

SCHOOL OF GEOGRAPHY AND THE ENVIRONMENT



**MSc NATURE, SOCIETY AND  
ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY  
COURSE HANDBOOK 2011/12**





MSc NATURE, SOCIETY AND ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY



## Welcome to the School of Geography and the Environment



I am extremely pleased to welcome you to the University of Oxford. Oxford is a remarkably diverse and stimulating place, and our postgraduate programmes will be a substantial part of your intellectual and social life over the coming terms. Each and every programme has its essential core features and the chance to reach out and learn about the world in its remarkable diversity. I hope you will take advantage of what we have to offer, and what each College and the wider University has to offer in terms of your broader academic interests.

The School of Geography and the Environment, and its associated research centres in the Oxford University Centre for the Environment, offer a unique blend of teaching and research, providing undergraduates, MSc, MPhil and DPhil students across a range of cognate disciplines the means to engage in the big themes of the 21st century: from climate change to globalization; from the philosophy of nature and society to biodiversity and conservation; and from the frontiers of physical science to the hard realities of public policy and corporate decision-making. Our research expertise, and the quality of our research is recognised in the 2008 national assessment that placed us as the equal top Geography department in the UK, and has important implications for our teaching, particularly at postgraduate level. We take pride in the range and scope of our postgraduate programmes, and we are committed to a level of intellectual engagement with the issues that will carry over into your research and subsequent careers. We want to make a difference; we believe that you are an important part of that commitment.

*David Thomas, Professor of Geography  
Head, School of Geography and the Environment*

### ... and to the International Graduate School



As Director of the International Graduate School, I am delighted to welcome you to Oxford and to the School. One of the most exciting aspects of being a graduate student is the opportunity to interact with leading academic and policy thinkers and get to know students from a remarkable range of backgrounds and disciplines, in the School, in your College and in Oxford more generally.

The challenges ahead of you are exciting and, for many of you, doubtless a little daunting. You should have confidence in your abilities and the experience that you are bringing to your new course. But you should also be ready to tackle new challenges and new ideas. The School is an intellectually demanding but supportive environment in which to study, combining independent and collaborative styles of working and providing a wealth of opportunities to engage in an energetic research culture through class discussions, seminars, reading groups, field work and other events. I look forward to meeting you.

*Gordon Clark, Halford Mackinder Professor of Geography  
Director, International Graduate School*



### ... And, finally, to MSc Nature, Society & Environmental Policy



The NSEP course is never settled. Every year we make adjustments to improve the content and balance of the course and strengthen the conditions for dynamic interplay between theory, practice and research. This is what makes NSEP exciting and challenging – our aim is not to offer you a coherent view of policy or governance, rather it is to provide you with an integrated set of theoretical and practical insights and the intellectual environment to enable you arrive at your own understandings.

Last year we more fully integrated the ‘Mapping Controversies’ group exercise with practical research methods exercises and more tightly prescribed the applied policy content of the course. This year we are reducing the overall number of teaching hours so that students have sufficient time to engage with key readings and pursue individual study.



A number of fascinating intellectual challenges are emerging in the field of environmental governance and nature-society relations more generally. These are diverse yet interlinked. They include: the problem of how to link up multi-level governance and multi-scalar environmental systems and how to move beyond the anxiety-based messaging that has dominated contemporary environmental discourse yet is alienating publics, critical questions like what are we going to do now the limits of the new market-based policy instruments are becoming apparent?, what are the implications of new forms of government power and a multi-polar globalised world?, how is ‘nature’ framed and constructed cross culturally and how does this relate to different processes of environmental degradation? Added to these is the

big picture thinking that is required if we are going to integrate an expanding human population and their resources’ demands into an Earth, a biosphere, already in need of restoration.

You have been selected for NSEP because we believe you have the ability to engage with us in thinking through forward-looking questions such as these. The core modules are designed to provide the conceptual and case study foundations through which you, in discussion with faculty and your student cohort and through your individual research can engage with future-looking questions and develop as a thought-leader in academia, policy or related professions.

Oxford is an amazing place for people interested in the environment, politics and society. Both inside and outside of the University there is an extraordinary range of events relevant to this course and the opportunity to hear some of the world’s leading academics speak on current issues. Your time in Oxford offers a unique opportunity to build your networks, meet like-minded people and others in the International Graduate School. Our eight-week terms can prove to be short and intense. It is important that you pace yourself and to find time for reflection and rest. This way you will get the most out of the course.

*Paul Jepson  
Course Director,  
Derek McCormack  
Academic Director*



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## INTRODUCTION

### 1. Course Introduction

This handbook provides an overview of the MSc in Nature, Society and Environmental Policy (NSEP). It sets out the aims of the course, the content of the study programme and the various component parts of the course, including core lectures, elective modules, seminars, dissertation, etc. The booklet also contains important information about handing in coursework, guidelines for dissertations, attending examinations, and other aspects of course management. You should read through the handbook carefully and ensure that you understand your obligations throughout the course. We will provide you with more detailed material for particular parts of the course as appropriate during the year.

Most of all we would like to thank you for choosing to come to Oxford to study for the MSc in Nature, Society and Environmental Policy. Your class comprises a group of students carefully selected from top international universities who combine qualities of academic excellence, innovation in thought and action and a commitment to changing the world for the better. We hope that your year in Oxford will be formative, memorable and intellectually challenging time. The 'core' NSEP team are Dr Paul Jepson (Course Director), Dr Derek McCormack (Academic Director), and Ms Niamh Tuite MA (MSc Co-ordinator). We are available to help you to get the most out of the course. The MSc NSEP is rooted within the 'Technological Natures' and 'Transformations' research clusters of the School of Geography and the Environment, but draws on expertise from the whole of the Oxford University Centre for the Environment.

