

**Staffordshire University
Faculty of Sciences
Applied Sciences
Postgraduate Distance Learning**

**MSc Sustainability and Environmental
Management
(distance learning)**

**STUDENT HANDBOOK
2011-2012**

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The content of this handbook is accurate as at 2-Aug-11. Any changes/updates to this document will be notified during the delivery of the award(s).

Masters (MSc), Postgraduate Diploma (PgD) and Postgraduate Certificate (PgC) in Sustainability and Environmental Management

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Welcome

The following sections within this document are written to provide you with the background information that you will need to help you to decide if you wish to enrol upon one of these study programmes. The five taught modules and the dissertation module that make up the MSc are all delivered by distributed learning over the Internet. This means that you will need to be computer-literate, and be comfortable using 'standard' software on a computer (at home/work or here at the University) in order to be able to successfully complete it. If you have not had any prior experience of distance learning, you will need to think carefully about how you might feel about this style of delivery. Distance learning is especially appropriate if you are self-motivated, goal-oriented and work well independently. If you learn best through reading, and communicate best through writing, then, again, you will find this learning environment especially to your liking.

Information is provided about:

- what prior knowledge you need to have to give you confidence on embarking upon the study programme
- what you will expect to know and understand when you have finished the course
- the activities that you can expect to be doing during the course and how long these should take
- the way in which you will be able to assess your own progress over time, and the way in which you will be assessed during the course of the study programme
- what support you can expect from the team at Staffordshire University
- the entrance requirements for the course and the costs

Your Award Manager is :

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MSc Environment and Sustainability Programme,
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Tel: +44 (0)1782 294776

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2 WHAT ARE THE AWARDS ABOUT?

2.1 What are the aims of the MSc/PgD/PgC Sustainability and Environmental Management.

This Masters programme consists of 6 interrelated postgraduate level modules (4 x 30 CATS credit taught modules, a 1 x 15 CATS credit taught module and a 1 x 45 CATS credit dissertation module). Sustaining the environment has become a key goal and principle for policy action at global and local levels. From the United Nations, through to national and local government, NGOs and the business sector, it is now widely recognised that understanding sustainability and integrating its principles and methods into everyday practice is vital for the environmental, economic and social welfare of society. This assertion of the importance of sustainable development was renewed at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002.

Through studying this award you will acquire the advanced knowledge, understanding and skills needed for progressing the environmental sustainability agenda in both a community and a business context. Through studying both the broader framework of ideas, principles and policies within which sustainable development and environmental management are being pursued, and the practical techniques which can be deployed within communities and organisations to identify, evaluate, manage and reduce their impacts on the environment and society, this award will provide you with a rounded and multi-faceted view of the current sustainability agenda.

The award will challenge you to think deeply about and critically analyse the whole notion of sustainability. It *is* a contested concept that has been influenced by diverse intellectual histories, disciplinary concerns, commercial considerations and national and local cultural assumptions. There are, for example, serious tensions between ecocentric and technocratic perspectives or between 'strong' and 'weak' versions of sustainability. It will also challenge you in respect of the transfer of broad ideas and principles to implementation at a local

level and through the day-to-day management and functioning of organisations and businesses and the evaluation and monitoring of their ongoing performance. You will learn about a range of evaluation and monitoring techniques (such as environmental management systems, sustainability indicators and corporate environmental and sustainability reporting) and about the regulatory and legislative context within which business organisations have to operate. In parallel a strand, you will examine sustainability initiatives within communities to see how they can become transformed via these types of activities.

The award will provide you with a clear understanding of sustainability and environmental management within the organisational context – where ‘organisation’ can range from the neighbourhood up to the corporate environment. It will offer you an insight into how the combination of economic, environmental and ethical/societal factors are increasingly influencing both local community and national and international business activities, and how important this combination of factors will be in making an organisation successful during the 21st century. You will explore the question of whether ‘businesses’ can ever be sustainable in their current guise, and whether organisations will need to fundamentally re-evaluate their philosophy and policies if they (and we) are to have any kind of sustainable future.

A specific subset of this Masters programme (*The Postgraduate Certificate in Sustainability and Environmental Management*) is accredited with the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA), so that if you pass both of the accredited modules (“*Understanding Sustainability*”, and “*Environmental Risk Assessment, Regulation and Management Systems*”) then you will be automatically eligible to apply for Associate Grade status with this Institution (AIEMA).

Success in the 4 x 30 CATS taught modules associated with this award will be sufficient to obtain a *PgD in Sustainability and Environmental Management*.

2.2 What are the aims of the award?

The aims of the MSc in Sustainability and Environmental Management are:

- To provide an advanced course of study of the theory and practice of sustainability and environmental management; emphasis is given to the application of strategies, tools and techniques to real world problems facing institutions, business organisations and communities;
- To provide students with a critical appreciation of sustainability and environmental issues, together with an understanding of the key principles, laws, theories and models of environmental management;
- To provide students with a critical appreciation of the wide range of tools, techniques and strategies that can be used to address sustainability and environmental issues (from environmental impact assessment to community profiling);
- To develop students' capacity for independent, creative thought, and developing critical skills to assess and evaluate academic literature and other forms of research output which address the issues and challenges associated with the sustainability and environmental management;
- To enable an appreciation of the contested nature of the theory and practice of sustainability and environmental management, and so to develop conceptual skills in understanding and evaluating appropriate research methodologies and strategies as a basis for research into sustainability issues associated with institutions, business organisations and communities;
- To develop a critical understanding of the techniques and methods deployed in assessing sustainability and environmental management, competence in collecting, processing and presenting information and data, thus enabling students to undertake their own research;
- To develop and advance students' skills in communicating effectively their understanding and analysis of research on a topic related to the sustainability and environmental management to academic and lay audiences;
- To provide students with the opportunity to develop a range of key academic and life-long skills supporting their management of continuous career, professional development or further post-graduate study;

What is distinctive about this programme?

- A thought-provoking and stimulating insight into the challenges of sustainability and environmental management with particular reference to institutions, business organisations and communities;
- Careful mapping of the curriculum to gain accreditation by IEMA (Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment) – become an associate member of IEMA (AIEMA) when you complete your course;
- An innovative and well-established (running since 1999) part-time award which allows you to balance Masters level study with the demands of your workplace and family;
- An Internet-based delivery using a virtual learning environment which allows interaction with tutors and fellow students drawn from right across the world;
- An extensive electronic library of on-line journals, e-books and study skills based resources for you to access 24/7.

More detailed learning outcomes for the Certificate, Diploma and Masters stages of the award can be found in section 4.

2.3 Entrance Requirements

What are the admissions requirements?

PgC Sustainability and Environmental Management

Normally, an honours degree in a related subject such as environmental studies/ science, environmental management, one of the natural sciences, social sciences, business studies, geography, or law. Candidates with appropriate degrees (or equivalent) in other subjects will also be considered if they have related employment experience or a demonstrable interest in (or a commitment to) sustainable development, local community sustainability initiatives, and/or environmental management issues.

PgD Sustainability and Environmental Management

An honours degree (normally 2:2 or better) in a relevant subject or an honours degree in any subject with relevant postgraduate experience or successful completion of the PgC in Sustainability and Environmental Management.

MSc Sustainability and Environmental Management

An honours degree (normally 2:2 or better) in a relevant subject or an honours degree in any subject with relevant postgraduate experience or successful completion of the PgD in Sustainability and Environmental Management.

It is possible that applicants may be asked to attend an interview at the University in order to establish/confirm their eligibility.

As English is used throughout the distance learning programme for learning, teaching and assessment, you will not gain the full benefit from any of these awards unless you have the appropriate standard of English. For this reason, in our entry criteria for international students we normally require an English language qualification, e.g. GCSE/O level grade C or above, IELTS average of 6.0 or a TOEFL score of 550 (213 computer-based.) TOEFL results must include a minimum score of 4.5 for the TWE (Test of Written English). If you do not have an appropriate English qualification, you can find more information about the range of courses that Staffordshire University can offer to help you reach the required level here: http://www.staffs.ac.uk/international/support/english_courses/

2.4 Accreditation of Prior Learning

The University has a mechanism whereby it is possible to give credit (in the form of Credits under CATS and exemption from 1 or more modules) on the basis of an individual's prior learning record. This may either be in the form of prior *formal* learning or prior *experiential* learning. If you feel that either of these criteria may apply to you in respect of one or more

of the modules within this course, then please go and look here:

http://www.staffs.ac.uk/assets/apel_pol_student_hbook_tcm44-26830.pdf

Once you have read this information, and if you still take the view that it may apply in your own case, then please feel free to contact us to discuss it further.

