set, 5 questions will appear on the exam paper, you must answer 3. You will have 3 hours to complete each exam paper. You will find more information in the Examinations Guide available in term 2.
- In module GISC 05, you will complete a design and development project (DDP), in which you will evaluate other dissertation work as preparation for the second stage of the DDP, producing your own dissertation proposal. In the midst of this, you will produce an outline early on for us to allocate you a dissertation advisor to assist you along the way.
- Also in module GISC 05, you will complete a dissertation, consisting of 8,000-10,000 words based on individual research submitted by September 15 of your final year. You will find more information in the Dissertation Guide available early in term 2.
8. The Curriculum Schedule

Please note that this is a provisional schedule and may be subject to change at short notice.

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<th>Attend ET (Wednesday)</th>
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**MODULE GISC 01 – TERM 1 – YEAR 1**

**FUNDAMENTALS OF GISC**

- Induction session for DL and ET programmes – Sat 02/10/10

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- Release of A1: SS/JB 29/10 Due date: Tue 11/01/11 Final CAS deadline: Tue 08/02/11

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**DATA CAPTURE AND DATABASE MANAGEMENT**

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<td>19/11</td>
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Exam question set published for DL and ET programmes on 31/03/11

Examination for DL and ET programmes provisionally Tuesday 10/05/11

**MODULE GISC 02 – TERM 2 – YEAR 1**

**SPATIAL STATISTICS**

- Basic concepts I
- Basic concepts II
- Point pattern analysis
- Spatial autocorrelation

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<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
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- Release of A2: SS/MF 28/01 Due date: Tue 05/04/11 Final CAS deadline: Tue 03/05/11

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**PROGRAMMING FOR GIS**

- Algorithms for GIS
- Programming 1
- Programming 2
- Programming 3
- OVC (TBC)

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- Portfolio 2: JB Due date: Tue 29/03/11 Final CAS deadline: Tue 03/05/11

Exam question set published for DL and ET programmes both on 31/03/11

Examination for DL and ET programmes provisionally on Thursday 12/05/11
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Exam question set published for DL and ET programmes both on 31/03/11
Examination for DL and ET programmes provisionally on Wednesday 11/05/11

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Exam question set published for DL and ET programmes both on 31/03/11
Examination for DL and ET programmes provisionally on Friday 13/05/11

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### 9. Teaching & Learning Resources

**Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) also known as Bloomsbury Learning Environment (BLE) and also known as Blackboard**

The VLE is our interface or electronic classroom, where you can access programme materials, download coursework, upload coursework submissions, access coursework feedback, communicate with your fellow students and tutors, etc. Birkbeck uses a Blackboard VLE, which can be accessed from the GISc web pages at [http://www.bbk.ac.uk/gisc](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/gisc). Click on ‘Login to BLE’. Click on the login button, and login using the IT Services username and password ITS emailed you once you formally accepted a place on your programme of study. If you have not received your ITS username and password, please contact its-helpdesk@bbk.ac.uk and gis-admin@bbk.ac.uk. Please also read the ITS section near the end of the Handbook for more information about the ITS services available to students.

From the Blackboard login page, self register for training courses listed there to familiarise yourself with college polices and the use of the BLE. Once you have done that, login to Blackboard, where you will see a course list showing you the modules you are enrolled on, and the self registered training courses that you signed up for.

**General Software Requirements**

Students will need access to a computer with Internet access and software for emailing, web browsing (e.g. Explorer), word-processing (e.g. Word), reading pdfs (freeware available at Adobe Acrobat [http://www.adobe.com](http://www.adobe.com)), zipping and unzipping files (freeware available at Winzip [http://www.winzip.com](http://www.winzip.com)), creating spreadsheets (e.g.
Excel), creating slideshow presentations (e.g. PowerPoint), ArcGIS 9.3, IDRISI Taiga, and adequate disk space to install/download other teaching and learning materials.

**Textbooks**

From the start of term, to supplement the curriculum, we recommend you have access to at least one of these three books:


Depending on your area(s) of interest, or perhaps your weakness(es), consider the following optional books (we may add more books closer to the start of term):


You may find [http://www.fetchbook.info](http://www.fetchbook.info) helpful for finding the lowest priced online vendors.

**Library Resources**

The Library website is at [http://www.bbk.ac.uk/lib](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/lib). As well as giving comprehensive information about the Library, its services and collections, you can also:

- Search the Library catalogue, renew your books and place reservations on items out on loan.
• Read articles in over 12,000 electronic journal titles and newspapers.
• Search databases to help you find out what has been written about the subject you are researching, including Business Source Premier, Science Citation Index and Social Science Citation Index.
• Access past exam papers.
• Work through LIFE – an online tutorial to help you make the most of the Library.

Although weekly topics/lectures are an essential element of the programme, success in learning depends largely on the reading and research that is undertaken individually by students. Many reference materials referred to in the topics can be found in the Birkbeck Library. At times, you may also find it useful to use other libraries in the course of your research.

For those of you who can come into the college, the Birkbeck Library is in the main building on Malet Street. To join the Library, bring your College ID card to the Library issue desk. The opening times of the library are designed to meet the needs of part-time students in full-time work. Library opening times can be found at http://www.bbk.ac.uk/lib/about/hours.

Postgraduates can borrow up to 15 items and they can be renewed as long as no-one else requests them. Most books can be borrowed for 3 weeks. Some books, videos and DVDs can be borrowed for 1 week. Please be a responsible Library user. The smooth running of the Library depends on your co-operation. Please renew or return items promptly, especially if someone else has requested them.

You have access to an extensive range of Birkbeck Library and/or eLibrary resources to support your studies while at Birkbeck. Explore the library website to find out more.

eLibrary

For those of you who can’t come into the college, you can access many Library resources from your PC. You can access a whole host of electronic journals and databases from any PC in College. The majority of resources can also be accessed from home or work with your IT Services (ITS) username and password.

Other eLibrary resources are accessed in other ways, as you may discover when attempting to access them. In those instances, you will want to check the ‘Help using resources in the eLibrary from outside the college’ web page at http://www.bbk.ac.uk/lib/elib/elibhelp also available on the menu on those library web pages. From the help page, for example, there are links to documentation on how to set up a Virtual Private Network (VPN) another route to accessing some eLibrary resources.

Ejournals

To support your assessments, you may want to access relevant Ejournals. You can navigate to the Ejournals from the library home page as follows:
1. From http://www.bbk.ac.uk/lib, click on eLibrary
2. Follow the instructions on Accessing the eLibrary from outside College by setting up your Institutional Athens Cookie.
3. Click on Ejournals
4. choose one of the three search options...
5. Find out which journals cover GIS topics. One way to do this is to browse the journals by subject (at Birkbeck, Geography is in the Social Sciences). When looking at the subjects, don't forget to check related areas such as Computer Science, Earth Sciences, etc. Also, don't forget Remote Sensing is an integral part of GIS.
Let us work through an example by accessing an Ejournal:
1. Follow the instructions above to access the Ejournals.
2. Under the search option 'If you know what journal you are looking for', click on 'click here'.
3. In the search box, type in the name of the journal as 'International Journal of Geographical Information Science', press the search button (you can also navigate to the journal using the letter menu).
4. Click on 'IngentaConnect'.
5. You should see the words, 'signed in as:  +Birkbeck College' acknowledgement on the right.
6. Under 'Volume 23', click on 'Number 3-4, 2009'.
7. Click on the top article by Bejar et. al.
8. You should see the text, 'You have access to the full text electronic article'.
9. Click on the PDF button to download the article.
Alternatively, you can access the International Journal of Geographical Information Science via InformaWorld through to the present, at step 4 above.

Note: from the eLibrary and Ejournals web pages, there is a link to 'Help using the eLibrary from outside the College' link on the left menu - you may need to use this to troubleshoot access problems, given that there are a number of online publishers with various routes of access.

Library Materials by Post

The Library also offers a service called LAMP, LibrAary Materials by Post, whereby distance learning students can obtain printed copies of articles available in the Birkbeck College Library.