As an ESRC recognized training programme, particular emphasis is put on the development of research skills and competence in using quantitative and qualitative methods of the social sciences, the humanities and human geography to prepare students for advanced research careers, doctoral research and cognate work in governmental, non-governmental and commercial research environments.

### 1.2. School of Geography and the Environment

The School of Geography and the Environment (SoGE) and its associated research institutes based in Oxford University Centre for the Environment (OUCE), is an internationally-recognised centre of excellence for environmental research and scholarship. The historical origins of OUCE lie in the former School of Geography, the first geography school to be established in Britain, over 100 years ago by Halford Mackinder. The School was established through a co-operative effort involving the Royal Geographical Society and University of Oxford. From these deep roots the School has grown and prospered. The ethos of the SoGE is to promote research that is bold, innovative and challenging whilst remaining committed to the highest standards of scholarship.

Today, the School of Geography and the Environment is one of the leading centres of scholarship for environmental and social change. It has been a leading global institution in developing cutting edge research not only in the UK but around the world. The SoGE is committed to training a new generation of graduate students in the core research fields of environmental science and human



geography and in the new and exciting interdisciplinary research frontiers that exist between and across these disciplines.

The School of Geography and the Environment is home to the internationally recognised Environmental Change Institute (ECI) and other vibrant research centres, such as the Oxford Centre for Water Research (OCWR), along with cross-departmental research groups, such as the Climate Systems and Policy, Oxford Centre for Tropical Forests, and the Global Environmental Change and Food Systems (GECAFS) international project office. Creative combination of theory and practice provides a relevant and fertile training ground for our postgraduates. Our research programmes span the globe with researchers working in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, and North America along with a strong record in European studies and, of course, the UK.

The SoGE currently offers two thesis-based higher research degrees (DPhil, MPhil) and four MSc courses. These are:

**MSc Biodiversity, Conservation and Management (BCM)**

**MSc Environmental Change and Management (ECM)**

**MSc Nature, Society and Environmental Policy (NSEP)**

**MSc Water Science, Policy and Management (WSPM)**

Students studying for the two-year MPhil in Geography and Environment follow the course of tuition for either NSEP, BCM or WSPM in their first year and undertake an extended research project in their second year. Students may apply to transfer from the MSc course to the MPhil programme any time before the beginning of Trinity Term (when dissertation research plans are finalised). Transfer from the MSc and MPhil programme is also possible. All such transfers are subject to students meeting the required academic criteria and also their meeting the University's financial conditions.

## **1.3 Oxford Learning Environment**

### **1.3.1 Learning Approach**

During your time at Oxford you will experience a wide range of different formats and styles of teaching, from small group discussions to field visits and from traditional lectures to public talks by some of the world's leading academics. In keeping with Oxford's tradition of academic freedom, the exact nature of the learning experience within any particular tutorial, seminar or lecture is left to the discretion of the lecturer which, we hope, produces a productive variety of learning experiences. The most typical forum for teaching and learning remains the lecture although there is immense variation from lively class discussions to learned discourse. Core modules are normally taught in eight sessions that typically involve a lecture/seminar followed by, or integrated with, class discussion. Some classes are supported by DPhil-led reading groups.

In the International Graduate School, we place strong emphasis on peer group and individual learning. Your peer group consists of exceptionally talented scholars from around the world,



many of whom have practical experience or extensive knowledge of issues and topics that are covered during the MSc course. We strongly recommend that you form strong academic bonds with your peers, both within your MSc course and the wider International Graduate School, and we encourage this with small group projects, reading groups and discussions.

There is an obligation on you as an individual to develop your own spheres of interest within the subject area and to work hard at identifying gaps in your knowledge and training. Oxford's exceptional learning facilities provide unrivalled opportunities for individual learning, not to mention the array of international researchers and scholars who present their work at external lectures around the university. We urge you to take full advantage of all of these opportunities if you are to get the most out of your time at Oxford.

Staff members are available to advise students on reading, literature, and topics. An Academic Adviser will be assigned to assist students with these matters and your own College will provide a personal advisor who can also give additional support.

### **1.3.2 Academic conduct**

You are expected to attend all the classes, workshops, seminars, study days and field trips specified in the course handbooks. It is particularly important that you attend sessions involving external professionals as their contributions to the course are voluntarily and based on good will. Arriving late for a class or workshop or leaving before it has ended without the agreement of the lecturer is considered disrespectful and is not condoned.

### **1.3.3 Feedback**

We aim to provide written feedback and preliminary marks on assessed work within eight weeks of the work being submitted. Any marks communicated may be revised at the final Examiner's meeting. Written feedback will focus on how to improve the quality of your written submissions and/or research design. Normally feedback will be provided on: i) the two assessed elective essays submitted at respectively the beginning of Hilary and Trinity terms; ii) feedback on dissertation research proposals submitted at the end of Hilary term, and; iii) feedback on practice exam questions in Trinity term.