2.5 Costs

The current fees for all our courses can be found at :

http://www.staffs.ac.uk/courses_and_study/postgraduate_courses/course_fees/sciences.i

[sp](#)

In **ALL** cases, the fees currently include the cost of any learning support material.

Please note that the quoted costs do **NOT** cover the cost of any overnight accommodation, travel or food if you decide to attend any meeting, workshop or interview, if offered, – There is no UK VAT to pay, but you must also budget for the cost of purchasing (or accessing) a computer and any associated telephone charges (and possibly ISP charges) whilst you are on line. You should expect to spend around 15-18 hours a week involving yourself in your course - this can help to give you an indication of the likely connection costs.

Please note that there is NO compulsory physical attendance at Staffordshire University for any of the courses described in this handbook, although you **may** be offered the opportunity to attend one or more of the following :

- An initial induction meeting on a 1-1 basis, or (subject to demand and recruitment),
- A 1-2 day induction workshop

- A 1 day pre-dissertation workshop or meeting
- A face-to-face viva voce examination to defend your final dissertation.*

***Please note that a viva - voce examination is a compulsory part of the final dissertation, although this may be conducted via video conferencing if so desired.**

If you do travel to any event from outside the UK, then we can help with **advice** on transport arrangements from your point of entry into the UK and any work permit or visa requirements that you may have. If this is the case then please contact us well in advance (please refer to the appropriate section of this document). We can then provide you with a 24-hour contact number to alert us should there be any last minute changes that affect our plans.

2.6 Data Protection

Throughout your time at the University, we will gather data about you, from your initial application to us, through to your graduation and beyond. When you enrol, you will be asked to sign a consent form for the release of data under the Data Protection Act 1998. This is to allow us to disclose information to prospective employers or other universities. This consent will remain in perpetuity unless, at any time, you tell us that you wish to withdraw your permission.

We have a responsibility under the Act to ensure that your data is kept safe and secure and is as up-to-date as possible. We will rely on you to tell us when certain data changes, e.g. home address, name etc.

The data we gather will be used in accordance with our registration under the Data Protection Act 1998. We have a statutory and legal requirement to supply some of the data to third parties, such as the Higher Education Funding Council for England, the Higher Education Statistics Agency, Social Security, your Local Education Authority, the Student Loans Company, and the Police (in connection with potential criminal offences). Under our registration we are able also to pass your data to other named categories of third parties

such as the Students' Union (to enable you to have membership), our Alumni Office, and Professional Bodies. This list is not exhaustive.

Sometimes, particularly as you get to the end of your course, prospective employers or other universities could contact us to verify details about you, such as your assessment results and degree classification or to ask for a reference. We will only provide this information if you have explicitly agreed for us to do so (see paragraph 1 above). If you have not given your consent to disclosure, we will require you to contact us directly to give permission to release the information, or require that the third party sends us a statement from you agreeing to the disclosure. Obviously, this can be very time-consuming – and it could jeopardise your chances of a job.

If, at any time, you wish to object to the accessing, processing or disclosure of your personal data, you can do so in writing to:

Sue Howlett
Information Protection & Security Manager
Staffordshire University
College Road
Stoke-on-Trent
Staffordshire ST4 2DE

Telephone : 01782 294365
Email : s.l.howlett@staffs.ac.uk

More information is available at :

<http://www.staffs.ac.uk/legal/privacy/index.jsp>

2.7 Amendments to Personal Details

It is **vitaly important** that you notify the Faculty Office of any changes to your personal details such as your home address, your name, or your landline or mobile telephone number. Notification of your results, or of any referral requirements, will be sent to the home address that we have on file or your university email account. Please tell the office if

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want your results sending elsewhere. Your certificate will bear your name as it appears on your student record.

The Faculty Office contact details are as follows :

Amanda Dinnivan,

Award Administrator,

S029 Mellor,

Staffordshire University,

Faculty of Sciences,

College Road,

Stoke-on-Trent ST4 2DE

Telephone : 01782 294857

Email : a.m.dinnivan@staffs.ac.uk

It is vitaly important that you check your university email inbox regularly – this is the address that will be used to send you information about your award including feedback relating to your formative and summative assessments and for general communications from tutors, administrative staff, finance etc. You can access your account (once you are enrolled) via the MyPortal system at :

<http://myportal.staffs.ac.uk>

3 WHAT IS THE STRUCTURE OF THE AWARD?

3.1 The routes and awards available

The award has been constructed so as to provide an academically coherent and educationally sound course of study. The named award in Sustainability and Environmental Management operates within the general framework for the University Modular Masters programme (for further details see Appendix A).

Modules are normally taken sequentially (i.e. one at a time) allowing in depth study and a focus on specific material in the limited study time available in a part-time mode. The modules are taken in a different order if students start in February/ March rather than in September.

All of the modules on the award are validated at Masters level. However after certain numbers of modules are completed (and therefore credit points accumulated) you are eligible for the granting of a Postgraduate Certificate (PgC) or Postgraduate Diploma (PgD) award.

The credit equivalent of each stage of the award is as follows:

PgC Sustainability and Environmental Management	60 credits
PgD Sustainability and Environmental Management	120 credits
MSc Sustainability and Environmental Management	180 credits

3.2 The modules you will take

The modules on the programme are first described and then listed in accordance with the Certificate, Diploma and Masters levels of the award.

The module '***Understanding Sustainability (IEMA accredited)***' provides an introduction to the concepts underpinning sustainability, and the challenges of understanding the importance of the inter-relationships between the different dimensions of sustainability – the environmental, the economic, the political, the social and the ethical amongst others – and how they may contribute to effective environmental management. Particular emphasis is given to the consideration of how visions of sustainable progress may be embedded in enterprises, organisations and communities in support of environmental management. The recognition of the contested nature of the sustainability agenda introduces the critical analysis of understanding sustainability, and is the introduction to the module. The debates over 'weak versus. strong' ecological modernisation provide one way of articulating the diverse roles that new technologies, enterprises, governments and civil society may play in delivering a vision of sustainable progress.

The second block of the module deals with environmental sustainability. A key foundation of sustainability is to understand the function of 'critical natural capital' and the role of the earth's natural systems both as sources for resources and sinks for pollution. A review is undertaken of the impacts of pollution and resource development on environmental ecosystems and human habitats resulting from the production, distribution, consumption and disposal of materials and products. These processes form the basis of the key sustainability challenges facing contemporary society.

Developing the responses – the third block - requires a recognition of the multi-scale nature of these challenges. Governance for sustainability introduces the 'global to local' perspective needed to develop new ways in which markets and enterprises need to be re-shaped to embrace sustainability. Central to sustainable development is the development of new strategies and tools for environmental management so that it embraces the notion of a sustainable economy. Parallel to this is a new vision and expectation of what constitute sustainable lifestyles and communities.

The module concludes with a block on communication and learning for sustainability. Changing mindsets is a critical lynchpin: hence communication and lifelong learning are key elements that need embedding in the sustainable society. The need for leadership in organisations is analysed. As an example of the importance of communication, the role of environmental and sustainable reporting is critically reviewed. However the transformative change that progress to a sustainable society requires necessitates complementary 'bottom-up' approaches: the module concludes with a critical analysis of the prospects of education for sustainable lifestyles. This first module also develops key learning skills such as assessing and utilizing web-based learning resources and methods of electronic interaction.