Past Exams

The library also archives past exam papers. You may wish to view the exam papers by:
1. navigating to http://www.bbk.ac.uk/lib
2. clicking on ‘eLibrary’
3. clicking on ‘Past exam papers’
4. navigating to Geography
5. clicking on the year
6. then clicking on the exam paper for one of our programme modules

If you have any questions about library services, please direct them to library-help@bbk.ac.uk. The School of Geography, Environment and Development Studies also has a subject librarian Robert Atkinson, r.atkinson@bbk.ac.uk.

Other libraries

Birkbeck students can also use a range of other libraries. Students have reference access to most University of London college libraries. In addition, the UK Libraries Plus Scheme allows students reference access to over 135 other higher education libraries and part-time students may also borrow from up to three member libraries. See the Library web site for more information.

GIS Software

From the start of term, you are required to have access to ArcGIS (9.3) and IDRISI (Taiga) for practical work. Eduserv agrees terms of software provision for UK higher education institutions. Under their CHEST agreement, the Birkbeck Geography ArcGIS site licence allows us to provide ArcGIS software to your UK postal address for you to use at home for your coursework. If
If your ArcGIS software is sent to a UK postal address: there is no cost for the software for the duration of your enrolment on the programme. Download and complete this [UK ESRI agreement form](#), following the instructions on the form.

If your ArcGIS software is sent to an address OUTSIDE the UK the cost is £130 annually. Download and complete this [NON-UK ESRI agreement form](#), following the instructions on the form.

IDRISI GIS software is available for US$147.50, plus shipping, and it doesn't time-out. You may order:

- online ([www.clarklabs.org](http://www.clarklabs.org)) by choosing the $295 IDRISI Full Student License option on the online order form and indicate "$147.50-Birkbeck" in the comments section. The website is not automated, you will not see the discount applied on-screen or in your confirmation email, but it will be discounted. Clark Labs validate your student status.
- or by fax (number on website above), post (address on website above) or email ([idrisi@clarku.edu](mailto:idrisi@clarku.edu)), and make [payment arrangements](#) with them.

**GIS Practicals**

Throughout the curriculum, topic tutors will refer you to GIS practicals to complete. The practicals will consist of ArcGIS practicals accessed through the ESRI Virtual Campus, IDRISI practicals integrated into the software, and tailor-made practicals designed by the topic tutor and explained in the topic. The objective of you completing these practicals is for you to gain hands-on experience to re-enforce the theoretical concepts of the topics. Some of you might already be familiar with these packages and find the practicals very easy. Others might have worked up to now with other GIS software and will find these practicals useful to get more acquainted with ArcGIS and IDRISI.

**ArcGIS practicals**

In the week 1 topic, you will find instructions for setting up your ESRI Virtual Campus Global Account at [http://campus.esri.com](http://campus.esri.com). Once you have set up your global account, you will be able to access ArcGIS practicals. In specific weeks you will be prompted to complete certain practicals. An access code will be provided in your weekly materials in Blackboard as and when required. In addition, you do have access to a limited range of practicals from the ESRI VC course catalogue at the web address above, which you can complete in your own time. Email your request to [gis-admin@bbk.ac.uk](mailto:gis-admin@bbk.ac.uk) stating the name of the practical for which you would like an access code.

**IDRISI Taiga Practicals**

The practicals for IDRISI Taiga can be found within your IDRISI software. Start IDRISI and go to Help/IDRISI Tutorial. This will open a .pdf file with a set of practical exercises. Another good way of getting to know IDRISI is by using the manual from the menu at Help/IDRISI Manual. It gives a good overview of the software and also provides an excellent introduction to GIS and Remote Sensing. You may wish to consider printing and binding the manual to use it as an additional reference throughout the curriculum.

**Other Practicals**

For some topics, tutors may choose to create more applicable tailor-made practicals. Information about those will be contained in the relevant topic in Blackboard.
10. Progression and Course Units Overview

The PG Cert, PG Dip and MSc curricula all consist of compulsory level 7 modules. There are no option modules for these programmes. Students will normally be required to study module GISc 01 before studying module GISc 02, and module GISc 03 before studying module GISc 04. Modules GISc 01-04 must be successfully completed before students are allowed to progress to module GISc 05, the dissertation module.

Students will normally be required to complete modules to the value of 180 credits. This includes the compulsory taught modules of GISc 01-04, worth 30 credits each, and the dissertation module, GISc 05, worth 60 credits. The maximum number of ‘compensated fail’ credits that may be accumulated by the end of the programme is 30 units for the MSc programme. No compensation is permissible for PG Dip and PG Cert programmes.

11. Assessment

Weightings

Each of the 4 taught modules have weight one and will be assessed by:
- a discussion board portfolio (10%)
- a seen written exam paper (50%)
- an assignment (40%)

The research module (GISc 05) has weight two and consists of:
- a design development project (20%)
- the dissertation (80%)

The module weights are used to determine the overall degree classification (distinction, merit, pass, fail) of your award (MSc, PG Dip, PG Cert).

Marking

All assessed pieces of work are marked according to the following guidelines. Assessments are usually double marked. In addition, the programme is subject to an external quality assurance check carried out by a University of London approved external examiner. Therefore marks are provisional and indicative rather than absolute, until ratified by the College. They can, and sometimes are, changed during the external examination process (usually upwards). It is therefore College policy to feedback the results as an alphabetical mark that translates to:
- A = 70% and plus
- B = 60-69
- C = 50-59
- MF (marginal fail) = 40-49
- and F = <40

The 'pass' standard is 50%. Inevitably, marks are usually clustered in the middle somewhere. So if you are used to a different system, keep it in perspective that marks are relative.

12. Coursework

In this section you will find further details to supplement the Teaching and Assessment Overview section above. An Assignment Guide will be made available to students to
provide you with guidance on completing and submitting assignments for your study programme. In addition a Topics, Discussion Board and Portfolio Guide will be made available to students to provide them with guidance on completing and submitting portfolios of their discussion board contributions for assessment.

Coursework is submitted during or after completion of the module. Your coursework must be submitted by the published deadline, and penalties will be imposed if this deadline is exceeded. Follow exactly the instructions on the procedure and format for submission which you will be provided.

Details of deadlines and penalties are found on each coursework assignment.

Under College regulations, extensions cannot be granted by individual tutors prior to the initial deadline. If you submit late and your work is of a pass standard, you will receive 50% for that piece of work unless you can demonstrate reasonable mitigating circumstances for the late submission. To do this, students must ‘provide written evidence, medical or otherwise, as to why their work was submitted late’. A Mitigating Circumstance sub-Board of the Board of Examiners considers all such cases and makes a decision about whether a penalty mark is imposed or not.

In all cases, every piece of coursework has a deadline and a later absolute cut off deadline for late submission, often referred to as the CAS (Common Awards Scheme) deadline. Coursework cannot normally be submitted for assessment after this second cut off deadline.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is submitting coursework for assessment that is the work of other people. This commonly takes two forms: the reproduction of text without attribution of the author, and the use other people’s ideas without acknowledging the source.

There are three areas where plagiarism may occur. First, straightforward fraud where a student may submit another author’s essays, practical reports etc. as their own. This may occur with or without the author’s consent. This deception devalues the coursework of the perpetrator as well as being grossly unfair to their peers. Markers find this is fairly easy to spot as they usually keep some record of the coursework content of past or present students. Anyone caught doing this will be subject to the harshest possible penalties that we are allowed, including not being able to complete your degree.

Second, essays, short or extended, may contain text pirated (sometimes word for word) from a textual source that is unacknowledged. Likewise, this form of plagiarism is not difficult to detect, for even if the source of the text is not known to the marker (although it often is), the written style of the plagiarised text betrays the fraud. The subtlety and cohesiveness of argument, the structure of the text, and the general standard of English usage, always differ substantially from the usual output of the plagiariser. 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. To avoid a suspicion of plagiarism in essays, always supply a full reference to authorship (see guide to referencing) and full details of the source in your bibliography.