### **1.3.4 Library and Learning Facilities**

The University of Oxford Library system is extensive, with dozens of individual facilities around the city. The Geography and the Environment Library will fulfil many of your needs. However over the course, you will also need to seek out books from other locations. A tour and instruction on using the library facilities and will be provided during induction week. More information may be found at <http://www.ox.ac.uk/libraries/>

### **1.3.5 Weblearn**

WebLearn is Oxford University's Virtual Learning Environment. NSEP has its own departmental area where we post general course information along with lecture notes, reading lists and other materials specific to each module, workshop or field trip. There is also a class message board.



Weblearn contains information on all staff and students at Oxford, and their groups, thus allowing you to easily restrict access to certain cohorts.

### **1.3.5. Oxford University Computing Services**

Oxford University Computing Services (<http://www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/>) offer a wide range of Information Technology support including excellent training courses and a shop selling leading software at educational discount prices.

### **1.3.6 Security and care of personal belongings and data**

People outside the School have access to the building. It is important therefore that you are vigilant of your own and others valuables at all times. This applies particularly to laptops, tablets and phones. In an effort to combat crime the University runs registration schemes for bikes and personal possessions and you are encouraged to use these. Please contact your college for details. You are strongly advised to back-up your data, lecture notes and drafts of written work at regular intervals. In addition, we request that you are particularly vigilant of 'tail gating' i.e. people coming in through the security barriers behind you and who lack swipe card access to the Department.

## **COURSE INFORMATION**

### **2.1 Aims/Objectives**

The rate and complexity of environmental change poses profound economic and political challenges for contemporary society. Developing ways of addressing these challenges will demand intellectual rigour, innovation and flexibility, as well as the capacity to think across existing disciplinary boundaries. This course aims to help students develop a theoretically sophisticated and empirically grounded understanding of the dynamic relations between environment, society and policy. To this end the course draws on the methods and approaches of economic and cultural geography along with the broader interdisciplinary field of environmental social science, including fields such as environmental law, science and technology studies and corporate environmental management. A particular stress is placed on the value of dialogue between researchers and practitioners concerning contemporary issues of environmental policy and politics. As an entry course for further advanced study at Oxford and elsewhere, the course has a strong emphasis on developing research skills for studying the relations between environment, society and policy at all levels.

#### **The specific objectives of the MSc course are:**

- To develop students' research skills;
- To introduce students to the advanced research methods and practices of contemporary human geography, the environmental social sciences, including reference to the ethics of research;
- To promote students' theoretical and applied knowledge of cutting edge approaches to the intersection between nature and society, cultural, political and economic issues by providing formal and broad-based instruction;



- To create an interplay between theoretical perspectives and the practice of environmental policy to enable student to develop critical and individual perspectives on questions and challenges relating to environmental governance;
- To provide a critical and broad perspective on the relevant debates concerning nature and society, globalisation and localisation, and environmental governance and policy;
- To integrate research students into state-of-the-art research in the SoGE by providing core teaching and supervision by research active staff;
- To expose students to a range of innovative teaching methods and pioneering theoretical and methodological perspectives;
- To enhance students' personal development and their employment-related skills;
- To equip students with the research skills necessary to undertake further advanced study by research ere at the University of Oxford or at other institutions.

## 2.2 Core Teaching Staff

This inter-disciplinary course is led by academics in the School of Geography and the Environment, and supported by experienced practitioners, all of whom have considerable national and international expertise (Appendix 1).

### The core staff teaching on the course includes:

Dr Paul Jepson:	Course Director
Dr Derek McCormack:	Academic, Director, University Lecturer, Mansfield College
Prof David Banister:	Director of the Transport Studies Unit, St Anne's College
Prof Gordon Clark:	Halford Mackinder Professor of Geography, St Peter's College
Prof Sarah Whatmore:	Professor of Environment and Public Policy, Linacre College
Dr Andrew Barry:	Reader in Geography, St Catherine's College
Dr Patricia Daley:	University Lecturer, Jesus College
Dr Craig Jeffrey:	University Lecturer, St John's College
Dr Anna Lora-Wainwright:	University Lecturer, St Cross College
Dr Richard Powell:	University Lecturer, Mansfield College
Dr Dariusz Wojcik:	University Lecturer, St Peter's College
Ms Marta Lang:	OUCS Teaching Associate, Fellow at the Australian National Centre for Ocean Resources

In addition, we have important teaching contributions to our **Policy and Governance** theme from:

Dr Connie McDermott:	James Martin Research Fellow, Environmental Change Institute
Dr John Holmes:	Senior Research Fellow, Earth Sciences
Dr Kathryn Monk	Environment Agency
James Painter	Reuters Institute for Journalism

and to our **Theory and Analysis** theme from:

Dr Jamie Lorimer:	Kings College London
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## 2.3 Course Description

### The MSc programme comprises:

- Six core modules organised under three themes
- Two 'integrated' modules taught across the four MSc's which fit into the same three themes
- A group 'mapping controversies' exercise
- A series of policy dialogue seminars and policy workshops
- Two elective modules which are assessed through essays and/or coursework;
- A piece of original research which is assessed through a dissertation;
- Training in research methods and group tasks associated with core modules;
- Study tours and field trips throughout the year.

The elective modules are assessed through essays, the piece of original research by dissertation and the rest of the material by three, 3-hour examinations that reflect each of the three course themes.

## 2.4 Course Structure

An outline time-table for the course is illustrated in the matrix. Core modules and elective modules are generally taught in the first two terms leaving the third term for examinations and dissertation preparation.