The module ***'Environmental Risk Assessment, Regulation and Management Systems' (IEMA accredited)*** provides an overview of environmental pollution, its characteristics and impacts; the legislative and regulatory framework which frames the responses of organisations as they seek to manage the associated hazards and risks. It places the understanding of these regulatory processes within a broader environment that seeks to engender sustainable business practice through the development of environmental policies and environmental management systems (including ISO14001, EMAS). Attention is also paid to the contribution made by ecological and carbon foot-printing, life cycle analysis, impact and sustainability assessment as techniques enhancing the environmental management and environmental sustainability of operations. The context is primarily that provided by the EU and UK legislative and regulatory framework (directives / laws/ regulations), although students will be able to analyse and critically review different frameworks. The module will provide an understanding of the role of the typical regulatory processes (e.g. environmental permitting), with its compliance and consequences/penalties for failure, and how this may shape the formulation of the organisation's wider environmental management and sustainability policies as part of corporate planning. Hence both the role of integrated approaches to pollution control and prevention, and the contribution of a wider environmental management regime in creating a continual

improvement process are examined. Finally the contribution of auditing and reporting of environmental management systems are given due consideration.

The third module ***'Cities, Governance and Sustainability'*** explores issues surrounding sustainable development in the cities of both developed and less-developed countries, and identifies the bases for effective urban governance. The module begins by considering the key characteristics of contemporary urbanisation and the issues and challenges that these present for sustainability and urban environmental management. Changing attitudes to urban growth and management are then identified and explained. This is followed by a comparison of informal and formal approaches to urban management and an evaluation of participatory means of management of urban environmental infrastructure. Throughout the module attempts to engage with the sustainable development agenda within the cities context are examined using examples drawn from: urban lifestyles, health, water and sanitation and climate change. In particular the module places emphasis on the relationship between urbanisation and climate change, explores the need for cities to place strategies for climate change adaptation and mitigation at the heart of their sustainability agendas and critically examines the role of effective urban governance structures in progressing urban sustainability agendas.

In the final 30 credit module ***'Climate Change and Sustainable Communities'*** we seek to examine the role of communities and grassroots initiatives as part of the sustainable development agenda. Academic, political and practitioner circles envisage community-based action playing a critical role in the progress towards a sustainable low carbon future, in the face of the potential impacts of climate change and peak oil. There are also important theoretical considerations in analysing initiatives in building low-carbon sustainable communities (e.g. debates on community capacity for adaptive social learning and action; ecological citizenship, localisation, new social movements, social capital and public participation, socio-technical transition theories). The module provides a background introduction to the causes and impacts of climate change. It analyses the opportunities and barriers to community-based actions and reviews the potential for

uptake of low carbon-technologies, and the processes of environmental auditing and carbon/ecological foot-printing which offer a starting point for change. However it also provides a critical awareness of the need to move beyond the assessment of the technologies and socio-technical systems of provision to consider the pivotal role of communication, public engagement /participation, social learning and partnerships as mobilising agents in developing and managing low carbon and sustainability initiatives.

The 15 credit ***'Understanding Sustainability Research'*** module aims to develop an understanding of the broad methodological issues in researching sustainability and an ability to select, use and evaluate appropriate research methods. This latter module in particular prepares you for undertaking the major 12,000 word 'Research Project Dissertation' which completes the MSc programme (see section 9 for more details on the dissertation).

Normally, the *Understanding Sustainability Research* module can only be taken after the other four taught modules have been successfully completed, and enrolment on the *Masters Project/Dissertation* module can only happen once *Understanding Sustainability Research* has been successfully completed.

Further details of all the modules may be found in the module descriptors in Appendix C.

The formal module requirements of the Certificate, Diploma and Masters awards are as follows:

Postgraduate Certificate in Sustainability and Environmental Management

All students take **two** modules:

- Understanding Sustainability 30 credits
- Environmental Risk Assessment, Regulation and Management Systems 30 credits

Postgraduate Diploma in Sustainability and Environmental Management

Modules taken at Certificate level, plus a further **two** modules:

- | | |
|--|------------|
| • Cities, Governance and Sustainability | 30 credits |
| • Climate Change and Sustainable Communities | 30 credits |

MSc Sustainability and Environmental Management

All students must complete the course for the Postgraduate Diploma as outlined above and, in addition, must take:

- | | |
|---|------------|
| • Understanding Sustainability Research | 15 credits |
|---|------------|

and then submit:

- | | |
|---|------------|
| • A 12,000 word research project dissertation | 45 credits |
|---|------------|

3.3 Designated Routes Through the Award

Each module runs over a 16-week period. There are 12-14 weeks of directed learning activities, followed by 2-4 weeks that will be used to give you time to complete the outstanding work in the module. This might involve finishing off any assignments that might be outstanding for the module and/or completing any supplementary reading. You should expect to spend a total of about 15-18 hours per week studying. All of the taught modules (except *Understanding Sustainability Research*) are independent and freestanding. Other than *Understanding Sustainability Research* and the *Masters Project/Dissertation* modules, modules can be taken in any sequence (subject to the prevailing delivery criteria) and a learner's enrolment on any one module is not predicated upon participation or completion of any other [within the current Postgraduate Regulations].

As explained earlier, normally the *Understanding Sustainability Research* module can only be taken after the other four taught modules have been successfully completed, and enrolment on the *Masters Project/Dissertation* module can only happen once *Understanding Sustainability Research* has been successfully completed.

Distance Learning Calendar 2011/2012

Each 30 credit taught module runs for **16 weeks** (12-14 weeks tuition, with 2-4 weeks of completion time) . The USR module runs for **8 weeks**.

Date (Week Commencing)	Activity	Note
12/09/11	Induction Activities	INDUCTION
19/09/11	Week 1 – Module 1, 3 or USR/Dissertation	TEACHING BLOCK 1 MODULE 1,3 or USR/DISSERTATION
26/09/11	Week 2	
03/10/11	Week 3	
10/10/11	Week 4	
17/10/11	Week 5	
24/10/11	Week 6	
31/10/11	Week 7	
07/11/11	Week 8	
14/11/11	Week 9	
21/11/11	Week 10	
28/11/11	Week 11	
05/12/11	Week 12	
12/12/11	Week 13	
19/12/11	Christmas Break	
26/12/11	Christmas Break	
02/01/12	Christmas Break	
09/01/12	Week 14	
16/01/12	Week 15	
23/01/12	Week 16	
30/01/12	Intermodule Break Week	INTERMODULE BREAK
06/02/12	Week 1 – Module 2, 4 or USR/Dissertation	TEACHING BLOCK 2 MODULE 2,4 or USR/DISSERTATION
13/02/12	Week 2	
20/02/12	Week 3	
27/02/12	Week 4	
05/03/12	Week 5	
12/03/12	Week 6	
19/03/12	Week 7	
26/03/12	Week 8	
02/04/12	Easter Break	
09/04/12	Easter Break	
16/04/12	Week 9	
23/04/12	Week 10	
30/04/12	Week 11	
07/05/12	Week 12	
14/05/12	Week 13	
21/05/12	Week 14	
28/05/12	Week 15	
04/06/12	Week 16	

The constraints on patterns of study are as follows:

- modules are only available for study in the period designated by the annual timetable
- ‘Understanding Sustainability Research’ must be taken before the dissertation module.

The ‘distance learning’ environment that we have used for these modules is one that has been developed at Staffordshire University. It is called Blackboard and it features as one aspect of Staffordshire University’s drive to promote a learning community. In order to set Blackboard-based distributed learning in this context, we would strongly recommend that you look at the background information here:

http://www.staffs.ac.uk/images/blackboard_tcm68-27850.pdf

In order to access Blackboard you will need a username and password. **This will be given to you when you enrol on the course**, and you will then be able to log on and see how it works.

As always, we expect that there will be occasions (hopefully very infrequently) when our Blackboard server is unavailable. In such cases, if necessary, we will arrange for you to submit assignments as attachments to a conventional email message.

This document is written in Word 2007, and as you will see (if you are using WORD 97 or higher) that you can click on the hyperlinks contained within the text and go straight to the appropriate web address.