Third, group work is an area where a student may be unsure about whether their work constitutes plagiarism. Here the difference between plagiarism and joint effort can sometimes be more difficult, though not impossible, to distinguish. In this type of coursework, it is plagiarism of ideas that is more likely. Increasingly however, in some part of your course a teaching strategy may involve working with other students as a group.
Group work encompasses:
- collecting results in practical classes as a group.
- presenting seminar papers as a group, some or all group members participating in the presentation, but all contributing to the production.
- project work in groups; designing experiments and collecting data; producing posters.

Sometimes a mark is assigned to the group as a whole and the same mark allotted to each group member, so plagiarism is not a problem. If this is not the case, whether the group size is 2, or many more, it is always essential to:

- declare in your report the other participants of your group
  The course tutor will know this anyway, but it simplifies the task of marker in identifying your contribution in your report. The key to dealing with group work is

- ensure that your report has a content that is distinctively yours
  Often this distinctiveness will be possible only in the discussion of the results you have obtained, but it may be possible to add an individual touch to data analysis also. In written reports of oral presentations again ensure it is clear to the marker which is your contribution.

Pay particular attention to avoiding plagiarism. If your work is suspected of containing plagiarised elements, the College will be forced to take disciplinary action. In serious cases this could mean termination of your degree programme. Plagiarism can involve unacknowledged copying from published sources (literature or web pages), as well as from other students. Take great care over this.

Further information about the College Policy on Assessment Offences, including plagiarism, can be found at http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/services/rules/assmtoff.pdf for you to refer to.

References

Many potential problems relating to plagiarism are eliminated if sources of information are always properly cited in your work and listed with full details in a bibliography or reference list at the end. This is done by including in the text of your work the author’s name and the date of publication in parenthesis, where relevant, e.g. (Coast 1996) for a single author, (Baggott and Graeme-Cook 1997) for two authors, (Baggott and Graeme-Cook 1997; Cunningham and Rayne 1998) in year order for more than one citation, or for more than two authors (Goldsworthy et. al. 1995).

Then the publications referred to in the text are listed in alphabetical sequence at the end of the work. The examples here refer to an abstract, single author paper, two author book, two author book chapter, and multi-author paper.


Notes on criteria for assessing coursework

Coursework assignments are not all alike. Always be sure that you have the information on the requirements for a particular piece of coursework; e.g. if it is numerical, what sort of tabulation/graphical presentation is expected, or, if a piece of text, what is the maximum number of words. The format for submitting coursework can be found in the Assignment Guide. For example in assignments involving computation, precision in the use of arithmetic is important, but understanding is also demonstrated by the ability to draw correct conclusions from the result, and from showing how you obtained this result. Show all intermediate workings.

The diversity of coursework assignments means that criteria for marking cannot be applied rigidly to all types of assignment. The criteria listed illustrate what assessors are looking for in assignments. This is knowledge, originality and insight - summarised as understanding.

How can you demonstrate understanding? Markers judge understanding in terms of the ability to analyse and synthesise information, rather than the presentation of a multitude of detailed facts. Analysis is the ability to select relevant material. Synthesis is the ability to take concepts directly relevant to the topic, and use these, together with appropriate information (e.g. experimental data), to develop your own argument, and to reach your own conclusions.

For half marks or more (50%+) the examiners will require coursework that is focused on the topic in question. Lower marks, down to the lowest pass (50%), are associated with coursework containing some evidence of understanding, but the material contained within the answer, and/or the way in which the work is organised, all betray a less than complete understanding of the topic. Below, the pass/fail boundary assignments always indicate little understanding of the topic, and usually contain very little of relevance.

For 50%+ you should present a relatively complete selection of information (analysis), and you must attain accuracy throughout. This is especially important for numerical material. You should also attempt to present information in such a way that the argument progresses in a logical manner (discussion). Absence of logical organisation for your assignment signals to the examiner a lack of understanding on your part.

For higher marks, you should aim to show some evidence of synthesis: the use of appropriate evidence in your discussion, and clear evidence of your ability to reach clear, reasoned conclusions based only on the information available to you. Higher marks are also obtainable for evidence of wider reading, excellent presentation of the argument, and clear, unambiguous English. Wider reading can be indicated by reference to the sources from which you obtained the information.

Remember that the ability to communicate in writing is of fundamental importance. It is an essential skill for a scientist. If your presentation lacks clarity because it is illegible, misspelled, ungrammatical or ambiguously phrased, the impact of your work is lessened and you will inevitably lose marks - even if the scientific content is acceptable.
### Criteria for Assessing Coursework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mark</th>
<th>Percentage range</th>
<th>Class equivalent</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A*</td>
<td>90-100</td>
<td>Distinction</td>
<td>An outstanding piece of work, comprehensive, logical with excellent presentation, written in unambiguous, readable English. Communication of ideas showing a sophistication not normally found at Masters level. Technically faultless. There should be synthesis, with a critical weighing of evidence, and quotation of authorities in recent literature. The candidate's own conclusions should be evident.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>70-89</td>
<td>Distinction</td>
<td>Both introductory material and the critical discussion showing a logical sequence of ideas. Written in unambiguous, readable English. Analysis of numerical material will be complete, accurate and appropriate. A high level of technical competence demonstrated. Totally focused on the subject matter and showing evidence of understanding and reading beyond that provided by the topic material given by the tutor. Skill in synthesis should be obvious.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>Merit</td>
<td>A complete understanding of the material, with a well-written discussion or technically competent application, showing substantial evidence of understanding. Overall, critical weighing of evidence not as sophisticated as for 70%+ piece of work; minor technical flaws might be present; weakness in this area could be compensated for by use of relevant extra reading or a technically competent piece of work. Analysis of numerical material will be complete, accurate and appropriate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>Pass</td>
<td>Clear, relatively complete and accurate account of the subject matter, with some extra relevant information. Competent technical skills demonstrated with minor errors or omissions. Less well organised, accurate and detailed than a 60%+ answer. Analysis of numerical material should be largely accurate, if incomplete. No substantial evidence of synthesis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MF</td>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>Marginal</td>
<td>Must show some understanding of concepts. A less than complete account of the subject matter, with significant omissions both in text and/or analysis of data. Technical errors and omissions present throughout. Organisation is adequate for only part of the answer, as irrelevant material, omissions, and inaccuracies all reduce the quality of the work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F1</td>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>Fail</td>
<td>Shows some limited understanding of</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
concepts. Overall, a partial and superficial piece of work with only the minimum amount of relevant material. Organisation is poor, with serious omissions or major errors.

F² 28-34 Fail
Predominantly composed of inadequate material. Shows little understanding of what is required, being marred by inaccuracies and omissions.

F³ 0-27 Fail
Completely inadequate knowledge and understanding; may contain a few partially relevant facts. Often trivial and anecdotal.

Coursework procedures are designed to:

- encourage you to keep up with the work;
- prevent the loss of your coursework;
- enable rapid return of marked coursework for feedback.

Your coursework will be returned to you with a provisional literal or numerical mark and written comments to provide you with feedback. Tutors aim to provide students with a mark and feedback within a month of the final CCAS deadline for that piece of work, where possible.

13. Examinations

In this section you will find further details to supplement the Teaching and Assessment Overview in section 7, above. An Examinations Guide will be made available to students to provide you with guidance on entering and preparing for examinations for your programme of study.

Entry into the examinations

Towards the end of autumn term you will receive an email from Registry asking you to confirm your modules for the academic year. This is done online via the My Birkbeck portal. Please remember that your list of modules should include ALL the modules you are taking: not just those assessed by examinations, but also those assessed by coursework, dissertation, project etc., to ensure the marks and grades you achieve are properly recorded and reported to you at the end of the year.

Based on this confirmation, you will be automatically entered for your exams. Incorrect data will severely hamper the production of the summer examination timetable, and as you will appreciate this could cause difficulties to all students required to sit for examinations. If you do find that any of the information supplied is incorrect, please inform the Geography administrators.

If you need to withdraw from any examination it is essential that you have permission from the Programme Director, normally accompanied by written evidence of any circumstances that are giving rise to the need for withdrawal. You must then formally withdraw in writing to the examinations' officer in the College, stating the reason for withdrawal. Non-attendance at the exam without formal withdrawal is deemed to be an attempt at the examination and will result in a 0% mark for the theory exam.