MSc Nature, Society and Environmental Policy		
1st Term	2nd Term	3rd Term
Nature & Society	Science & Politics	Brussels & Holland Field Trip
Governance, Politics & Policy	Corporate Environmental Management	
International Environmental Frameworks (All MScs)	Economy & Development	Exams
Research Design (1)	Research Design (2)	Research Dissertation
Research Methods (All MScs)		
Mapping Controversies Exercise		
Elective modules, Policy Workshops, Policy Dialogue Seminars		



## 2.5 Core Modules

(For full details, please see the module outlines in Annex 1)

The **Policy and Governance** strand, comprises three core modules, policy workshops and a policy dialogue seminar series:

The core module in **International Environmental Frameworks** is offered to all MSc courses in the School. This module will cover history, principles and standards of international environmental law. Lectures consist of an insight into the process of international law making, its implementation, regulation, dispute resolution and liability for environmental damage. The module will be illustrated with case studies relevant to various MSc courses.

**Governance, Politics and Policy focuses on** the spaces, actors and other drivers that shape how environmental problems and policy responses are both framed and executed. The module introduces a range of analytics that help us think about forms of governance beyond the state and examine the role of trans-national, local, corporate and NGO actors involved in contemporary environmental governance and the spaces and techniques through which they leverage influence.

**Corporate Environmental Management** deals with the ways in which corporate institutions manage risk, change and liabilities, especially as regards environmental issues. It focuses on large, multi-jurisdictional firms whose environmental footprints are the focus of internal and external stakeholders (including the courts and regulators). The course closes with the application of lessons learned in the recent BP case.

**Policy workshops** and the **Policy Dialogues Seminar Series** aim to ground theory and practice and to provide opportunities for in-depth exploration of emerging policy issues and themes (see section 2.9)

The **Theory and Analysis strand**, comprises three core modules and a group exercise:

**Nature and Society** examines the ways in which the relations between nature and society have been articulated within the disciplines of Geography and related fields. It will examine the contested ways in which nature-society relations are articulated in different times and places, and the consequences of this for contemporary environmental policy and politics.

**Economy and Development** provides an interdisciplinary perspective on economy and development, contrasting mainstream 'economic' and 'political' standpoints with economic and political geography, stressing the significance of studying economic development with its environmental factors and outcomes on the ground, and in specific contexts.

**Science and Politics** addresses the complex relations between science, politics and public policy. The course examines topics such as the conduct of scientific controversies, the relationships



between experts and non-experts, uncertainty, interdisciplinary research, risk, and the role of scientific knowledge as an instrument of regulation.

**Mapping Controversies** is a group exercise which is integrated into the previous module and aims to develop insight into the intermediate stages through which scientific and technical knowledge comes to be presented as certain and/or authoritative. Through the analysis of a scientific controversy it aims to complicate notions of a structured and ordered environmental governance and develop more nuanced understandings of the spaces where decisions/perceptions about the objects of policy are framed, contested, negotiated and transformed.

The **Research Skills strand** comprises a core module, an integrated package of research skills teaching and a research dissertation:

**Research Design** relates questions in philosophy of science (about the nature of asking questions; the practice of generating 'data'; and the role of 'writing' in the research process) to specific methodological techniques and analytical strategies.

A series of **Research Methods** classes are offered to all MSc courses within the School. These run over the three terms but are concentrated in Michelmas and Hilary terms. The classes on offer include basic and advanced research skills that are essential to your research dissertation and a possible future career as a researcher and academic. A set of practical exercise are linked to the Mapping Controversies group exercise. The required classes for NSEP are as follows:

- **Research Practices** will develop key competences in using library and online research facilities and develop understandings of communicating research through presentations and publications and applying for research grants.
- **Basic Qualitative Research Techniques** aims to develop core competencies in interview, focus-group and participatory methods.
- **Questionnaire design and analysis** introduces the various types of questionnaire and their applications and then covers the key elements of designing and executing a robust questionnaire survey. Linked to this module is training in the software programme SPSS and statistical tests for questionnaire analysis.
- **Research Ethics** reviews and explores the key ethical questions involved in doing qualitative research and includes information on the University's ethical approval process.

**Research Dissertation** The above courses help students design and execute an original and independent research that is expected to be of publication quality. All students are assigned a supervisor from the School of Geography and the Environment, although it is also possible to appoint additional supervisors from external institutions. Many students carry out their dissertation research outside of the UK and some work as members of research teams in OUCE or firms and organisations with which the Centre has developed close relations (see 2.8).



## 2.6 Elective Modules

Elective Modules offer a tutorial-style teaching and discussion environment within smaller groups, based on a suite of contemporary research themes that reflect the specific interests of core faculty and visiting research associates. They involve eight hours of instruction that may be organised in different formats. Each student has the opportunity to identify elective modules of particular interest, though there is a selection process for these electives through committee at the start of term. As such, the teaching aim is to foster discussion and debate between academic staff and students to identify and explore theory, methods and practice in an academic space that encourages a critical dialectic.

Students will be required to read and present work to the group throughout the term. Assessment will be by an essay of up to 4,000 words (including a 150 word abstract also required on the title page of the essay) to be submitted by noon on the first Monday of the following term to the MSc Coordinator. Essays are to be submitted by two paper copies of the essay and also soft copies in both MS Word Document and PDF formats.

There is a separate Elective Modules handbook that provides outlines of available elective modules in the School of Geography and the Environment for the forthcoming year. Please note, however, that module details may change at short notice due to changes in staff availability and are subject to both maximum and minimum student numbers.