It is also important that you install and run one of the many anti-virus programmes that are available to protect your machine (and ours) The University currently offers Kaspersky Antivirus for free to enrolled students : <https://www.staffs.ac.uk/kaspersky/>

4 WHAT ARE THE LEARNING OUTCOMES?

4.1 Award Outcomes

Learning outcomes specify what you should be able to *do* when you have successfully completed a specified amount of studying. They therefore provide a way for you to keep track of what you should be achieving and the key skills and abilities that you are going to be assessed on. Learning outcomes are specified below for the Certificate, Diploma and Masters level of the award. The University has identified eight generic postgraduate learning outcomes that should apply to all postgraduate awards. These are:

- Knowledge and Understanding
- Learning
- Enquiry
- Analysis
- Problem Solving
- Communication
- Application
- Reflection

The specific award outcomes have been mapped to these generic postgraduate outcomes, and they are cross referenced in brackets at the end of each of the following sections. The overall challenge involved in taking any Masters degree is to achieve an advanced level of analysis of the concepts and problems in the chosen area of study and to be able to critically assess the achievements and limitations of practice and to explain differences between theory, policy and practical implementation. Masters students should be actively challenging orthodoxies, displaying creativity and innovation and ultimately producing material of a near-publishable standard.

Learning outcomes are also specified for each module (see module descriptors at the end of this document) and mapping matrices (correlating module learning outcomes to award outcomes) are included – one following each group of awards in this section. Each learning Activity that you undertake also contains information about the specific learning outcomes that are being addressed within it.

4.2 Postgraduate Certificate

At this stage students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate advanced knowledge and understanding of the concepts of sustainability and environmental management and apply this knowledge and skills to make a case for and develop an organisation's sustainability agenda. *[SU: Knowledge & Understanding, Enquiry, Analysis, Application, Learning]*
2. Review the diverse nature of pollutants and waste within a life cycle context and critically appraise the relevant legislative and regulatory frameworks *[SU: Knowledge & Understanding, Enquiry, Analysis, Application]*
3. Critically review and discuss the purpose and mechanism for formulating and implementing an environmental management system (EMS) within an organization; apply this specialist knowledge and skills to the implementation of an EMS within a small/medium sized enterprise (SME) environment *[SU: Problem Solving, Application, Analysis, Reflection, Communication]*

4.3 Postgraduate Diploma

At this stage in addition those outcomes listed above students will be able to:

4. Engage in critical analysis and reflection of the inter-relationship between urbanisation, climate change and urban sustainability *[SU: Knowledge & Understanding, Reflection, Analysis]*
5. Evaluate and communicate the potential for urban governance to contribute to the sustainable development of urban areas *[SU: Analysis, Communication, Enquiry]*

6. Demonstrate advanced knowledge and critical perspective of the approaches by which sustainability and low carbon agendas are put into practice by local initiatives [*SU: Knowledge & Understanding, Analysis, Reflection, Application*]
7. Critically appraise the different tools and demonstrate the ability to select and communicate to a wider public the appropriate strategies at the community level to implement sustainability and low carbon agendas [*SU: Analysis, Enquiry, Reflection, Application, Communication*]

4.4 Masters [Sustainability and Environmental Management] level:

At this stage in addition to those outcomes listed above students will be able to:

8. Demonstrate critical understanding of the methodological issues in researching sustainability and environmental management and critical ability to evaluate and reflect upon different research methods and techniques [*SU: Knowledge & Understanding, Learning, Enquiry, Problem Solving, Analysis, Application*]
9. Independently design and execute a research project in sustainability and environmental management selecting appropriate research methodologies, critically evaluate and interpret the results in the context of the appropriate wider literature and communicate these results for the wider professional and public understanding of sustainability and environmental management [*SU: Enquiry, Analysis, Problem Solving, Communication, Reflection*]

If you look at the criterion referencing table in Sect. 7.11 and read the benchmark criteria associated with the 'pass', 'merit' and 'distinction' categories, you should also be able to relate these generic statements of competence to the content of each of the modules and the particular specific assessment elements.

5 HOW WILL I STUDY AND WITH WHAT RESOURCES?

Unless you have undertaken a distance learning course before, the experience of studying in this way will present you with significant challenges. It is likely to take you a while to ‘find your feet’. Even those of you who are used to distance learning may find the use of a web-based learning environment and the extensive use of web-based learning resources rather daunting. Therefore, it is important that you read this part of the handbook carefully and fully appreciate how your studying is to be directed and supported and how you are going to access the resources that you need.

5.1 The challenges of postgraduate study and distance learning

The most obvious difference between undergraduate and postgraduate study is the greater degree of independent learning that is involved. This is particularly the case with a distance-learning course. In a conventional programme you have lectures and seminars to attend which provide a structure and discipline to your learning. With distance learning you still have a structure to guide your studying (indeed this is often more explicit than in conventional face-to-face teaching), but the discipline of getting down to work on a regular basis has to be more self-generated. In a conventional mode of course delivery you also have regular direct contact with other students (and hopefully tutors!) where you can check your progress, ask questions, share experiences etc. In distance learning these features of studying are less readily available and as a result it is possible to feel isolated and cut off from both those providing expertise and your peer group of fellow learners.

You will see from the discussion over the rest of this section (and the next section on support) that we have included various features that should reduce the isolation you feel and which provides for a degree of interaction and mutual support. We cannot pretend however that workshops, electronic discussions or phone calls can entirely reproduce the benefits of regular face-to-face interaction - but this is to an extent a feature of the flexibility and convenience of distance learning. We will provide guidance on ‘how to be a

successful distance learner’ in the introductory workshop and there are various books and on-line resources which provide useful advice and tips that we can point you towards.

5.2 Our approach to distance learning

Distance learning is a generic term covering a range of different approaches to studying away from an institution. We have adopted an approach with the following characteristics:

KEY FEATURES OF DISTANCE LEARNING ON THIS AWARD

- ❑ We have combined a structured programme of independent study which you undertake in your home (or work) environment with face-to-face workshops. The role of the workshops is explained further below
- ❑ We have chosen a ‘wrap-around’ method for designing the study guide that you work through for each module. This means that we utilise texts, papers, reports and internet resources to provide much of the core content and then ‘wrap around’ a structured programme of directed reading, tasks and activities and assessment.
- ❑ We are utilising a web-based study environment called Blackboard (see more details below) to contain the Module Handbooks and provide a base from which to access web-based learning resources. Blackboard also provides a facilities for submitting work on-line (either via the Turnitin system or the Digital Drop-box facility) and for interacting with other students in learner groups. However as we recognise that all computer-based systems are fallible we have taken care to have back-up systems in place if for any reason you are unable to use on-line methods
- ❑ Rather than expect you to find copies of key readings we will provide you with a learning pack for each module as part of your course fee. This will include (often online) copies of core texts and packs of key papers and chapters (where appropriate). You will also be directed to access resources on-line such as institutional web pages, on-line reports, databases and electronic journals

5.3 Induction and Enrolment onto the Course

We carry out online induction activities at the beginning of the course to enable you to meet fellow learners and your tutors, and to provide you with an introduction to the university and to the award. We also offer every student the opportunity to meet staff members at the beginning of their course – this is often on a 1-1 basis, although if demand

warrants it, we may run a 1-2 day structured induction event for those students who wish to attend the University at the beginning of their course.

Please note that there is NO compulsory physical attendance at Staffordshire University for any of the courses described in this handbook, although you may be offered the opportunity to attend one or more of the following:

- An initial induction meeting on a 1-1 basis, or (subject to demand and recruitment),
- A 1-2 day induction workshop
- A 1 day pre-dissertation workshop or meeting
- A face-to-face viva voce examination to defend your final dissertation.*

***Please note that a viva - voce examination is a compulsory part of the final dissertation, although this may be conducted via video conferencing if so desired.**

Once you have been accepted onto the course, and have confirmed that you will take up the offer of a place, you will be allocated an account within our virtual learning environment (Blackboard). At this point you will also enrol via our online system– this is when you formally sign up for the course and become a ‘student’ at the University.