In the case of illness (or other unavoidable cause), a candidate may be permitted to withdraw an entry or re-entry up to and including the date of their first paper, providing
they have not entered the examination hall. In such cases the Registry and the Programme Director must be notified in writing and certification for the illness (or other cause) must also be provided to the Registrar as soon as possible.

Written examinations

General details about the examination format were provided in the Teaching and Assessment Overview section, above. The GISc team publishes examination question sets in late March/early April each year. Copies of past theory examination papers are available from the Library web site.

Written examinations are usually held in May of the same academic year.

Examination answers are marked and moderated by two different members of staff and will also be reviewed by a visiting external examiner.

Notes on criteria for assessing examination answers

Examination answers for our seen, written examination papers will be often of the essay type. The criteria below were devised mainly for essay answers. To obtain a high mark, you have to demonstrate sound understanding of the topic or different topics. We judge understanding in terms of the ability to analyse and synthesise information, rather than the recall of a multitude of detailed facts. As can be seen from the criteria, for half marks or more (50%+), the examiners will require an answer to the question as set. Lower marks, down to the lowest pass at 50%, are associated with answers containing some evidence of understanding, but the material contained within the answer, and/or the way in which the answer is organised, all betray a less than complete understanding of the question. Below the pass/fail boundary answers always indicate little understanding of the question as set, and are often composed of inaccurate and irrelevant material.

For a 50%+ answer you should aim to select information and examples directly relevant to the question (analysis). You should also attempt to present this information in such a way that the argument progresses in a logical manner (discussion). The information so presented should, therefore, be demonstrated by you to be relevant. It is of little use remembering factual material of relevance to a question if you don't present this information in a reasoned way. Absence of logical organisation for the answer signals to the examiner a lack of understanding on your part. The ability to marshal a well-argued case by selecting and presenting the evidence is a skill worth practising. Use assignment essays and tutorials as practice - they provide an opportunity to have your work discussed and criticised. Try to attain accuracy in your statements.

For higher marks, you should aim to show some evidence of synthesis, and the use of appropriate examples. By synthesis, examiners mean the ability to take concepts directly relevant to the question set, and use these, together with appropriate examples, to develop your own argument about the topic. Higher marks are also obtainable if the examiners find evidence of wider reading, excellent presentation of the argument, and clear, unambiguous English. Wider reading can be indicated by reference to the sources from which you obtained the information. Your focus should be totally on the question as set.

Remember, you must give careful thought to the significance of the question and ensure that you answer the question as set. Under examination conditions it is not always easy to keep a cool head, but do try to avoid presenting a jumbled compilation of recalled facts.
## Criteria for Assessing Examination Answers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mark</th>
<th>Percentage range</th>
<th>Class equivalent</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A*</td>
<td>90–100</td>
<td>Distinction</td>
<td>An outstanding answer with logical sequence of ideas, sensible presentation of subject matter and written in unambiguous, readable English. Totally focused on the question. Technically faultless. Presentation of ideas showing sophistication not normally found at Masters level. There should be synthesis, critical weighing of evidence and reference to authorities in recent literature. If appropriate, the candidate’s own opinion should be evident.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>70–89</td>
<td>Distinction</td>
<td>Excellent presentation of discussion with logical sequence of ideas and sensible organisation of subject matter. Written in unambiguous, readable English. Totally focused on the question and showing evidence of understanding and reading beyond the lectures. A high level of technical competence demonstrated. Appropriate choice of examples with relevant diagrams where necessary. Skill in synthesis should be obvious.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>60–69</td>
<td>Merit</td>
<td>A complete answer with good presentation of discussion; well-written and informative. Accurate recall of material and good understanding of principles underlying subject. Organisation not so critical as for 70%+ answers. Minor technical flaws might be present. Any weakness in presentation should be compensated for by appropriate examples and synthesis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>50–59</td>
<td>Pass</td>
<td>Clear, relatively complete answer to the question set, with some extra relevant information. Reasonably well organised; information should be largely relevant and accurate. Competent technical skills demonstrated with minor errors or omissions. No evidence of synthesis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MF</td>
<td>40–49</td>
<td>Marginal Fail</td>
<td>A less than complete recall of information gained only from lectures and handout sheets, but showing some understanding of principles. Organisation is adequate for only part of the answer. Technical errors and omissions present throughout. Irrelevant material, omissions, and inaccuracies all reduce the quality of the answer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F¹</td>
<td>35–39</td>
<td>Fail</td>
<td>A partial and superficial answer with some material relevant to question and some understanding of principles. However, serious omissions, or major errors, show misunderstanding of the question. The</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reasons for failure

A candidate entering an examination for a module must be examined in all parts of the examination prescribed for that module, i.e. theory and coursework. Unless prevented by illness or other adequate cause for which certification must be provided, a candidate must take each prescribed test and submit sufficient work to permit them to be examined.

If candidates fail to present themselves for examination they will be recorded as ABSENT and be deemed to have used up one of the permissible total of two entries at the postgraduate level. Absence from an examination will result in a candidate failing the module.

Students fail modules for a number of reasons:
Failure to submit coursework
Failure to submit coursework of an adequate standard
Failure to sit the theory exam
Failure to achieve a high enough mark in the theory exam

What happens if you fail?

Failing one or more modules does not necessarily mean the end of your postgraduate career. Depending upon your reason for failure you may, in discussion with the Programme Director do the following:

(1) re-sit the theory exam*;
(2) submit or resubmit coursework;
(3) retake the year.

*A candidate who, at their first entry, does not complete a module successfully may, subject to the original or strictly comparable module still being examined, re-enter for the relevant module on not more than one further occasion. When such re-entry would require further attendance at the College, a candidate may re-enter the relevant examination only with the agreement of the Board of Examiners.

To be certain of admittance to the next academic year you must pass your modules. If you fail a module due to failing the exam paper you may re-sit the exam at the end of the following academic year. There are generally no re-sits prior to this. If you fail a module you may be interviewed to discuss your future studies with the Programme Director. For example, sometimes, with consideration of your performance on other elements of your degree programme, you may be allowed to carry the fail and move on.

Readmission

At the end of the year the sub-board of examiners reviews your progress.
Informal examination results from the Programme Director are emailed to students normally within four weeks of the external examiners meeting in July, where possible. Normally, by the end of January you are informed in writing by the Registrar of your overall percentage mark for each module examination. Academic and support staff are not permitted to give you these results or to discuss them with you until they have been cleared through the Registry. If you have not paid your fees then marks will not be released.

Finalists

Finalists usually receive an informal degree result within four weeks of the second external examiners meeting in November. Normally, by the end of January you are informed in writing by the Registrar of your overall percentage mark for each module examination.

14. Rules for Progression to Year 2 and Dissertation

All matters relating to examination performance are ultimately the responsibility and the decision of the programme Board of Examiners in conjunction with our External Examiner(s). The following guidance is used by the Board of Examiners to determine progression. The guidance is subject to change by the Board of Examiners.

Students are NOT normally permitted to progress from year 1 to year 2, or from the end of the taught modules to the dissertation unless all modules taken to that point have been passed. However, the exam board may, at its discretion, permit a student to progress if they are holding no more than ONE marginal fail across all modules taken to that date (including those of a previous year, where applicable). The progression is conditional upon the student retaking during the following academic year those parts of the module required to bring it up to a pass.

15. Dissertation

A Dissertation Guide will be made available to students to provide you with guidance on completing and submitting the dissertation element of the MSc programme.

Guidelines for Dissertation Marking

These guidelines are based on the guidelines produced for the University of Cambridge Geographical Tripos (Part II).

General guidelines

The following three criteria will be taken into account when assigning marks to the completed dissertation:

1. Conception of the project:
   This refers to the intellectual and practical framework in which the dissertation is situated and the extent to which the research undertaken has identified a relevant and appropriate context. It should outline specific research questions, normally phrased as a hypothesis or series of linked hypotheses.

2. Execution of the dissertation:
   This refers to the manner in which the research has been undertaken in terms of research
design. For dissertations involving primary empirical research, the examiners may take
into account the manner in which data have been collected, the techniques used to
analyse the research question and the difficulty of the mode of investigation.