## 2.7 Reading Groups

Each term we offer reading groups led by doctoral students within the department. Reading groups are linked to core module teaching and offer an opportunity for an in depth exploration of a particular set of literature in a smaller group setting.

## 2.8 Dissertation

In addition to the core and elective modules, you are expected to undertake an independent and original research dissertation. The dissertation is an integral and formal part of the course, and completing a good dissertation is essential for further research study in the School of Geography and the Environment, leading to the M.Phil. or DPhil degree.

The dissertation gives you the opportunity to design and execute your own research. The choice of research topic is up to you, but it normally relates to one or more of the core or elective modules, or to the research interests of one of the School of Geography and Environment staff. A supervisor will be appointed to guide you during this work, the bulk of which will be carried out after the exams are over, and the final work must be handed in on the first weekday of September, namely Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2012.

It is expected that the best dissertations will be of publication quality, and all submissions should show originality and/or competent and creative scholarship. Indeed, it is possible to submit the work in the form of a journal paper ready for submission. This should be discussed with your dissertation supervisor.



All dissertations will be judged on the degree to which they fulfil the criteria of a comprehensive and coherent treatment of a suitable research question in an analytical and critical manner. On successful completion of all of the necessary components of the MSc Programme - assessed essays, examinations, and dissertation - you can be considered for entry into a higher research degree in the School of Geography and the Environment.

Many students will have never completed an extended piece of independent and original research before the course. To assist students develop the skills and techniques necessary to execute a successful research project a number of inter-connecting modules, training sessions and seminars are provided throughout Michaelmas, Hilary and Trinity terms. These training modules are compulsory.

## 2.9 Research Seminars and Workshops

The University of Oxford offers a truly outstanding opportunity to immerse oneself in public talks from leading global thinkers, activists and politicians on a kaleidoscope of topics and issues.

### 2.9.1 Research Seminars

The School of Geography and the Environment runs a weekly departmental seminar series where leading geographers from outside Oxford are invited to share their work. In addition, each research cluster organises several seminars each term.

Elsewhere in the University, a number of regular seminar series have an environment focus. These include the Linacre Lecture Series and a seminar series convened by the Smith School for Enterprise and the Environment.

### 2.9.2 Policy Dialogue Seminars

This series provides an opportunity to ground theory in practice through in-depth discussions with professionals, occupying different roles in the policy process. In short, the weekly policy dialogue seminars provide an opportunity to gain insights into the real world of policy, the various career routes within it and how policy professionals talk and think about emerging issues.

### 2.9.3 Policy Workshops

Students may choose to participate in workshops that provide for an in-depth exploration of key issues in environmental policy. Each year we convene a series of policy workshops and an Environmental Innovation Forum. The number of places on workshops is normally restricted to thirty. We can guarantee your participation in at least two workshops. The Innovation Forum is open to all.

**The following workshops are planned for 2011-12:**

- An **Environmental Innovation Forum** brings together students with Oxford-based groups working at the cutting-edge of environmental policy and practice.
- An **Oceans Policy Symposium** will profile cutting-edge initiatives to create meaningful governance approaches in the marine environment.



- A **Science and Evidence Policy** workshop will examine the actors and pathways through which science enters the policy process and how it is mediated along the way.
- A **CITES Conference of the Parties** role-play simulation to understand how scientific evidence is modified by national and interest group positions.
- A workshop on **Media and the Environment** will analyse how science is represented in the media, and interrogate the politics, ethics and impact of media representations of environmental problems.
- A workshop on **Participation and Policy Complexity** will examine the complex interplay of the different elements that conspire to shape transport policy drawing on Oxford as a case-study.

## 2.10 Fieldwork

Fieldwork is an important element of the programme's teaching philosophy. Each year there are two compulsory residential field trips and several one-day study visits that allow students to develop a grounded understanding of the issues involved.

**Field trips and study days planned for this year include:**

- A three day induction field trip to the Isle of Purbeck to get to know each other and think about ideas of landscape and heritage and the governance of Kimmeridge Bay, located within the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site.
- A five day field trip to Brussels and Holland to understand the role of EU institutions in environmental governance and to explore the motivations and implications of Dutch re-wilding policies. We then visit colleagues in Amsterdam involved in the development of web-based research. This is a new and innovative field course and a departure from previous field trips to Paris.
- A day study tour Waddesdon Manor and Stowe Landscape Gardens in Buckinghamshire to study the origins of positive perceptions of nature in western thought.
- A study day to London to understand the city as an emerging centre of ethical and environmental governance of markets and businesses.

In addition to the compulsory field trips, there may be other opportunities to work in the field, either as daytrips, or assisting one of the academic staff members with their research. Additionally, many (if not most) of the research dissertations will have a fieldwork component for which appropriate instruction will be given.

## 2.11 Induction

All new postgraduates are expected to attend a full-time orientation and induction programme in the week before term commences in Michaelmas Term. The purpose of this orientation is to provide an opportunity to lay out the structure and expectations of the programme in an informal setting. The first half of the induction programme is led by the Course Director and comprises, among other things, an introduction to the School of Geography and the Environment, its component centres and its facilities. It also introduces and explains the training and research programme, institutional and organisational procedures, the aims, objectives,



structure, outline, and assessment methods of the course, the key expectations and responsibilities of the students. Information about supervision arrangements is provided. In addition, specialist induction to library and database resources, electronic databases and Internet facilities, GIS and mapping, and the use of available equipment and facilities is provided.

The second half of the induction is organised by the student's respective Colleges and includes induction and information concerning College facilities and arrangements, College computing and internet access, university affairs, and the like.