If you do travel to the University at any point, full travel guidance can be found on our website at http://www.staffs.ac.uk/about_us/campuses_and_maps/

5.4 Module Texts and other Directed/Suggested Reading

We have chosen the references and books listed below as suitable supporting texts for the modules in this study programme. **We do not provide these texts as part of the course fee**, although you may find that some of them are provided free of charge via the University e-book system, or are available online. Access to the *Pollution Control Online* database will be provided as part of the course fee.

You will be asked to read deeply in your course and you may then be asked to enter into some web-based group discussion about the content or provide a report or synopsis for example. You will need to study the reading material in detail rather than taking a superficial impression of the content. **Push yourself to think deeply about the significance of what is written about and your reaction to it.**

Kane, G (2011) *The Green Executive - Corporate Leadership in a Low Carbon Economy*.
Earthscan : London

World Business Council for Sustainable Development (2010) *Vision 2050. The New Agenda for Business* : <http://www.wbcsd.org/web/vision2050.htm>

Brady, J., Ebbage A., and Lunn, R. (2011) *Environmental Management in Organizations The IEMA Handbook Second Edition* London: Earthscan

Environmental Protection UK (2011) *The Essential Guide to UK & European Pollution Control Legislation* <http://www.pollutioncontrolonline.org.uk/>

Epstein, Marc J. (2008) *Making Sustainability Work: Best Practices in Managing and Measuring Corporate Social, Environmental and Economic Impacts*. Greenleaf Publishing:
Sheffield

Hill, M. K. (2010) *Understanding Environmental Pollution* Cambridge : CUP

Bulkeley, H. & Betsill, M. (2005) *Cities and Climate Change: Urban Sustainability and Global Environmental Governance*. Routledge, London.

Devas, N. (2004) *Urban Governance, Voice and Poverty in the Developing World*.
Earthscan, London

Evans, Bob Joas, Marko Sundback, Susan (2005) *Governing Sustainable Cities* Earthscan,
London

Marcotullio Peter J. and McGranahan, Gordon (eds.) (2006) *Scaling Urban Environmental Challenges From Local to Global and Back* Earthscan, London

Roberts, Peter, Ravetz, Joe, and George Clive (2009) *Environment and the City* ISBN: 978-0-415-30247-0 Routledge, London.

UN-HABITAT (2011) *Cities and Climate Change: Global Report on Human Settlements 2011*.
Earthscan, London.

Wheeler Stephen M. and Beatley, Timothy (eds.) (2004) *The Sustainable Urban Development Reader*. Routledge, London.

DEFRA (2007) *Mobilising individual behavioural change through community initiatives: Lessons for Climate Change* HMSO: London

Peters, M., Fudge, S. and Jackson, T. (2010) *Low Carbon Communities Imaginative Approaches to Combating Climate Change Locally* London : Edward Elgar

Rowell, A. (2010) *Communities, Councils & A Low Carbon Future What we can do if governments won't*. Green Books: Totnes

Seyfang, G. (2009) *The New Economics Of Sustainable Consumption: Seeds Of Change* (Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke).

Stibbe, E (2009) *Handbook of Sustainable Literacy* Totnes: Green Books (and updated by website

Stibbe, E & Poppy Villiers-Stuart <http://www.sustainability-literacy.org/multimedia.html>).

Whitmarsh, L., O'Neill S. and Lorenzoni, I. (2010) *Engaging the Public with Climate Change: Behaviour Change and Communication* London : Earthscan

When you are asked to read material and reflect upon the content it is very important that you engage with the task properly. Skimming the text is insufficient - and you will need to read and consider both what has been written and also your feelings and reaction to it. There are also a number of web references (URLs) embedded within the activities associated with each module. These should be visited and read in exactly the same way as the directed reading in the set textbooks. If you want to download any of the documents then as long as you are using them for personal research that's fine. Please bear in mind that some of the files are quite large and so the download might take a while. All of these URLs have been checked as valid, and you should be able to visit these directly from Blackboard simply by clicking on the appropriate link. If you find that any of them are not accessible then please let us know straight away.

There are a number of important copyright issues relating to any resource material provided by the University to you [as distance learners and students of the University.]

Please refer to the appropriate University web page here:

<http://www.staffs.ac.uk/copyright/> for more information and clarification.

5.5 BLACKBOARD

In order to provide for the effective management of the web-based learning resources on this course we are using Blackboard. The Blackboard virtual learning environment is a commercial product produced by Blackboard Inc. It is becoming widely recognised as a high quality environment for on-line study. It can be accessed and used over the internet and provides an integrated and flexible environment for hosting and structuring study guides, providing access to learning resources and enabling 'student-student' and 'student-tutor' interaction and submission of coursework. For more information about Blackboard and its educational philosophy and capabilities, go to the following web page:

<https://www.blackboard.com/Markets/Higher-Education.aspx>

We selected Blackboard for delivering this distance learning course because of the intuitive user interface and comprehensive learning facilities it provides.

Our Blackboard courses are structured around projects (= modules) and the specification of activities or tasks for students to actively do – rather than just passively providing information for them to read. This fitted well with our own preference for a structured programme of study providing a range of learning activities. Full documentation on how to use Blackboard along with initial training sessions will be provided in the first workshop. There is also a support service provided by the University for dealing with problems in using software (see Section 6.2).

5.6 Computer hardware/software requirements

As far as hardware is concerned, we recommend that you use a computer (either a PC or a Mac) with the following specifications as a minimum:

1 GHz processor (or faster)

512Mb of RAM

At least 20 GB of hard disc space

An internet service provider (ISP) with a broadband, cable or satellite internet connection (or >56K modem dial-up in an emergency)

Make sure that you comply with all of the guidance and advice (particularly that relating to the safe use of the equipment and any Health & Safety implications) provided by the computer manufacturers and/or your employers.

As far as software is concerned, you will need to have pre-loaded a standard web browser – such as Firefox, Chrome or Internet Explorer, and you will find that you will need the Adobe Flash Player[®] to access many modern websites (including some University systems). You will also need to have Adobe Acrobat Reader[®] installed on your computer – and, again, this is a freely available download. This program allows you to read the many web-based files to which you will be directed which are in ‘portable document format’ (PDF). You will be able to download one copy of some of these files if you wish, and save them on your local disc for off-line personal reading and study. You should also have access to Microsoft Word, Excel and PowerPoint, as some of the web-based documents to which you will be directed during the study programme are available in one or other of these formats. You would normally be expected to use MS Word or the Open Office equivalent for writing assignments and assessments. As a student of the University, you will be eligible for student discount on many commercial software packages such as Office. More information is available at :

<http://www.microsoft.com/uk/education/buy/licensing/buying.mspix>

5.7 What to do if computer access fails

Computer-based systems are far from infallible. You may find a number of reasons why your computer access to necessary resources and facilities fails you. **One option that you will always have is to use the various sources of technical and academic support that are available (see section 7).** However the following back-up methods may provide you with a fallback position – we would advise that where appropriate you set these up in advance as a precaution.

- **Your computer breaks down or is stolen** – in order to keep up with the work on the module, try and find an alternative computer that you can use. This may be at a friend's house, at work, or a local internet café, library or school. There may be problems with using Blackboard from such machines but if you can still get onto the web you can temporarily manage without Blackboard by:
 - using a paper study guide if you printed one earlier
 - submitting work to tutors by email attachment (having notified us that you need to do this)
 - interacting or sharing files with other students using standard email
 - regularly looking at the 'Award Web-Page' at the Staffordshire University web-site for notices regarding any changes to the study guide or problems we are aware of with accessing particular web pages
- **Your Internet service provider is down** – this can happen occasionally! One precaution is to be signed up with more than one – consider using one of the (often free, except for phone charges) dial-in services that are on offer.
- **You have problems with your phone line** – use the advice above for computer breakdown.
- **Something just won't work!** – ring the technical support line (see section 7) for help in diagnosing the source of the problem.

5.8 The modules

Each module will have a Module Handbook that you must read before working independently through the course materials. This handbook will be available within the Blackboard virtual learning environment.

STANDARD CONTENT OF MODULES WITHIN Blackboard

Module handbook: this will specify module themes, overall learning outcomes, structure, delivery and assessment timetable and key learning resources.

