BIRKBECK COLLEGE
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

B.Sc. ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE
HANDBOOK
This handbook is for students joining the programme from 2008 onwards
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1. Who and what is this handbook for?

This handbook is for students taking BSc Environmental Science.

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

Students should also refer to the departmental handbooks. Here you will find details about the staff in each department, the procedures for returning and collecting coursework, the personal tutor system and other essential information.

Details found in the departmental handbooks are not repeated here. There are several other sources of information. For example, a Study Skills booklet provides details of the study skills programme, and 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 I have no doubt 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due to changing academic staff, staff going on sabbatical or other reasons, courses may not be offered or may be superseded by new courses. As a result the timetable may change slightly from the one advertised in this booklet. 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 course content where necessary. We also do this from time-to-time in response to advice from students taking the course. If you have any comments about how the course might be improved please inform the Course Director.
2. Finding Help

Should you need further help or advice, please contact:

- The Course Director or the Course Administrator;
- A Module Organizer (normally a Lecturer);
- Your Personal Tutor;
- The Registry.

**The Course Administrator**

If you have a simple enquiry about the course, ask:

The Administrative Assistant

Malet Street Building
Room 715
020 7631 6473
secretary@geography.bbk.ac.uk

The administrative assistant works part-time, but someone should normally be available in the Geography office (room 715).

**The Course Director**

The current Course Director is Dr. Sue Brooks

School of Geography
Malet Street
Room 713
020 3073 8024
Email: s.brooks@bbk.ac.uk

The Course Director oversees the academic content of the whole degree. Each year, following the examinations, you will be advised in writing of your progress, and have a chance to discuss the selection of your courses for the following year.

At any time, if you want to discuss your progress, change courses or withdraw from courses, it is essential that you contact the Course Director. The Course Director can be contacted by email or telephone.
Course organizers

If you are having any problems with learning, keeping up or understanding the content of the modules you should contact the Module Organizer for that course unit or half course unit. This is normally one of the lecturers on that course.

Personal tutors

You will be assigned a personal tutor who will remain the same (staff changes permitting) throughout your undergraduate work at Birkbeck. If you are having any personal, family or work-related problems which are interfering with your studies, you can discuss these with your personal tutor.

The Registry

If you are having any problem with your registration, entry in the examinations (except withdrawal which must be discussed with the Course Director first of all), or the payment of fees, contact the Registry.

The Registry
Tel. 020 7631 6390
Fax. 020 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.

Further Help

Further help is available from several other sources such as:

Students' Union
Tel. 020 7631 6335/6365
Fax. 020 7631 6349

The Library
Tel. 020 7631 6239
Fax. 020 7631 6066

IT Services
Tel. 020 7631 6298
Although lectures and seminars are an essential element of the course, success in learning depends largely on the reading and research that is undertaken individually by students. Most items on module reading lists can be found in the Birkbeck Library and it is important that you register and familiarise yourself with the Library as soon as you can. At times, you will also find it useful to use other libraries in the course of your research.

Birkbeck Library is on the first floor of the main building in 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. During term-time the Library is open:

- Monday - Thursday  10.00 am – 10.30pm
- Friday   11.00 am – 10.30 pm
- Saturday - Sunday 10.00 am – 08.00 pm

You can borrow up to 10 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.

Birkbeck Electronic Library
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 Central Computing Services (CCS) username and password.

The Library website is at 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.

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.

Further information and help
If a book you need is not available in the Library or you require any help using the resources or finding information, please ask at the enquiry desk (020 7631 6063). Alternatively, contact your Subject Librarian, Helen Mathews. Telephone: 020 7631 6290. Email h.mathews@bbk.ac.uk

Your Current Contact Details

Please remember it is imperative that the College, the Administrator and the contributing departments are kept informed of any change in your home or work address, email address and phone number. It is sometimes necessary to cancel a class at the last minute and without the correct information, it will be impossible to contact you.
3. Programme Overview (BSc Environmental Science)

This degree programme enables students to understand the physical and ecological processes that are the context for environmental science.