## **COURSE ASSESSMENT**

### **3.1 Overview**

The regulations for the examination are set out in the University "Grey Book" of examination regulations. The assessment will consist of:

1. a written examination of three three-hour papers based on core modules as described in the schedule (40% of total marks);
2. two assessed essays based on elective modules (20% of total marks);
3. a dissertation on a subject selected in consultation with the Academic Supervisor and/or Course Director and approved by the standing committee (40% of total marks).

### **3.2 Written Examination**

Core courses will be examined by means of three three-hour written examinations in the middle of Trinity term. These are designed to determine the student's critical understanding and knowledge of the range of issues covered, and is also an opportunity for students to display the results of their individual study, and use information gained from field courses and seminar series.

### **3.3 Elective Modules**

Students are also required to submit written essays (of no more than 4,000 words plus 150 word abstract) on two elected courses due on the first Monday of the following term after which the elective module was taken (i.e. a Michaelmas elective module requires submission on the first Monday of Hilary Term). Essays must be submitted to the Clerk of the Schools, Examinations Schools, High Street, Oxford OX1 4BG and marked for the attention of the Chair of the MSc. Examiners (Nature, Society and Environmental Policy).

The essay topic and scope will be decided in consultation with the elective module leader.

Unless otherwise agreed with the module leader, the format for the assessed essays is as follows:

<b>Copies:</b>	Two hard copies to exam school plus one electronic copy sent to MSc Course Coordinator
<b>Max Word count:</b>	4,000



<b>Type:</b>	12 point
<b>Font:</b>	Times New Roman or Arial
<b>Spacing:</b>	1.5 or double
<b>Front Page:</b>	A front page with the title of the essay, candidate/ student number and title of the elective module
<b>References:</b>	Unless you have been instructed otherwise use a references section rather than a bibliography
<b>Printing:</b>	Print on both sides of the paper

### 3.4 Dissertation

You must submit to the MSc Co-ordinator by the end of the first week in Trinity Term in the year in which you enter the examination, the title and details of your dissertation as laid out in the proposal template, together with the name of a person who has agreed to act as your supervisor during preparation of the dissertation. In addition you are required to complete and have approved a CUREC research ethics application and Fieldwork Risk Assessment at least two weeks before commencing your field work. If you intend to conduct research on topic that might involve ethical issues and/or in remote or unstable regions you should submit these forms 4-6 weeks in advance of field work. All completed CUREC and Risk Assessment forms are to be signed and handed into your MSc Course Coordinator.

Bound, typewritten or printed copies of the dissertation must be received, not later than 12 noon on the first weekday in September by Clerk of the Schools, Examinations Schools, High Street, Oxford OX1 4BG and marked for the attention of the M.Sc. Examiners (Nature, Society and Environmental Policy).

<b>Copies:</b>	Two hard copies to exam school plus one electronic copy sent to the MSc Course Coordinator.
<b>Max Word count:</b>	15,000 including references and footnotes and accompanied by an abstract not exceeding 150 words The maximum word count does not include appendices, references or the abstract. If more than six tables each table counts as 200 words.
<b>References:</b>	Unless you have been instructed otherwise, use a references section rather than a bibliography
<b>Type:</b>	12 point
<b>Font:</b>	Times New Roman or Arial
<b>Spacing:</b>	1.5 or double
<b>Front Page:</b>	Front page with the dissertation title and supervisor's name
<b>Plagiarism declaration:</b>	A completed form must be inserted into the dissertation

It is also permissible to write the dissertation in journal paper format for submission to a specified international journal. All paper format dissertations should contain two separate sections: a) an academic paper in the appropriate format for submission to an international journal, where students should follow the published "Instructions for Authors" for the journal in question and should prepare the paper according to the exact requirements of submission to



that journal; b) a 4,000–7,000 word literature review on the subject area addressed by the paper. The total text should not exceed 15,000 words.

The examiners may retain one copy of the dissertation of each candidate who passes the examination for deposit in an appropriate library. All copies must bear the candidate's examination number but not his/her name.

### 3.5 Arrangements for Re-assessment

A candidate who has failed to satisfy the examiners in the examination may enter again for the examination on one, but not more than one, subsequent occasion.

Arrangements for reassessment will be as follows:

- (i) Core courses. Candidates who fail any one of the three examinations may re-sit the examination in the Trinity Term of the following academic year.
- (ii) Dissertation. Candidates who fail the dissertation may resubmit the dissertation by the required date the following academic year.

### 3.6 Submission Deadlines

The deadlines for handing in assessed course work are as follows:

#### **Elective Module Essays:**

Michaelmas Term essay: 1st Monday of Hilary term by 12 noon (16-Jan-12)

Hilary Term essay: 1st Monday of Trinity term by 12 noon (23-Apr-12)

#### **Note: There are no elective modules in Trinity Term**

Research Dissertation: 1<sup>st</sup> weekday of September, namely 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2012

### 3.7 Penalties relating to late submissions

Penalties will apply to the grade awarded for any piece of late submitted work (without prior proctorial permission):

1. Up to 20% deducted from the work submitted between one hour and 7 days late;
2. Between 21–30% of the assessed grade for work submitted between 8 and 14 days late; and,
3. No marks (0%) if the work is submitted more than 14 days late.