3. **Structure and Presentation of the dissertation:**
   This refers to the overall structure of the material presented, the clarity and succinctness
   of the writing and of any illustrative material, and the manner in which the evidence is
deployed to address the questions (hypotheses) that have been raised. ‘Presentation’
does not specifically refer to the aesthetic qualities of the dissertation, except if this is
poor enough to impede or detract from the understanding of the arguments developed by
the candidate, in which case a candidate may be penalized. The examiners would not
normally penalize a student for minor errors of spelling and grammar, but again may do
so if errors are such as to detract from the arguments being presented. Examiners may
penalize candidates for sloppy, inaccurate or incomplete referencing.

**Interpretation of each Criterion**

**A. Dissertation receiving an A* to A (100-70, distinction):**
1. **Conception** – A distinction will be awarded for
   (i) clear evidence of awareness of all relevant broader themes and issues (whether of
      a theoretical or applied nature);
   (ii) identification of an original set of research questions that follow from these
       themes; and
   (iii) recognition of the links between the process of drawing up specific research
       questions, the methodology subsequently used and the conclusions reached.
2. **Execution** – A distinction will be awarded for
   (i) clear evidence of research design relevant to the research questions raised;
   (ii) pursuit of an appropriate methodology;
   (iii) awareness of the methodological limitations of the research undertaken; and
   (iv) analysis and interpretation of the material collected in an appropriate manner.
3. **Structure and Presentation** – A distinction will be awarded for
   (i) logical and clear structure;
   (ii) incorporation of all the relevant material in a logical and coherent form;
   (iii) developing a clear distinction between evidence and interpretation of that
       evidence, where this is appropriate;
   (iv) drawing of relevant conclusions that clearly link interpretations to the problem
       identified in the introduction to the dissertation; and
   (v) inclusion of the standard and necessary components of a potentially publishable
       piece of work (e.g. high quality but succinct writing, proper referencing, appropriate
       use of visual or graphical material etc).

**B. Dissertation receiving a B (69-60, merit):**
1. **Conception** – A merit will be awarded for
   (i) display of reasonable understanding of relevant broader themes and issues;
   (ii) identification of interesting research questions, but these will not be as well
       specified as in a first class dissertation, and
   (iii) outlining the necessary links between theory, methodology and conclusions but
       with less sophistication than a first class dissertation.
2. **Execution** – A merit Dissertation will fail to reach a distinction for one or more of
   the following reasons:
   (i) the research design shows some minor flaws;
   (ii) the methodology is relevant, but chosen somewhat uncritically; or
   (iii) the material was collected, analyzed and interpreted well, but with more limited
       sophistication.
3. **Structure and Presentation** – A merit Dissertation will fail to reach a distinction
for one or more of the following reasons:
(i) the dissertation structure is slightly unclear;
(ii) the separation between evidence and its interpretation is not always apparent;
(iii) not all of the conclusions are well-developed; or
(iv) there are some flaws in Structure and Presentation or writing.

C. Dissertation receiving a C (59-50, pass):
1. Conception - A Dissertation will pass if it
   (i) address some but not all of the relevant broader themes and issues;
   (ii) has made some progress towards identifying interesting research questions, but
       these will not be as well thought out and explained as in a first or upper second class
doctorate, and
   (iii) has outlined the necessary links between theory, methodology and conclusions
       but in a somewhat uncritical, unoriginal or unconvincing way.
2. Execution - A pass Dissertation will fail to reach merit or distinction for one or
   more of the following reasons:
   (i) the research design is incomplete or inappropriate;
   (ii) the methodology shows signs of weakness;
   (iii) the methodology is not evaluated critically; or
   (iv) the material is analyzed and interpreted in an inappropriate manner.
3. Structure and Presentation - A pass Dissertation will fail to reach merit or
   distinction for one or more of the following reasons:
   (i) the dissertation is poorly structured;
   (ii) evidence and interpretation of that evidence is poorly separated;
   (iii) the conclusions are poorly developed; or
   (iv) important aspects concerned with Structure and Presentation or writing are not
       included, or included in an inappropriate manner.

D. Dissertation receiving an MF (49-40, marginal fail):
1. Conception - A Fail will be awarded to a Dissertation that has made only a limited
   attempt to identify research questions and/or an appropriate context, and these may
   have been: incomplete, under-developed, with an excessively narrow focus,
inappropriate or confused.
2. Execution - A Fail will be awarded to a Dissertation that shows only limited
   evidence of any attempt to use an appropriate methodology, (and without sufficient
   thought having been given to methodological issues), and the research will have
   employed an inappropriate or inadequate approach.
3. Structure and Presentation - A Fail will be awarded to a Dissertation that has
   one or two of the following shortcomings: (i) structure such that the argument is not
   clear; (ii) poor interpretation of evidence; (iii) lack of or largely unsupported
   conclusions; or (iv) largely unsupported arguments.

E. Dissertation receiving an F1 (39-35, fail):
1. Conception - A Fail will be awarded to a Dissertation that has made virtually no
   attempt to identify research questions and/or an appropriate context
2. Execution - A Fail will be awarded to a Dissertation that shows virtually no
   evidence of any attempt to use an appropriate methodology and the research results
   will be seriously flawed, inadequate or only partially relevant to the question raised
3. **Structure and Presentation** - A Fail will be awarded to a Dissertation that has three or more of the following shortcomings: (i) structure such that the argument is not clear; (ii) poor interpretation of scant evidence; (iii) lack of or wholly unsupported conclusions; or (iv) completely unsupported arguments.

**F. Dissertation receiving an F₂/₃ (0-34, fail):**

1. **Conception** - A Fail will be awarded to a Dissertation that has almost no conceptual basis relevant to the subsequent research.

2. **Execution** - A Fail will be awarded to a Dissertation that has little or no awareness of the importance of an appropriate execution, and the research will have been undertaken in a manner that fails to answer the questions under consideration, or which throws severe doubts on the accuracy of the data and hence the validity of the conclusions.

3. **Structure and Presentation** - A Fail will be awarded to a Dissertation that is poorly structured, lacking in coherence and is difficult to understand or interpret.

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### 16. College Regulations on the Examination Procedures and the Award of Degrees

The College has a series of regulations that govern degree programmes. Please refer to these at [http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/services/rules](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/services/rules), where you can find information about the Common Awards Scheme course regulations for taught courses; as well as policies and procedures on breaks in studies, student code of conduct, exam boards, marking and moderation, mitigating circumstances, assessment offences (referred to in the plagiarism section above), late submission of work for assessment, special exam arrangements, student complaints procedures etc.

A number of regulations are especially relevant. In particular please note the regulation governing **withdrawal** and **re-entry to examinations**:

It states:

"Application for permission to defer examination(s) shall be made in the case of summer examinations at least fourteen days in advance of the first examination or by 1 May whichever is the earlier, or in the case of September examinations by 1 August. Application must be made in writing to the Programme Director of the programme for the degree or diploma for which the student is registered."

And continues:

"In cases where permission is granted to defer the examination until the following year the relevant examination entries shall be designated as ‘withdrawn’ and the candidate will be required to submit entries for the examination(s) on an examination entry form in the following year."

The candidate will then be regarded as not having made that entry or re-entry. This does not automatically grant the candidate the right to re-admission to her/his prescribed programme of study, and all candidates who consider withdrawing an entry to an examination are therefore advised to discuss the matter in the first instance with their Programme Director.

In cases **where no withdrawal is made, please note:**

"All other candidates will be regarded as having made an entry or re-entry, except that in
the case of illness or other adequate cause for which certification must be provided a
candidate may be permitted at the discretion of the College to withdraw his/her entry to
the examination in the week before the commencement of the examination and up to and
including the date of his/her first paper provided that (s)he has not entered the
examination hall. **Candidates who do not attend an examination or who do not submit written work without being granted permission to defer or withdraw their examination entry shall be deemed to have failed the examination.** Absence from an examination will result in the candidate receiving zero marks in that examination”

Procedures regarding **examination entrance** are described on the reverse of the
Examination Entry Form which is sent to each student. Examination entrance is subject to
approval by the School, but otherwise it is the responsibility of students to enter
themselves on this form for specific module examinations (including modules assessed
entirely by coursework).