Activity Guides: each module will consist of a series of Activities (usually 12-14) that you are expected to work through on a week-by-week basis. Each session guide will summarise the session themes, specify the learning outcomes for the session, detail the tasks to be completed, suggest further follow up work and list references for the session.

Tasks: within each activity a series of Tasks will be specified. These will include a range of activities such as reading specified papers or book extracts, writing brief evaluations, categorising definitions, watching or listening to on-line video/audio resources, analysing documents, working through large web-sites, reflecting on your own experience etc. An estimate of the amount of time it should take you to complete each task will be provided. At various points you will be directed to submit work to the module tutor or share work with others in your designated learning group. **The work submitted to the tutor will sometimes count towards the formal assessment for the module. At other times it will enable you to receive individual or collective feedback; this will be clearly specified in the module documentation.**

5.9 Learner Groups

At various points in each module you may be directed to share work and/or interact with other students in your learner group. Learner groups will be created, normally consisting of 4 to 12 students, and set up within the Blackboard learning environment as forming a

group who can easily share their work with each other. To share work in Blackboard you type up a file, submit this to Blackboard and then enable other people in your user group to access this (full details will be provided). Alternatively as a back-up you could send this file as a standard email attachment to the other students in your group.

We are utilising the learner groups so that you are not always working on your own – working collaboratively is an important skill and one that will seek to incorporate both through learner groups and in the face-to-face workshop sessions. The learner group should also provide you with a small group of other students who you can get to know, share notes and discuss work with.

Communication by phone and other methods will also be possible, and even getting together if you live near to each other may also be something you choose to do. We may also organise on-line ‘chat’ sessions from time to time (available within Blackboard or arranged through a separate Skype/MSN/Yahoo/AOL room), this will vary depending on the module.

5.10 Access to learning resources

We have already discussed the module handbooks and module learning resources that are provided for you. These are directly and easily accessible. You will need to make use of other learning resources in carrying out some of the specified tasks, doing follow-up work and researching topics for a number of the modules (particularly your dissertation). Apart from the PCO online database [which we provide for you], the resources listed below will all be important

Web sites – you will be directed to particular web sites as part of module study guides and should become (if you're not already) a proficient user of the web. You can simply click on the web addresses from within Blackboard rather than having to type them in. Searching the web for material will be a bit more involved and we will provide guidance on how to best make use of Internet 'search engines'.

Electronic Journals – there are a wide range of electronic journals now available because the University subscribes to them and you will need specific password and access information to get to these. This will be described in more detail during the introductory activities. Full details on how to access these will be provided to you during the induction workshop.

A full guide to our subject specific library resources is available at :

<http://issubjectwiki.staffs.ac.uk/Sciences/Geography>

Staffordshire University On-line Library Portal servicing online, part-time and distance learners can be found here:

<http://www.staffs.ac.uk/uniservices/infoservices/library/>

This University web portal is being developed in line with the Faculty and distance learning course homepages, and offers:

- ◆ Postal book loans from stock
- ◆ Inter-library loans for books not in LLRS stock
- ◆ Book reservations
- ◆ Journal article and book chapter photocopies from stock
- ◆ Inter-library loans for journal articles not in our stock
- ◆ Help Desk and Reference enquiries online and real time
- ◆ Electronic access to subject specialists for detailed advice and guidance
- ◆ Induction to off campus services
- ◆ Online guides to sources of information
- ◆ Access to on-line databases and resources
- ◆ Access to digitised collections of material
- ◆ Negotiated access to other University libraries and information services

University Libraries – under a recent agreement between University libraries (*SCONUL Access*) all distance learning students can now join their local University library (with a few

exceptions) and use most of the facilities available including borrowing books. If you live reasonably close to a University this should prove a very valuable resource particularly when you are undertaking your dissertation. Details of this facility will be provided. Clearly if you live within travelling distance of Stoke or Stafford you can make use of our own libraries as well – our catalogues can be searched over the web to find out what materials are held and whether or not they are available.

More information is at : <http://www.access.sconul.ac.uk/>

Public Libraries – public libraries may hold some books of relevance to the course. They may also provide searching facilities and facilities for ordering inter-library loans.

Inter library loans – these will cost you money but provide a way of borrowing a copy of *any* published book or a photocopy of journal papers for your own use. You should be able to order these through any library you are a member of. On-line bibliographic databases and on-line library catalogues will provide you with a way of finding the books or papers you want to access.

6 WHAT SUPPORT WILL I GET?

Support from others whilst studying a course is important for all sorts of reasons. You may need support in the form of guidance on academic matters so that you can, for example, clarify instructions, ask for further explanation and talk over ideas on essays or research work. You may need support from others who are studying. For example, this might involve giving you reassurance that you are not the only one finding the course difficult (or easy!). You may need assistance in trying to track down particular papers or books, or in using a piece of software or in solving technical computing problems. You may be looking for help in finding out about future career opportunities.

These types of support are all important regardless of how you are studying – whether it be face-to-face or at a distance. However, some types of support can become more important and/or more problematical because you are not on-campus and physically proximate to tutors, other students and support services. We have therefore tried to provide access to and standards of support which will work for you as a distance-learning student – there are limits to what can be done, for example we can't sign you up with the University Doctor (home-visits could be a problem!) – but in many respects you should be able to achieve a comparable level of support to campus-based students.

6.1 Academic support

The Head of the Sciences Faculty is the Acting Dean, Professor David White [t: 01782 294648 d.g.white@staffs.ac.uk]. Professor White is supported in the running of the Faculty by two Faculty Directors; Dr. Rob Boast (Teaching and Learning) [t: 01782 294033 r.boast@staffs.ac.uk] and Dr. John Wheeler (Marketing and Recruitment) [t: 01782 294690 e: j.w.wheeler@staffs.ac.uk]

The Faculty of Sciences is divided into two Programme Areas, each managed by a Programme Area Manager. The Applied Sciences Programme Area is managed by Prof.

Stephen Williams [t: 01782 294108 e: steve.williams@staffs.ac.uk] and your award(s) fall under this Programme Area.

There are a number of people who can provide academic support during your period of study.

- Module Tutors /Award Tutor(s) – for matters relating to the specific module you are studying at the time or the award as a whole.
- Distance Learning Administration – for general information and matters relating to enrolment, payment of fees etc.
-

You will meet staff if you attend the induction workshop and be provided with names and full contact details when you enrol for the course.

PROTOCOLS

In contacting academic staff we would request that **YOU** follow the following protocol:

- **URGENT** enquiries/messages, EITHER use email - including the word URGENT at the beginning of the message title and copying the message to a.dinnivan@staffs.ac.uk - OR telephone +44 (0)1782 294 857. Telephoning between 9.00 and 5.00 may enable you to speak to the relevant person directly. At other times, messages can be left on answer phones.
- **OTHER** enquiries/messages that are *not urgent* use email, fax or telephone if discussion is necessary.

The standards that **WE** will aim to follow in dealing with enquiries are:

- **URGENT** enquiries/messages will be replied to as soon as possible but normally within 48 hours (2 working days) of the message being received. All urgent emails/messages sent over the weekend will be dealt with as soon as possible on Monday morning.
- **OTHER** non-urgent enquiries/messages - we will normally reply within 72 hours (3 working days) of the message being sent.

IF any key member of staff is to be unavailable for an extended period due to other commitments or illness, we will notify you that this is the case and suggest whom you should contact as an alternative.

6.2 IT support

IT support is available from the University's Information Services (IS).

If you have a problem with using your computer, the information here:

<http://www.staffs.ac.uk/uniservices/infoservices/it/help/index.php>

will try to help you identify the type of problem that you are having, and therefore who you can contact to fix it. This applies to issues such as the technical specification of hardware, software support and ISP problems. You might like to make a note of the phone numbers on the pages here in case you cannot access the page in the future for some reason!