### 3.8 Plagiarism

Oxford University imposes severe sanctions for cases of plagiarism. In the most extreme case, a student will be judged to have failed the course. These regulations are imposed by the University and if a student is suspected of plagiarism the matter is likely to pass to the Proctors who will rule on the matter independently of the OUCE. We expect students enrolled at Oxford to exhibit the highest standards of academic integrity and not knowingly submit any work or intellectual ideas that have been adapted from or copied from a third-party source without appropriate



recognition (see below). In addition, we expect all assessed work you submit to represent new and original writing conducted during your relevant terms in Oxford. It is not acceptable to re-package essays presented for degrees elsewhere (i.e. self-plagiarism). Students found suspected of plagiarism will be referred to the Proctors and if plagiarism is confirmed, the student may be failed.

During Michaelmas term we will discuss these rules and expectations regarding plagiarism. You will be required to complete the University's on-line course on the topic and sign a 'plagiarism declaration' form which accompanies each piece of submitted assessed work.

### 3.9 Role of External Examiners, Colleges and Proctors

There are several important actors within the examination process all of whom have distinct roles. Below is a brief guide to these roles:

**The Exam Board.** The University appoints an exam board comprising three or four members of faculty and an external examiner. The current chair of the NSEP exam board is Professor Sarah Whatmore. The exam board is responsible for ensuring the examinations are conducted fairly and according to University regulations. The board of examiners may be assisted in setting and marking assessed elements of the course by other internal staff members who are termed assessors.

The **External Examiner** is a senior academic from a reputable external academic institution whose role is to verify the quality of the examination materials, advise the MSc course team on course content, and sit on the final examination board. It is important to note that a key reason why marks from elective module essays or exams cannot be released during the year is that the external examiner has the right and the duty to modify marks if he or she sees fit. As such, releasing provisional results early may give a candidate a false guide to their final examination grade. Under the University Examination Regulations candidates are not permitted to communicate with examiners about any aspects of the assessment process after the examinations have begun. Any complaints about assessment procedures should be addressed to the Proctors via the candidate's college.

**Colleges** – if you need to ask for an extension on a piece of coursework or your research dissertation, are ill and cannot attend an examination, or have any other reason for not taking part in the examination process in a typical way you should liaise with the university authorities through your college, not through SoGE.

**Proctors** are responsible for the integrity, quality and effectiveness of the Oxford University examination system. Ultimately, they are responsible for making decisions on extensions, resubmission or any other aspect of examination protocol. Requests to proctors can only be made through your College.



**MSc MARKING GUIDELINES**

CLASS OR GRADE	MARK RANGE %	DESCRIPTIVE EQUIVALENT FOR EXAMS	DESCRIPTIVE EQUIVALENT FOR PROJECTS/ESSAY	DESCRIPTIVE EQUIVALENT FOR DISSERTATIONS
DISTINCTION	81+	A comprehensive and complete answer that clearly demonstrates a deep understanding of the subject, high intellectual quality and comprehensive knowledge of the facts. As good as could have been expected under examination conditions.	Worthy of retaining for future reference and application to teaching or research. Outstanding work based on a critical appraisal of a good volume of material that makes an original contribution to the subject.	Outstanding independent research of a standard equivalent to work published in leading academic journals in the field.
	80  70	Goes beyond simply answering the question. Perceptive focused use of a good depth of material. Original ideas or structure of argument and critical evaluation of the literature.	Wide breadth and intensity of accessed data or literature plus critical contribution or original finding relevant to the topic.	Identification with professional research approach. Full completion of task, achievement of stated objectives and good philosophical review of shortcomings. Clear critical appreciation of subject, study methods and findings.
MSc PASS	69  63	Perceptive analytical and critical understanding of the issues plus a coherent, well read and good presentation. MUST show evidence of wide background reading around the subject and a deep approach to study that goes beyond reproducing material given in lectures and seminars.	Thorough, clear treatment showing an understanding of arguments, contribution and context. Efficient use of literature. No serious flaws or misconceptions. Engages with the major issues and comes to sound and coherently argued conclusion.	Clear programme of study and worthwhile objectives. Well-conceived and executed. A highly satisfactory piece of work but with some unfulfilled potential.
MSc PASS	62  58  55  50	A "correct" answer based largely on lecture material. Little detail or originality but presented in an adequate framework. Lacks evidence of significant outside reading and, while sound, does not penetrate the subject sufficiently, nor display much critical evaluation.	Adequate treatment of literature or data but with little spark or critical insight. Efficiently reproduces material covered in lectures/seminars but adds only a little that comes from the student's own course of personal research and investigation.	Good effort and sound outcome but pedestrian or lacking in imagination and critical insight. Failure to achieve objectives fully. Programme of work not particularly ambitious or innovative. Satisfactory, but not stylish or perceptive.



AIL	49	Engages with question but is a poorly structured answer based entirely on lecture material and containing several important errors of concept and/or fact. Overall, concepts are disordered or flawed, factual material is poorly presented and there is only shallow consideration of issues.	Basic approach to a narrow or misguided selection of material. Lacking in background or flawed in arguments. Lines of thought are not sustained and conclusions are not supported by the text/project analysis.	Deficient in effort or arguments/discussions poorly resourced. Uncritical use of literature. Little sign of analytical techniques or depth. No clear programme of work and insufficiently clear objectives.
	45			
	40			
FAIL	39	Attempts to engage with the question but with significant errors of content and scope, or poor in knowledge, structure and expression. No evidence of relevant outside reading.	Work is shallow and poorly presented. Lacking in sustained lines of thought or reasoning. No conclusions or conclusions incorrect. No evidence or relevant outside reading.	Low input of effort and superficial write-up conveying little of the context or value of the research. Barely adequate effort given the dissertation's importance.
	30			
FAIL	29-	Significant inability to engage with the question. Either, an answer to an imaginary question, or mostly irrelevant material to the question posed.	Inadequate and without any serious scholarly content.	Insufficient effort to complete a reasonable piece of work. An inadequate thesis.
	0	Copied or plagiarised answer with no intellectual input from the student resulting in immediate academic failure from the module, OR work penalised for late submission submitted without the granting of a specific dated extension by the lecturer of the appropriate module.		