Finally, please also note this regulation in relation to **re-taking modules**: 

A candidate who has passed a module examination may not repeat that examination;

And:

a candidate who at his/her first entry does not complete successfully an examination for a
postgraduate programme of study, may re-enter for the relevant examination, on such
conditions as may be prescribed in the regulations for the particular programme of study, on **not more than one further occasion**.

Where such a re-entry would require further attendance at the College, a candidate may
re-enter the relevant examination only with the agreement of the Examination Board.

For detailed conduct of examinations and assessments the University delegates powers to
College Boards of Examiners, which further delegates to the Sub-Boards of Examiners. **The Sub-Board of Examiners** consists essentially of members of the academic staff of
the School. The Sub-Board also includes Visiting Examiners from another university. Their
role is to ensure that procedures and standards of assessment generally correspond to
those practiced in other comparable institutions.

**17. Quality Assurance**

In the UK, only Parliament has the authority to determine which educational institutions
can award degrees (for more information see [http://www.dfes.gov.uk/recognisedukdegrees/](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/recognisedukdegrees/)). The University of London, of which Birkbeck is a part, is trusted to maintain the quality and rigour of its awards through quality assurance and enhancement mechanisms which include (but are not restricted to):

- A Board of Examiners, who oversees the assessment and examination process of
  the programmes and reports to a similar Board of the college who reports to the
governing body of the college and university. Essentially, all exist to ensure
fairness.
  - All students have a right to appeal decisions to a successively higher
    authority.
- An External Examiner, independent to the university, appointed to assist in setting
  the examinations, checking the marking standards and suggesting improvements
to the programme. The external examiner reports to the college and university.
  o A major consideration for the external examiner is to ensure comparability of degree standards between institutions.
  o Our external examiner is Rich Harris (Dept of Geography, Bristol University).
  o External examination meetings take place in July (focussing on assessment, examinations and progression) and November (focussing on dissertations and finalists) each year.

From time to time a further external audit takes place, in which all Birkbeck study programmes and procedures are checked by a visiting team of external experts who report to the college and publish their reports. The GISc programmes are subject to precisely the same quality assurance procedures and regulations as any other Masters degree offered by Birkbeck College and the University of London. The result of all this is that degrees awarded by UK Universities have a very high reputation for quality. The college publishes further information about their web site at: http://www.bbk.ac.uk/qa.

18. Formal Marks

Formal end of year marks are issued by the Registry, Examinations Office following the final examiners’ meeting in November. Normally students receive their official marks by mid-January. Your marks will take the form of a numeric mark for each module completed.

19. Awarding Degrees, Diplomas and Certificates

College and University regulations dictate the awarding of postgraduate degrees, diplomas and certificates.

As the final piece of work for the MSc degree is the dissertation, submitted on 15 September, the date of awards will be 1 November.

Upon completion of the programme, in addition to the numeric mark for each module, you will also receive a final degree, diploma or certificate classification based on the weighted average of your module marks. Your award will be classified as follows:

- 70 and up is a distinction
- 60-69 is a merit
- 50-59 is a pass

The award you receive upon completion of the programme will be a PG Cert, PG Dip or MSc in Geographic Information Science from Birkbeck, University of London. Distance learning degree programmes in the University of London system are required to meet the same standards as traditional degree programmes within the system. As a result, no distinction is made between traditional and distance learning programmes on the degree certificate.
20. Graduation Ceremony

Within two weeks of formal marks being issued to students through the Registry Office (usually in January), External Relations send finalist postgraduates a graduation packet which includes details of the date, cost, format, number of permitted guests and booking form for graduation, usually in March for postgraduate students. Information about graduation ceremonies can be found on the External Relations website at http://www.bbk.ac.uk/er/comms/events/grad_ceremonies, including a link to graduation ceremony dates. The ceremony is followed by a reception.

Please contact Ruth Clydesdale in External Relations (+44 (0)20 7631 6571, r.clydesdale@bbk.ac.uk) if you have any questions. Also, please notify her of any changes in your address, should your graduation packet not arrive in the time frame suggested.

21. Degree Certificates

Degree certificates are usually issued within three months of formal notification of your final results. Your certificate will not be available at the graduation ceremony. Certificates for master's degrees are produced and sent to graduates by Senate House, University of London. Certificates are sent by recorded delivery to the student's home address. Please notify the Birkbeck Examinations Office (http://www.bbk.ac.uk/reg/contact) if you have a change in address. Additionally, in the first instance, contact the Birkbeck Examinations Office if you haven't received your degree certificate. If you do not receive your certificate, or if it is lost or damaged and you require a replacement, please contact the University of London Diploma Production and Despatch Office (http://www.london.ac.uk/contact#615).

Should you need a certified copy of your degree transcript, please notify the Examinations Office, above. Birkbeck does not hold copies of certificates. Normally, if you require a certified copy, you are strongly advised to bring the original to the Registry, and a member of staff will certify a photocopy. The College cannot be held liable for certificates lost or damaged in the post. Photocopies will be certified with a signature and embossed with the Registry stamp.

22. Information Technology Services (ITS)

Opening hours: Term: Monday – Friday, 10:00 – 20:00
Vacation: Monday – Friday, 10:00 – 18:00

Access to College IT facilities and services is controlled by using a username and password. IT Services (ITS) usernames and passwords are allocated to registered students of Birkbeck College.

Accepted applicants for undergraduate and postgraduate degree courses will receive details from ITS of the username and password for the purpose of on-line enrolment.

Following completion of enrolment, registered students will be able to access the full range of IT services. Details of the allocated email address and an Overview to ITS for Students are included in the communication students will receive from ITS. Please note the account and email address are not operational until the enrolment has been completed, until then the username and password can only be used for on-line enrolment.
Returning students should continue to use the same account they were previously allocated. If you forget your password, visit www.bbk.ac.uk/its/mycomputeraccount - if you have registered an external email address with the Registry then it may be possible to send you a new password, otherwise you will have to contact the ITS Helpdesk.

You are expected to be familiar with the College Computing Regulations which are available at: http://www.bbk.ac.uk/hr/policies_services/policies_az/computing_regulations.

ITS resources include:
- 8 PC workstation rooms
- Wireless network
- Wide range of general office and specialist computer applications
- Web-based electronic mail
- Blackboard Virtual Learning Environment
- Assistive technology facilities
- Training workshops and self-training materials
- Remote access to College electronic resources and services from home or work

You can find out more about these services and others by visiting our website at: www.bbk.ac.uk/its.

Your Birkbeck email address will be used for official Birkbeck correspondence so you should check it at least once a week. Alternatively you can forward all email sent to this address to another email address that you do regularly check, instructions on how to do this are on the ITS website.

There is a text message news flash service which enables students to receive free urgent messages from the College via their mobile phones. You are encouraged to subscribe. Full details are available at: www.bbk.ac.uk/its/services/sms

Your ITS username and password will not necessarily work on systems that are locally managed by Schools and departments. Schools and departments who have locally managed equipment include Computer Science, Crystallography, Economics and Psychology, and your School will provide details of access.

Students are allocated personal storage space on a networked file server. Files will remain on the server for one year after you leave.

Your username, password and email address will normally remain valid as long as you remain a paid up undergraduate or postgraduate student of Birkbeck College. However, if we have reason to think that the security of an account has been compromised your account could be suspended without warning and you will need to visit the ITS Helpdesk to have it reinstated.

23. Disability Handbook

The Disability Office

The College has a Disability Office located on the main corridor of the Malet Street building. We have a Disability Co-ordinator, Mark Pimm, and a Disability Administrative Assistant, Steve Short.

Mark is your first point of referral for disability enquiries at the College whilst Steve is for dyslexia. They can provide advice and support on travel and parking, physical access, the
Disabled Students Allowance, special equipment, personal support, examination arrangements etc. If you have a disability or dyslexia, we recommend you make an appointment to see them as soon as possible after commencing your course. Appointments lasting one hour are available from 12 noon to 5 pm Monday to Friday and are booked by Steve (details below).