**General Aims**

- To provide research-based teaching which will generate a knowledge and understanding of the natural environment, at a variety of scales.
- To foster independent and critical thought, so students can reach appropriate conclusions based on relevant evidence.
- To provide the practical, field, laboratory, computing and library skills necessary to contribute to that evidence.
- To provide general skills in learning, information technology, data processing and communication appropriate to any subsequent employment.

**Specific Aims**

The course aims to provide students with an understanding of:
- Ecology;
- Evolutionary adaptation; biogeography;
- Environmental processes;
- Remote sensing geographical information systems;
- Biodiversity;
- Environmental geology;
- Geology and plate tectonics;
- Earth history
- Key environments

Students will be given training and the opportunity to practice the following skills:
- Information technology;
- Ecological techniques;
- Environmental interpretation;
- Environmental Modelling;
- Remote Sensing;
- Statistical methods;
- Laboratory skills;
- Field surveying;
- Geological map interpretation;
- Rock and mineral interpretation.
The course builds on skills relating to the science of the natural environment. Students who gain a firm grounding in the physical and ecological processes underlying environmental science will gain the confidence to enter employment in diverse areas of government, NGOs, charities and nature conservation.

The degree utilises the environmental expertise available in a number of Schools. Lecturers in the Schools of Geography and Environment, Biological and Chemical Sciences, Earth Sciences and the Faculty of Continuing Education teach this degree.
4. The Curriculum

**Duration and attendance**

The course normally consists of four years of part-time study. Some students take longer, if they fail courses or have a break in study. In some circumstances the course duration may be shorter, if credit has been given for previous study. Credit can only be gained at the point of entry to the course.

Students are expected to take 3 course units (modules) per year, which may be combinations of full and half-course units. You may not take more than 3 course units in any given academic year, including all field courses and non-examined course units. All course units and half course units 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 or not the assessment is in the form of a written examination.

The academic year runs from October to June. There are three terms: Autumn, Spring and Summer term. Summer term is largely taken up with revision classes and exams. Some departments have half-term reading weeks. You will be advised during the teaching sessions how this affects your timetable. There are breaks at Christmas and Easter of three or four weeks each.

You are normally expected to attend 2 or 3 evenings a week. Your attendance will be monitored by a class register. Make sure you tick it each week. Some modules do not require weekly attendance, having a self-paced component for individual consolidation of taught material. You will be advised accordingly.

Classes normally run between 6.00-9.00 pm. Some classes may finish earlier to give you time to visit the library, and some practical classes may continue to 9.30 pm. Weekend attendance is also required for some courses, normally field courses.

**Textbooks**

Many textbooks are available in the library. There are multiples of important books. However, you are expected to buy some textbooks. Recommended textbooks are listed in the course material for each module.
**Progression and course units**

There is academic progression from foundation level (C), through Intermediate (I) to advanced (higher) level studies. Years 1 and 2 provide a general grounding in the subject and there is little or no choice in the courses taken. Years 3 and 4 provide an opportunity for specialisation at an advanced level with a selection of courses chosen at the end of second and third year.

Students take 3 course units each year which involves up to 3 evenings attendance per week in term time. You may not take more than 3 course units in any given academic year but you may take fewer.

Students will normally be required to complete modules to the value of 12 course units. This includes a compulsory Environmental Research Project (1 CU) or Literature Review (0.5 CU).