6.3 Library and Learning Resources Service support

For all students the first 'port-of-call' is the library help page here:

<http://webpac.staffs.ac.uk/livehelp/ishelp.html>

Library staff can assist and give general advice on all electronic services (e-journals and databases). For specialist subject advice, the following people can help:

Kathleen Morgan tel: (0) 1782 294770	e-mail: k.morgan@staffs.ac.uk
Andrea Hatton tel (0)1782 294448	E-mail : a.hatton@staffs.ac.uk

6.4 Employability

Increasingly, employability is being recognised as a priority within higher education. Universities need to be able to enhance their student's potential for employment as a consequence of the studies that they undertake - not just in terms of subject knowledge but more widely in respect of their overall prospects for entry and mobility within the employment market. The University has produced an Employability Policy that details its commitments to enhancing student's employability -- you can find it here:

http://www.staffs.ac.uk/assets/employability_and_enterprise_tcm44-26802.pdf

There's also a separate area of the University website devoted to employability issues, containing some links and resources; you can find this here:

http://www.staffs.ac.uk/business_solutions/careers_centre/

Finally, the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS) has a comprehensive employability resource page here:

<http://www.agcas.org.uk/communities/10>

and the UK Higher Education Academy has some great tools and employability resources available here:

<http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/teachingandlearning/employability>

6.5 Careers advice

The University careers service is able to provide a wide range of information and advice on potential career paths. The contact details can be found here:

http://www.staffs.ac.uk/study_here/student_services/careers/index.jsp

6.6 Personal Development Planning (PDP)

Central to a more explicit recognition of the acquisition of key skills and competencies, both generic and subject-specific, is the notion of personal development planning (PDP). The University is committed to the continuous development and implementation of a framework to support student PDP. As part of this, the Faculty of Sciences is undertaking a project designed to evaluate how best to integrate PDP within its online awards. As this project unfolds, we can provide you with more information about how PDP will be incorporated into your programme of study. Our PDP is summarised here:

http://www.staffs.ac.uk/images/pdp_policy_summary_tcm68-15858.pdf

6.7 Support from fellow students

Whilst the services listed above can provide the more formal institutional support, the mutual or peer support provided by fellow students is also important. As discussed earlier, you will be placed in a designated learner group so that you have several other students whom you will work with 'electronically' and with whom, hopefully, you will build a relationship beyond the formal requirements of directed activities.

6.8 Personal Tutoring

The University's Personal Tutoring Policy can be found linked from here:
<http://www.staffs.ac.uk/personaltutoring/>

In respect of our off-campus distance learners, it states that:

"Experience with the delivery of distance learning / e-learning awards off campus has shown that personal tutoring as defined in this policy is not appropriate in an environment where no face to face contact is available. Instead of Personal Tutors, these students will be allocated an Academic Guidance Tutor (all module tutors will be expected to fulfil this role). Given that teaching teams on e-learning awards tend to be relatively small, students will also be given access to an additional contact within the University / Faculty with whom any concerns could be raised."

In addition to the Module Tutor, if you need advice, guidance or information on the academic side of your student career, the Student Guidance Advisor is here to help. The Student Guidance Advisor is based within the Faculty but their services are confidential and impartial. If you happen to be close to Stoke, or passing nearby, the Student Guidance Advisor can provide advice, guidance and information on a wide range of educational issues as well as specialist advice and support. A drop in service is available for initial advice and longer booked appointments for more in depth issues.

There is also a Student Guidance Officer based in the Information Centre in Stoke and the One-Stop-Shop in Stafford. These Officers provide the same advice, guidance and information as the Advisors and can be used as an alternative.

The Student Guidance Advisor can offer further advice and guidance if you...

- Are concerned that you have chosen the wrong course?
- Are considering taking time out (intermitting) or leaving your course?
- Need advice on how to appeal against your examination results?
- Need advice on how to make a complaint?
- Need advice on submitting extenuating circumstances?
- Need advice on any aspect of the University's Regulations?

The Student Guidance Advisor for Faculty of Sciences is:

Jean Simpson

Recruitment Centre, Ground floor Mellor Building, College Road, Stoke-on-Trent, ST4 2DE

Tel: 01782 294715

Email: j.simpson@staffs.ac.uk

The Stoke-based Student Guidance Officer is:

Nicola Gardener

Information Centre, Flaxman Building, College Road, Stoke-on-Trent.

Tel: 01782 292768,

Email: n.j.gardener@staffs.ac.uk

6.9 Disability Issues

If you have a disability Information about this is circulated to relevant tutors, provided you have consented to this, so that they are aware of any necessary adjustments which may need to be made to your learning environment. Our reference point here is the assessment and statement of your needs by **The Student Enabling Centre**.

http://www.staffs.ac.uk/courses_and_study/disabled_students/

Staffordshire University is committed to enabling all students to achieve their full potential.

In order for this to happen we recognise that students will, from time to time, require support from our Counselling team and that many of our disabled students will need individually tailored support for part, or all, of their course.

With this in mind, we combined the Disabled Student Centres, Staffordshire Regional Access Centre and the Counselling Centre in 2010 to ensure that students have access to an efficient, well-organised and promptly delivered service.

For more information and contact details, read more about our services here :

http://www.staffs.ac.uk/courses_and_study/disabled_students/disability_support/

If you are an English/Welsh student and you have a disability or specific learning difficulty (dyslexia, for example) you may be eligible to apply for extra funding in the form of the Disabled Students' Allowances (DSA). These allowances are intended to cover any extra costs or expenses you have while you are studying that arise because of your disability. They are not intended to pay for disability related costs that you would have whether you were a student or not. Alternatively, visit the web site at:

http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/EducationAndTraining/HigherEducation/DG_10035904

The University has designed a Guide to provide simple and straightforward information on where to get advice and help on a range of issues. It provides information on the many services which the University and the Students' Union offer plus useful telephone numbers. The Guide will be kept up-to-date on the University website at <http://www.staffs.ac.uk/a2z4u>

7 HOW WILL I BE ASSESSED AND SUBMIT WORK?

To successfully achieve the qualification you are seeking you obviously need to be successful with the formal or summative assessments included in the award programme. However, assessment should also provide feedback on how well you are doing through the course and thereby help you to improve on your performance. For this reason there is virtue in having assessments or submitted activities which do not count towards the grades you get for individual modules and for the overall award – these are often referred to as ‘formative’ assessments. We have included both formative and summative assessments in the study guides developed for each of the modules in the award and both types are discussed in this section of the handbook. For reference, the current academic regulation which are mentioned in this section can be found at :

http://www.staffs.ac.uk/assets/postgrad_regs_tcm44-26797.pdf

7.1 Summative Assessments

Every module you take contributes to the overall final grade that you achieve. In order to gain an MSc you will need to pass all of the relevant modules listed in section 3.1.

All of the assessment for the award consists of coursework rather than traditional examinations. The coursework takes a number of forms including essays, reports, annotated bibliographies and a range of shorter submitted tasks (such as short responses to questions, evaluations of documents, critical analyses and comparisons). Specific details about the format required for each assessment are provided in Module Handbooks, or the information that is associated with each week’s Activity. Make sure that you read the instructions and guidance on assessments carefully – too many learners do badly on assessments simply because they don’t take the time to establish precisely what is being asked of them! If you are in doubt, contact your tutors using the methods outlined in section 6.1.

Please note that you must attempt ALL of the summative assessments on EACH module that you study to enable the Award/Progress Review Board to be confident that all of the module learning outcomes have been met. If you do not make a separate submission for ALL of the separate summative assessments for EACH of the modules that you study then you will fail the module(s) in question.

Normally, to pass a module students have to achieve a grade-point 7 (50%) average across the assessment elements, and general University regulations apply. In the case of a multi-component assessment, internal compensation can normally be applied within the module. In addition there are further conditions:

- **for all modules with multiple assessments students need to achieve at least a grade-point 4 (compensatable fail grades: 4, 5, 6) for each of the summative assessments. Again, students may achieve a module average grade-point of 7 or more, but still be referred in one or more components if any element of assessment is grade-point 0-3. This is to ensure that all students demonstrate engagement with the full range of learning objectives and assessments for each module;**
- **for 30 credit modules, 2 out of the 3 components have to achieve at least a grade point 7 (pass)**

Given of the nature of the learning outcomes in the 30 CATS taught modules in this award there is NO compensation allowable between modules. This means that you have to pass ALL of the modules with a grade point of 7 or higher.