At your first appointment at the Disability Office they will ask you to complete a Confidentiality Consent Form. This allows you to state who in the College can be informed of your disability. Remember, if you wish, we do not need to inform people of the exact nature of your disability, just your disability related needs.

They will also complete an Individual Student Support Agreement form, confirming your support requirements and send this to your School and relevant Departments at the College so they are informed of your needs.

**The Disabled Students Allowance**

Students with disabilities or dyslexia on undergraduate or most postgraduate courses who meet the eligibility criteria regarding residency are eligible to apply for the Disabled Students Allowance (DSA). This can meet the cost of special equipment; e.g. computers, cassette recorders, etc; non-medical personal help e.g. note-takers, interpreters, readers, etc; book and photocopying allowances; and additional travel costs. The Disability Coordinator can assist you in applying to your Local Education Authority (LEA) for this.

**The Personal Assistance Scheme**

Some students need a personal assistant to provide support on their course; for example, a note-taker, sign language interpreter, reader, personal assistant, disability mentor or dyslexia support tutor. Birkbeck has a Personal Assistant’s Scheme to assist you with recruiting, training and paying your personal assistant. Please contact Steve for information on this scheme.

**Support in your School**

The provision which can be made for students with disabilities by Schools is set out in the Procedures for Schools for Compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act. This is available from the Disability Office and the Disability web site (see below).

As mentioned above, your School will receive a copy of your Individual Student Support Agreement from the Disability Office. This will make specific recommendations about the support you should receive from the School.

**Support in Central Computing Services and Library Services**

There is a comprehensive range of specialist equipment for students with disabilities in Central Computing Services. This includes screen reading and character enhancing software for students with visual impairments, specialist scanning software, large monitors, dyslexia software, ergonomic mice and keyboards, specialist orthopaedic chairs etc. For advice and assistance please contact the Disability IT Officer. There is also some specialist equipment in the Malet Street Library, including a CCTV, and students with disabilities may benefit from using the Library’s LAMP service for postal deliveries.

**Specific Learning Difficulties (Dyslexia)**

Mature students who experienced problems at school are often unaware that these problems may result from their being dyslexic. Whilst dyslexia cannot be cured, you can
learn strategies which make studying significantly easier. If you think you may be dyslexic you should contact Steve. He can screen you and where appropriate refer you to an Educational Psychologist for a dyslexia assessment. These assessments cost £300. Some students can receive assistance in meeting this cost from their employer. In exceptional cases students may receive assistance from the Access Fund.

**Examinations**

Students with disabilities and dyslexia may be eligible for special arrangements for examinations; e.g. extra time, use of a word processor, amanuensis, enlarged examination papers etc. In order to receive special arrangements, students must provide Medical Evidence of their disability (or an Educational Psychologists Report if you are dyslexic). The closing date for making special examination arrangements is the 15th March and beyond this date consideration will only be given to emergency cases.

**The Disability Handbook**

The Disability Handbook provides detailed information on the support available from the College. Copies are available from all main reception areas, the Disability Office and from the College disability web site at: [http://www.bbk.ac.uk/disability/policies](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/disability/policies).

For further information or to make an appointment to see Mark or Steve, please call Steve Short (Disability Administrative Assistant) on +44 (0)20 7631 6336 or email disability@bbk.ac.uk.

**24. Students’ Union**

Web:  [http://www.bbk.ac.uk/su/](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/su/)
Email:  president@bscu.bbk.ac.uk
Tel:  +44 (0)20 7631 6335

The Birkbeck Students’ Union Room is on the 4th floor of the Main College Extension Building. It provides a variety of resources ranging from photocopying to a shop. It maintains the C&S/Television Room, and holds a file of useful contacts for Clubs and Societies. It operates an Advice Centre on three nights a week. It also has a valuable ‘Skills for Study’ programme. This is made up of a range of courses, including Saturday workshops.

The Students’ Union also runs a bar and canteen service on the 4th floor of the Main College Extension Building. This is a good place to meet other students.

For further information see the website above.

**25. Careers Advice**

Most students are interested in developing their careers, either within their current field of work or in a completely new direction. The Specialist Institutions’ Careers Service [SICS], part of The Careers Group, University of London, offers great expertise and experience in working with students and graduates of all ages and at all stages of career development. And it's Birkbeck's next-door neighbour!

- Term-time they offer an Early Evening Advisory Service specifically and exclusively for evening students on Wednesdays between 17.00 & 19.00.
• Drop-In Advice Service - Monday-Thursday, 14.00-16.30 - always very popular with the Birkbeck students.
• Longer Advisory Interviews can be arranged if necessary - for complete career beginners, for people wanting a practice job interview, and for every stage and situation in between.
• They also offer Psychometric Testing and Personality Assessment Workshops, Employer Presentations, Computer-based Career Guidance Programs, Insight Career Courses as well as invaluable information on Course Funding.
• Enrolled students of Birkbeck who are following degree and postgraduate courses lasting one year or longer courses may use the services of SICS free of charge up to the end of July of the year they finish [September for postgrads].
• For more information visit The SICS website at http://www.careers.lon.ac.uk/sics
SICS is located at: 4th. Floor, ULU Building, Malet Street, WC1E 7HY, +44 (0)20 7866 3600, email: sics@careers.lon.ac.uk.

26. Fire Instructions if in the College

Our fire alarms are tested between 8.00 a.m. and 8.40 a.m. on week-days. Alarm tests involve intermittent bursts of sound of only a few seconds duration. The main fire alarm is a continuous ringing bell or continuous siren in all Birkbeck buildings. When a continuous alarm sounds you must leave the building immediately.

There will be no other warning messages!

If you hear a continuous fire alarm
1. Leave the building immediately by the nearest exit. Do not delay to collect your belongings.
2. Do not use the lifts or the phone.
3. Follow the instructions of your tutor, course leader and/or fire marshals.
4. Move well away (100 metres) from the exits once outside
5. Do not stand in the road/street.
6. Do not re-enter the building unless told it is safe to do so.

If you discover a fire
1. Operate the nearest fire alarm (red "break-glass" boxes on walls). The Duty Attendant at Malet Street will be automatically contacted in every case and will immediately call the Fire Brigade.
2. Do not try to fight a fire unless you have been trained to use fire extinguishers.
3. Leave the building by the nearest exit.

Explore the College. Get to know all the fire exit routes available to you.
In the event of a fire you may need to use more than one.
APPENDIX A – COMMON AWARDS SCHEME

Birkbeck, University of London
Common Awards Scheme

Postgraduate Programmes

Introduction

1. The majority of Birkbeck’s postgraduate programmes are offered as part of the College’s Common Awards Scheme. Programmes within the Scheme have common regulations, and a common structure, and this makes it possible for you to take modules from Schools across the College which are outside of your normal programme (subject to programme regulations and timetable constraints).

2. This paper gives a brief introduction to the Common Awards Scheme.

Structure of Programmes

3. All programmes offered as part of the Common Awards Scheme will consist of modules, each of which will be “credit-rated”. In order to achieve your award you will need to gain at least the following, and meet the requirements outlined in your programme specification:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>Credits needed</th>
<th>Min at upper level</th>
<th>Max at lower level</th>
<th>Birkbeck common awards schemes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Masters Degree</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>150 level 7</td>
<td>30 level 6 (not included in calculation of classification)</td>
<td>4 modules plus dissertation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate Diploma</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>90 level 7</td>
<td>30 level 6 (not included in calculation of classification)</td>
<td>4 modules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate Certificate</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60 level 7</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>2 modules</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. The Common Awards Scheme offers, for postgraduate programmes, half modules (15 credits), modules (30 credits), double modules (60 credits), or exceptionally triple modules (90 credits) and quadruple modules (120 credits – normally for MRes dissertations)

5. The detailed requirements for each programme are published in the relevant programme specification. Each module on a programme is designated as one of the following:

- **core** the module must be taken and passed to allow the student to complete the degree

- **compulsory** the module must be taken, and Programme Regulations must stipulate the minimum assessment that must be attempted
option students may choose a stipulated number of modules from a range made available to them. Option modules are clearly identified in Programme Regulations.

elective students may replace an option module with modules from another programme, subject to approval of Programme Directors, availability of places and timetable requirements.