**Safety**

You must know and carry out the safety regulations required in the field and laboratories. Read the abbreviated Safety Code for Students on the School of Geography web site and other safety codes provided to you. Copies of departmental codes are provided on web pages by the College Safety Office. Please check the following documents:

http://www.bbk.ac.uk/geog/current/health
http://intra.bbk.ac.uk/so/geolfield.htm
http://www.bbk.ac.uk/bcs/safety/school_safety_codes.html

Safety glasses/goggles are available from staff and you must wear them for experiments involving chemicals. You should also wear some form of protective clothing, preferably a laboratory coat, when carrying out chemical or microbiological work. If you are not sure how to do something or which is the correct chemical or piece of apparatus to use – ASK. If you have an accident you must report it immediately to the demonstrator or the members of the academic staff on duty. Make yourself aware of the location of fire-extinguishers and first aid boxes around the laboratory.

A laboratory is no place for unthinking, irresponsible behaviour. Please note that fieldwork has its own special hazards. All students undertaking field-courses or individual fieldwork projects should read the Code of Practice for Safety on Field Courses available from the School of Geography web site.

**Assessment**
Each course unit is usually assessed by a combination of coursework and a theory examination. Coursework may contribute between 0-100% of the mark for a course, but normally about 25-40% of the course mark comes from coursework.

A small number of course units have no theory examination or no coursework assessment.

**Coursework**

Coursework is submitted during or after completion of the module. Your coursework must be submitted by the published deadline, and penalties will accrue if this deadline is exceeded. Follow exactly the instructions on the procedure and format for submission. Deadlines for coursework may differ between courses and departments. Make sure you understand what they are for each course and follow the guidance provided by the course unit organizer.

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

Under College regulations, **extensions are not permitted**. If you submit late and work is of pass standard, you will receive 40% 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. Coursework cannot be submitted for assessment after this second cut off deadline.

**Plagiarism**

**College guidelines on 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.**

**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.

For example, (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, including laboratory reports, can be found in the appropriate department handbook, course handout or from the course organiser. Remember that there may be additional requirements for particular assignments which will be communicated to you by the lecturer. 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. As you progress more will be asked of you. 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 (40%), 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. Remember scientific species and genus names must be underlined or italicised. Pay particular attention to the spelling of chemical compounds.

**Laboratory Reports**

The marks awarded to the various practical exercises make an important contribution to your degree classification. It is vital, therefore, that you write up these reports as soon as you can, normally within a week, of finishing an experiment. Complete as much as possible at the bench while doing the experiment. Do not leave reports until your detailed memory of the experiment has faded. In some courses you may be asked to write your reports in a hard covered notebook; in others to hand in reports on A4 sheets in a clear plastic folder.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COURSE WORK GRADE</th>
<th>Percentage range</th>
<th>(Degree Class equivalent)</th>
<th>CRITERIA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A</strong>*</td>
<td>90-100</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>An outstanding piece of work, comprehensive, logical with first rate presentation and written in unambiguous, readable English. Communication of ideas showing a sophistication not normally found at undergraduate level. 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><strong>A</strong></td>
<td>70-89</td>
<td>(1)</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. Totally focused on the subject matter and showing evidence of understanding and reading beyond that provided by the lecturer. Skill in synthesis should be obvious.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B</strong></td>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>(2i)</td>
<td>A complete account of the material, with a well-written discussion showing substantial evidence of understanding. Overall, critical weighing of evidence not as sophisticated as for 70%+ piece of work; weakness in this area could be compensated for by use of relevant extra reading. Analysis of numerical material will be complete, accurate and appropriate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C</strong></td>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>(2ii)</td>
<td>Clear, relatively complete and accurate account of the subject matter, with some extra relevant information. 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><strong>D</strong></td>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>(3)</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. 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><strong>F</strong></td>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>(Fail)</td>
<td>Must show some understanding of 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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>F</strong></td>
<td>28-34</td>
<td>(Fail)</td>
<td>Predominantly composed of inadequate material. Shows little understanding of what is required, being marred by inaccuracies and omissions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>F</strong></td>
<td>0-27</td>
<td>(Fail)</td>
<td>Completely inadequate knowledge and understanding; may contain a few partially relevant facts. Often trivial and anecdotal.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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.

Coursework is of many different types: laboratory classes, seminars, oral presentations, poster sessions, field course reports etc., but usually a single course unit will utilize only a small number of these alternatives.