### Links to Key Documents and Resources

The following are some useful links

**Department Intranet.** The department's intranet pages contain much information on members of staff, Health & Safety, House Rules and so on. To view this information, follow the link via the SoGE homepage.

**Weblearn.** This is our virtual learning environment and a key learning resources, Follow the link via the NSEP home page <http://www.geog.ox.ac.uk/graduate/msc-nsep/>

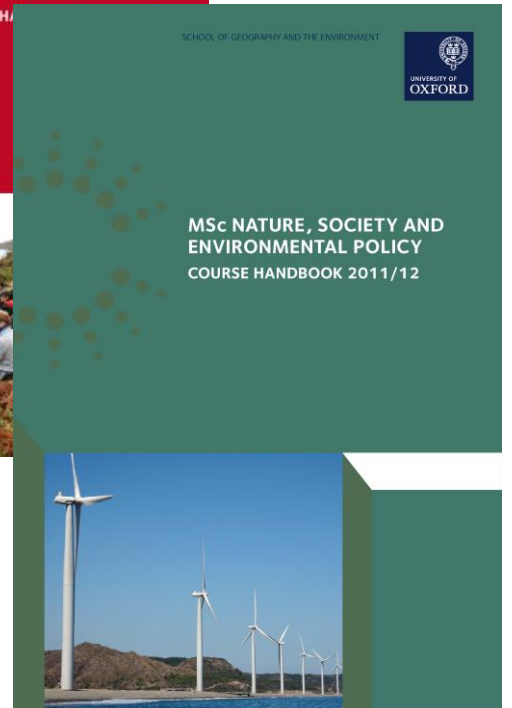
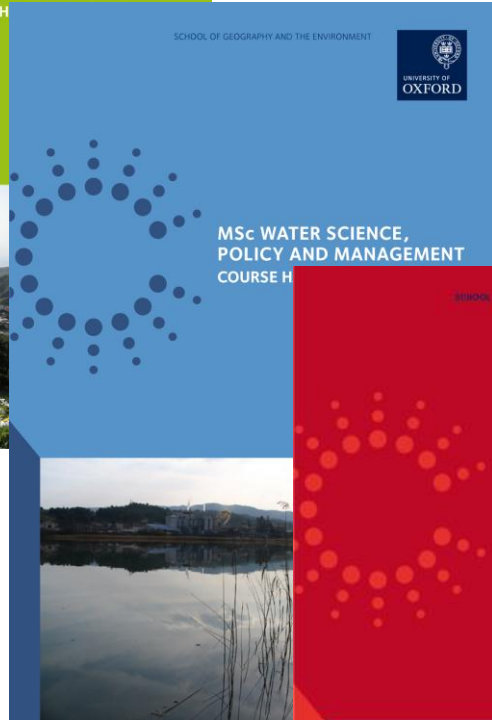
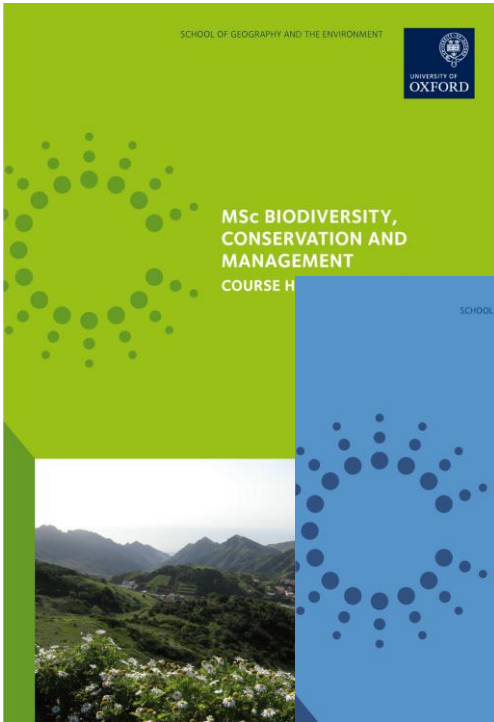
**Past Exam Papers** are available from OXAM <http://missun29.offices.ox.ac.uk/pls/oxam/main>  
The NSEP papers are JNSE 5D61 Research Skills; JNSE 5D65 Theory and Analysis; JNSE 5D66 Policy and Governance.

**The Central University Research Ethics Committee** web site <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/curec/> provides essential information on the University's policy concerning the ethical review of research projects involving human participants or personal data, undertaken by staff and students, or on University premises. The form you must complete and have approved before conducting such research is available at <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/curec/oxonly/checklistsandapplicationform/>

**Field Work Behaviour and Safety.** The forms you must complete before leaving for field work are available on the School's intranet at <https://intranet.ouce.ox.ac.uk/safety/fieldwork.html>



MSc NATURE, SOCIETY AND ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY





## MSc NATURE, SOCIETY AND ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

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