Modules may also be designated as pre-requisite modules, meaning they must be taken and passed to allow for progression to a specified follow-up module.

6. Detailed regulations on the structure of programmes, maximum period of registration and other areas are available at http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/services/rules.

Degree Classification

7. Postgraduate awards may be made with Merit or Distinction. Distinctions are normally awarded to students who achieve an average result of 70% or more, including a mark of 70 or over in their dissertation, for all level 7 modules on their programme. A Merit is normally awarded to students who achieve an average result of 60% or more for all level 7 modules. Level 6 modules included as part of the programme are not included in the calculation for degree classification for postgraduate programmes.

Failure and Re-assessment of a Module

8. The Regulations for Taught Programmes of Study outline how an examination board should treat a failed module when considering progression and awards. However, each examination board is responsible for judging, within these regulations, whether a fail can be “compensated” (i.e. whether you can be awarded credit for that module even if you have not actually passed), whether you will need to re-take the module (see paragraph 9) or whether you will be able to attempt a re-assessment (see 10).

9. For any module on a postgraduate programme, if your module result is less than 40% any subsequent attempt to pass the module will normally be a “re-take” – a re-take requires attendance at the module’s lectures and seminars as well as another attempt at the assessment.

10. If you obtain a module result of between 40% and 49% for any module on a postgraduate programme then the Board of Examiners may offer “re-assessment” as an alternative to a “re-take”. Re-assessment is where a student will re-attempt a failed element of a failed module; it does not require attendance at lectures and seminars. You will not normally be reassessed in elements that you have already passed.

11. A Board of Examiners may offer an alternative form of assessment for failed elements as part of a re-assessment regime.

12. The timing of any re-assessment will be at the discretion of the Board of Examiners; this will normally be either at the next normal assessment opportunity or in some instances before the beginning of the next academic year.
13. You will normally be offered two attempts at passing a module (the original attempt plus one further attempt which will either be a re-assessment or a re-take). After this, if the module has not been passed it will be classed either as a “compensated fail” (see 14) or a fail. In some cases this will mean that it will not be possible for you to gain the award that you have registered for; in such cases, your registration will normally be terminated.

14. If your module result is between 40 and 49% your Board of Examiners may award a “compensated fail”. This will mean that you retain the module result, but are awarded credit for that module. An MA or MSc may be awarded to a student carrying no more than 30 credits as compensated fail. A core module may not be treated as a compensated fail; core modules must be passed in order to gain the award. The awards of MRes, Postgraduate Diploma or Postgraduate Certificate do not normally permit the inclusion of compensated fail results in the calculation of classification.
Common Award Scheme Policies

1. As part of the introduction of the Common Awards Scheme, the College has implemented a number of College-wide policies. Some brief details on key policies are included here:

Late Submission of work for assessment

2. College policy which dictates how Schools will treat work that is due for assessment but is submitted after the published deadline. Any work that is submitted for formal assessment after the published deadline is given two marks: a penalty mark of 50% for postgraduate students, 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 work is not of a pass standard a single mark is given.

3. If you submit late work that is to be considered for assessment then you should provide written documentation, medical or otherwise, to explain why the work was submitted late. You will need to complete a standard pro-forma and submit it, with documentary evidence as appropriate, to your Tutor or Programme Director. The case will then be considered by the appropriate sub-board or delegated panel.

4. If no case is made then the penalty mark will stand. If the case is made and accepted then the examination board may allow the ‘real’ mark to stand.

Assessment Offences

5. The College Policy on Assessment Offences incorporates the College policy on plagiarism.

6. The policy describes three stages in the process for dealing with assessment offences (which include plagiarism, collusion, examination offences and other offences). The first stage allows for a very rapid and local determination for first or minor and uncontested offences. Stage 2 allows for a formal school investigation, where a student wishes to contest the allegation or penalty, where there is an allegation of a repeat offence or for more serious cases. Stage 3 involves a centrally convened panel for third and serious offences, dealt with under the Code of Student Discipline.

7. The College treats all assessment offences seriously. It makes strenuous efforts to detect plagiarism, including using web-based software that can provide clear evidence. If you are in any doubt as to what constitutes acceptable conduct you should consult your personal tutor or another member of academic staff. The College has a wide range of sanctions that it may apply in cases of plagiarism, including the termination of a student’s registration in the most serious cases.
**Mitigating Circumstances**

8. The College Policy on Mitigating Circumstances determines how boards of examiners will treat assessment that has been affected by adverse circumstances. Mitigating Circumstances are defined as unforeseen, unpreventable circumstances that significantly disrupt your performance in assessment. This should not be confused with long term issues such as medical conditions, for which the College can make adjustments before assessment (for guidance on how arrangements can be made in these cases please see the College's Procedures for Dealing with Special Examination Arrangements).

9. A Mitigating Circumstances claim should be submitted if valid detrimental circumstances result in:
   a) the late or non-submission of assessment;
   b) non-attendance at examination(s);
   c) poor performance in assessment.

10. For a claim to be accepted you must produce independent documentary evidence to show that the circumstances:
    a) have detrimentally affected your performance or will do so, with respect to 9a, 9b and 9c above;
    b) were unforeseen;
    c) were out of your control and could not have been prevented;
    d) relate directly to the timing of the assessment affected.

11. Documentation should be presented, wherever possible, on the official headed paper of the issuing body, and should normally include the dates of the period in which the circumstances applied. Copies of documentary evidence will not normally be accepted. If you need an original document for another purpose, you should bring the original into the School Office so that a copy can be made by a member of College staff. (Where a photocopy is made by a member of staff they should indicate on the copy that they have seen the original).

12. Discussing your claim with a member of staff does not constitute a submission of a claim of mitigating circumstances.

13. You are encouraged to submit your claim for mitigating circumstances in advance and at the earliest opportunity. The final deadline for submission of a claim is normally 1 week after the final examination unless otherwise stated by your School. Where possible, claims should be submitted using the standard College Mitigating Circumstances claim form (available from your School office) which should be submitted in accordance with the procedure for submission published by your School. Claims should always be supported by appropriate documentary evidence.

14. You should be aware that individual marks will almost never be changed in the light of mitigating circumstances. Assessment is designed to test your achievement rather than your potential; it is not normally possible to gauge what you would have achieved had mitigating circumstances not arisen.
Where mitigating circumstances are accepted, and it is judged by an examination board that these circumstances were sufficiently severe to have affected your performance in assessment the usual response will be to offer you another opportunity for assessment without penalty, at the next available opportunity.

15. Guidance on what may constitute acceptable mitigating circumstances is available online; you should note that this is not an exhaustive list, and that each case will be treated on its merits by the relevant sub-board or delegated body.

**Break-in-Studies Policy**

16. The Common Awards Scheme regulations allow you to suspend studies for a maximum of two years in total during your programme of study. This may be for one period of two years, or for non-consecutive shorter periods (see 17) that add up to a total of two years or less.

17. Any break-in-studies on a postgraduate programme would normally be for a minimum of one year; breaks may also be permitted for a period of one or two terms, dependent on the structure of the programme.

18. Any application for a break-in-studies should be made in writing to your programme director or personal tutor. If you are applying for an approved break-in-studies, you should give details of the length of the proposed break and the reasons for the application.

19. You will not be liable for fees while on an approved break-in-studies. If you have attended for part of a term you will normally be liable for the fees due in that term, unless there are mitigating circumstances.

20. If you are on a break-in-studies you will not have access to the Library or ITS unless you make an application and pay the appropriate fee to use these facilities. Applications must be made directly to the Library and/or ITS.

21. If you do not re-enrol after having completed two years of break-in-studies you will be deemed to have withdrawn from your programme. If you wish to resume your programme after having been withdrawn, you will normally be required to re-apply for admission.

**Other Policies**

22. In addition to the policies above, other College academic-related policies include:

- Termination of Registration
- Procedures for Dealing with Special Examination Arrangements
- Suspension of Regulations
- The Operation of Boards and Sub-Boards of Examiners
- The Role of External & Intercollegiate Examiners
- Marking and Moderation