Coursework is part of the examination for the course unit, and so like the theory examination it is marked by your course unit organizer (or appropriate lecturer) and moderated by another member of the department concerned.

You will receive feedback on your coursework accompanied by a provisional literal grade. The format of this will vary according to the type of coursework submission. If your coursework is returned to you as part of this process it is important that you keep your marked coursework safely because it may need to be scrutinized by a visiting examiner at the time of the exam. In your final year coursework from ALL previous years must be available to the visiting external examiners.
5. The Examinations

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 Studies 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 course-work, dissertation, project etc, to ensure that 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 Course 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 must be notified in writing and certification for the illness (or other cause) must also be provided to the Registrar as soon as possible.

Theory examinations

The format of the assessment for each course unit, both for the theory and the coursework, is provided in the course details, normally distributed at the start of the module sessions. This will include assessment weighting of different elements within a course unit. Copies of past theory examination papers are available from the Library.

Theory examinations are held in May/June of the same academic year, during daytime hours from 9.30 am to 5.30 pm.

Examination answers are marked and moderated by two different members of
staff and will also be vetted by a visiting (intercollegiate or external) examiner.

**Notes on criteria for assessing examination answers**

A simple set of criteria for all examination answers is not possible because of the different levels of courses and kinds of topics. However, examination answers for unseen, written 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 40%, 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.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERCENTAGE RANGE</th>
<th>(degree class equivalent)</th>
<th>CRITERIA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90–100</td>
<td>(1)</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. Presentation of ideas showing sophistication not normally found at undergraduate 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>70–89</td>
<td>(1)</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. Appropriate choice of examples with relevant diagrams where necessary. Skill in synthesis should be obvious.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60–69</td>
<td>(2i)</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; any weakness in presentation should be compensated for by appropriate examples and synthesis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50–59</td>
<td>(2ii)</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. No evidence of synthesis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40–49</td>
<td>(3)</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. Irrelevant material, omissions, and inaccuracies all reduce the quality of the answer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<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 style, grammar and syntax may be inadequate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28-34</td>
<td>(Fail)</td>
<td>Answer predominantly composed of irrelevant material. Some understanding of question set, but answer inadequate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-27</td>
<td>(Fail)</td>
<td>Trivial and anecdotal; unfocused and irrelevant. Individual marks may be awarded for individual accurate facts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reasons for failure

A candidate entering an examination for a course unit which is part of a course-unit degree programme must be examined in all parts of the examination prescribed for that course, 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 three entries. Absence from an examination will result in a candidate failing the course unit.

Students fail courses 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 courses does not necessarily mean the end of your University career. Depending upon your reason for failure you may, in discussion with the Course Director do the following:

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

*A candidate who, at their first entry, does not complete an examination successfully may, subject to the original or strictly comparable course still being examined, re-enter for the relevant examination on not more than two further occasions. 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 examinations. If you fail an exam you may resit it at the end of the following academic year (or two years later if the course runs every two years). There are generally no resits prior to this, although biannual course options may offer a resit assessment sooner than two years later. If you fail a course unit you may be interviewed to discuss your future degree programme with the Course 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, perhaps choosing more suitable courses if they are available.

**Readmission**

At the end of the year the sub-board of examiners for the combined degrees reviews your progress and advises the Course Director on your subsequent programme.

Examination results for non-finalists are usually posted in mid-July in the College Entrance Hall under your candidate number. They are listed as pass or fail. Later in the summer you are informed in writing by the Registrar of your overall percentage mark for each course unit examination. The academic or secretarial 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**

A Finalist candidate who wishes to postpone consideration for the award of honours through withdrawal from one or more course unit examinations MUST ALSO HAVE PERMISSION of the Course Director IN WRITING by the beginning of the fourth week of the summer term AT THE LATEST. Documentary evidence will be required, such as a medical certificate.

Finalists may be required to undergo an oral examination (viva voce) with the external examiner for the degree programme. This will take place during the day, normally the day before the final meeting of the sub-board of examiners.

In the final year a final weighted average mark is calculated following the Scheme for Award of Honours, described below. This mark is used as a guide by the sub-board of examiners, in discussion with the visiting external examiner, for deciding the class of your degree.

Finalists are usually informed of their degree result in the middle of July after the meeting of the College Board of Examiners.

**College Regulations on the Examination Procedures and the Award of Degrees**

The College has a series of regulations that govern degree programmes. We advise you to refer to these on the College website at:

http://www.bbk.ac.uk/reg/regs
This site also provides information on general procedures and appeals or complaints. All taught modules are now governed by the Common Award Structure Regulations.

Of particular importance are the programme regulations at:
http://www.bbk.ac.uk/reg/reg/regs/prog_regs/index_html/programme_regs

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 course 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 course examinations (including courses assessed entirely by coursework).

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

“A candidate who has passed a course examination may not repeat that examination nor may he/she enter a course examination which is deemed ... to overlap a course examination which he/she has already taken and passed”; And:

“a candidate who at his/her first entry does not complete successfully an examination for a First degree, or, where appropriate, any part of an examination for a First degree, may re-enter for the relevant examination, on such conditions as may be prescribed in the regulations for the particular degree, on not more than three occasions.”

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 Geography Sub-Board of Examiners consists essentially of members of the academic staff of the School. The Sub-Board also includes Visiting Examiners, one from another College of the University and one external to the University. Their role is to ensure that procedures and standards of assessment generally correspond to those practiced in other comparable institutions.
6. SCHEME FOR THE AWARD OF HONOURS

The Scheme normally requires completion of courses to the value of 12 course units. In order to obtain a degree, it is necessary to pass at least 10 course units. The aggregate percentage, which forms a major component in the calculation of the class of degree, is based on all I and H-level course units.

The weighting scheme for course units will be:

- C-level units (Foundation) Weight 0
- I-level Units and Half Units (Intermediate) Weight 1
- H-level Units and Half Units (Advanced) Weight 2

Note that although C-level courses are zero-weighted they must be completed successfully for students to be allowed to progress on the programme.

Everyone follows a common first year, taking the following units:

- Introduction to Geology 1 Course unit (C-level)
- Global Environmental Issues 1 Course unit (C-level)
- Humans and Environment 1 Course unit (C-level)

In the second year the following course units are followed:

- Environmental Processes 1 Course Unit (I-level)
- Ecological Communities 1 Course Unit (C-level)
- Geographical Analysis and Techniques 1 Course Unit (I-level)

In years 3-4 there are separate options available (H-level units) as follows:

1 Course Unit:
- Principles of sedimentology
- Geographical Analysis and Techniques (I-level)
- Coastal Processes and Management
- Principles of Geographical Information Systems
- Globalisation in the Contemporary World
- Environment and Development
- Igneous and metamorphic petrology
- Structural Geology I and II
- Conservation: People Policy and Practice
- Species and Populations (I-level)

0.5 Course Units:
- Earth History (I-level)
- Introduction to Geochemistry (I-level)
- Environmental Modelling
- Pollution, Reclamation and Plant Ecology
Weighted mean percentage
Section 48 of the Common Awards Structure Regulations outlines the scheme used throughout the College to derive a weighted mean percentage mark. It is reproduced below.

48. Determination of Honours Classification:

48.1 An honours classification may only be awarded for undergraduate honours programmes (single, joint and major/minor).

a) A student must have met the individual programme specifications at Level 4 to be given an honours degree. However, the overall module results at Level 4 DO NOT contribute to the determination of classification. Only modules at credit levels 5 (I) and 6 (H) shall contribute to the classification of honours.

b) All modules at credit levels 5 (I) and 6 (H) shall be given a weighted result which is calculated as follows:

c) Each module shall be assigned a weighting, w, where w=1 for a level 5 module and w=2 for a level 6 module.

d) Each module shall have a value, v, where v= one thirtieth of the credit point value of the module (namely, 0.5, 1.0, or 2.0).

e) For each module there shall be a result awarded by the board of examiners on the College Common Scale, m.
f) The weighted average result shall be the sum of the products \((v^*w^*m)\) for each module, divided by the sum of the products \((v^*w)\) for each module, expressed as follows:

\[
\frac{\sum_{i} ViWiMi}{\sum_{i} ViWi}
\]

g) The classification of honours degree to be awarded shall be based on the average of all the weighted results for completed modules from Levels 5 (I) and 6 (H).

h) The College sets the class of Degree that may be awarded as follows:

First: 70% or above for the average weighted module results

Upper Second: 60% or above for the average weighted module results

Lower Second: 50% or above for the average weighted module results

Third: 40% or above for the average weighted module results

i) The final Degree classification agreed through the assessment process is based on academic judgement and the above calculation is only used as a guide.

j) Once a student has fulfilled the criteria for the honours degree they may not undertake further modules in order to improve his/her average result.

In arriving at a degree classification, the Sub-Board, will apply the following criteria:

- The weighted mean percentage
- Question-by-question mark profiles for individual course-units, and for individual candidates.
- External examiners opinion
- The overall performance of the candidate, taking into account the distribution of the marks awarded to the candidate over the various units
- The strengths or weaknesses of the candidate in different elements of the degree
- The performance of the candidate in the oral examination
- Any special difficulties known to have been experienced by the candidate at the time of the examinations (e.g. illness).

Examination schemes are subject to continual modification and evolution, and the College does reserve the right to change this scheme when necessary or desirable. Any changes will be notified to all students in advance.
7. COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

Courses are either
• full course units (1 CU)
  run for 22 weeks, normally 1 evening each week, through autumn and spring term with revision classes in summer term before the examinations
• half course units (0.5 CU)
  run for 11 weeks, normally 1 evening each week in either autumn or spring term with revision classes in summer term before the examinations

Courses either run
• every year (most foundation and intermediate level courses)
• in alternate years (most advanced level courses)

Short descriptions of courses are available from Departmental Handbooks and more details are available on the WEB via the Departmental Home Pages.

BIOLOGY:
http://www.bbk.ac.uk/bcs

GEOGRAPHY:
http://www.bbk.ac.uk/geog/current/ug_students/options

EARTH SCIENCE:
http://www.bbk.ac.uk/es/

MANAGEMENT:
http://www.bbk.ac.uk/manop

SCHOOL OF CONTINUING EDUCATION:
http://www.bbk.ac.uk/fce

INSTITUTE OF ENVIRONMENT:
http://www.bbk.ac.uk/environment

REMEMBER

• some courses are obligatory for a particular degree programme
• some courses are restricted to a particular degree programme
• some courses are optional
• some courses have pre-requisites
  (Another course, usually at a lower academic level, must have been completed before embarking on the course)
• some courses only run in alternate years
• other courses (not shown) may sometimes be included within degree programmes

Courses are constantly modified to keep them up to date. Some courses may be superseded. Every effort has been made to ensure that the details here were accurate at the time of printing of the handbook but more up to date information may be found by visiting the departmental pages on the web.
8. COLLEGE DISABILITY STATEMENT

At Birkbeck there are students with a wide range of disabilities including dyslexia, visual or hearing impairments, mobility difficulties, mental health needs, HIV, M.E., respiratory conditions etc. Many of them have benefited from the advice and support provided by the College's disability service.

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 Co-ordinator 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

For further information or to make an appointment to see Mark or Steve, please call Steve Short (Disability Administrative Assistant) on 020 7631 6336 or email disability@bbk.ac.uk.
9. Timetable

Continually up-dated timetables can be found through the link

http://www.bbk.ac.uk/geog/current