The assessment workload has been devised to ensure that the distribution of work across the award is appropriate, equitable and balanced. This balance comprises two elements:

- the workload is approximately equal regardless of the combination of modules taken
- you should experience a range of assessment types across your award that are delivered in such a way that the assessment load is as even as possible throughout the duration of the course.

For summative assignments associated with these modules, we are happy to review and comment upon one plan before submission. The assignment guidelines will stipulate the deadline for submitting plans for formative feedback..

Each piece of summative assessment will have a **maximum number of pages stipulated.** **Exceeding the page length limits or not complying with the page formatting given below will result in a penalty of one grade point per additional page [or part-page] over the limit specified.**

The formatting for the assignment **must** be as follows:

A4 sized pages (210mm x 297mm) should only be used – you can use 'Page Setup' functionality in Word to set this if you use this software

1.5 line spacing must be used - look for the button on the 'Formatting' toolbar in Word to set this if you use this software

12 point Arial font must be used - use 'Format' and 'Font' function in Word to set this if you use this software

Margins must be 2cm all around [top, bottom, left and right] - use 'Page Setup' functionality in Word to set this if you use this software

All pages must be numbered

This format produces approximately 400 words per page. The maximum page number refers to text only, including any footnotes. IT does not include the bibliography or any illustrations [maps, diagrams, graphs, tables, figures etc.] These must be placed immediately after the main text and reference to them must appear at the appropriate point in the main text.

Please use the Harvard system for referencing – look at these links for more information:

http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/library/using/harvard_system.html

<http://iskillzone.uwe.ac.uk/Context10/Area8/Room25/Constellation40>

<http://www.usq.edu.au/library/help/referencing/harvard.htm>

http://skillsforlearning.leedsmet.ac.uk/Quote_Unquote.pdf

Assessment for Core Modules	
Understanding Sustainability	(1) a virtual SEMINAR PRESENTATION (1800 words equivalent) 30% (LO 1,2,5) (2) an ESSAY (1800 words) 30% (LO 1,3,5) (3) a REPORT (2400 words) 40% LO 1,4,5)
Environmental Risk Assessment, Regulation and Management Systems	(1). An ESSAY (2000 words) weighted at 30% (Learning outcomes 1, 3) (2). A REPORT (2000 words equivalent) weighted at 30% (Learning outcomes 2, 3) (3). A REFLECTIVE LEARNING LOG (2000 words equivalent) weighted at 40% (Learning outcomes 1 – 3)
Cities, Governance and Sustainability	1. an electronic seminar presentation (30%) (1800 words) (Learning outcomes 1, 4, 5) 2. a newspaper article(s) on urban governance (30%) (1800 words) (Learning outcomes 2, 3, 4, 5) 3. a 2400-word essay (40%) (Learning outcomes 1, 2, 3, 5)
Climate Change and Sustainable Communities	(1) a virtual SEMINAR PRESENTATION (1800 words equivalent) 30% (LO 1, 5) (2) an ESSAY (1800 words) 30% (LO 1-3, 5) (3) a REPORT (2400 words) 40% (LO 1-5)
Understanding Sustainability Research	A. 2500 word essay which reviews literature appropriate to the chosen research topic (Learning outcomes 4, 5) (60%) B. 1200 word critical review of a technique appropriate to sustainability research (Learning outcomes 1, 2, 3) (40%) C. Project Proposal equivalent 1750 words (Learning Outcomes 1, 3 & 4) (0%)
Research Project/Dissertation	(i) 20% allocation relating to the production, timeliness and content of FOUR progress reports to the project advisor during the course of the dissertation module (LOs 1,2 and 3) (20%) (ii) Production and content of the final report/thesis [~12,000 words] (LOs 1,2,3 and 4) (80%) (iii) Viva (LOs 1,4 and 5) Possible outcomes are pass or decision deferred

The viva is a compulsory part of the dissertation module and students are unable to complete this module without having completed and passed the viva. Full information about the expectations for, and preparations for, the viva can be found in the module handbook and the student award handbook

The outcome of the viva will be used to check the probity of the dissertation report/thesis

and to moderate the provisional grade point for the report/thesis. A pass in the viva that will result in the thesis grade point either remaining unaltered or can either raise or lower the mark for the report/thesis by a maximum of one grade point. A deferred decision on the viva [which, since a pass in the viva is compulsory in order to pass the module] will result in a deferred decision on the outcome of the module. Reasons for a deferred decision could include, for example, non-availability of the student or tutor, suspicion of academic dishonesty etc.

As an assurance of quality, another member of the teaching team will also second mark a proportion of your work. Specimens of submitted work will also be scrutinised by the external examiner for the Award.

7.2 Plagiarism, Dishonesty and Security of Assessment

You will also need to carefully read the University policy on academic dishonesty – particularly on [cheating and plagiarism](#), which can be found here:

http://www.staffs.ac.uk/assets/academic_misconduct_tcm44-26770.pdf

Academic dishonesty or plagiarism is a serious matter. It can be defined as:

‘the representation of another person’s work, without acknowledgement of the source, as the student’s own for the purpose of satisfying formal assessment requirements’ or as ‘taking someone else’s ideas and claiming personal authorship by copying information from books, encyclopaedias, periodicals and electronic sources particularly, those linked via the Internet, without clearly referencing the source¹’

You will be asked to sign a form agreeing to comply with our regulations when you enrol on the course. Plagiarism is a form of cheating and the consequences will be the same as if you were caught cheating in any exam -- your award may not be granted or your classification may be reduced severely.

¹ Jean Underwood¹ and Attila Szabo (2003) *Plagiarism: Is this a Problem in Tertiary Education*.

One obvious form of plagiarism is when you copy another student's piece of work. Another form of plagiarism is copying large chunks from a textbook, journal article or web site.

Your assignments should be original! Merely changing the odd word or making slight alterations to the order of words taken from another source still constitutes plagiarism. It is expected that you make reference to the work of others. It is even acceptable to have quotations from other sources ***BUT*** it is ***not*** acceptable to include material from another source without citing that source.

You should carefully read the University policy on academic dishonesty; it can be found linked off this page:

<http://www.staffs.ac.uk/schools/sciences/projects/plagiarism/>

Plagiarism is an acknowledged problem in the University sector, particularly with the widespread, indiscriminate and unacknowledged use of electronic documents accessed through the Internet. A number of different strategies are being used to counter plagiarism -- part of the problem may be a lack of awareness on the part of you, the learner. As part of the on-going learning experience, you will be provided with access to a set of guidelines establishing referencing and citation conventions, and methods for the identification of sources for all of the assessments that you submit. In addition, a range of assessments are used with their focus on analysis, evaluation and reflection and this, in itself, goes some way to combating the problem.

The University has also undertaken pilot work for the JISC anti-plagiarism project². We now use an online interactive facility (**Turnitin**) which allows the comparison and evaluation of any student work submitted electronically against a database of electronic sources (including against work submitted by students at other institutions.) This will detect any

² JISC Plagiarism Advisory Service
<http://www.jiscpas.ac.uk/>

instances of copying. Now the system is fully operational, it may well be standard practice that all assessments will be electronically screened through this facility should they be suspected of plagiarism. You will be kept informed of any further developments in this area.

7.3 Formative Assessment

Formative assessment does not count towards your module grades but is an important part of undertaking a distance learning course. Information in the weekly Activities will direct you to undertake many tasks that are not assessed – this is part of the ‘active learning’ approach fundamental to how we have approached designing the course. We would advise you work through all of these tasks because only by doing this will you be able to achieve the knowledge and skills you need, meet all the learning outcomes and fully gain from the experience of study at postgraduate level.

It also means that you can use the feedback from these activities to inform and improve your summative [formally marked] assessments, so you are not simply relying on the formal marks from the latter to help you improve the style and substance of your work.

For some of the formative tasks you will be able to immediately self-assess by comparing your answers or notes to those included in the study guide. For some of the formative tasks you will be directed to submit work to the tutor or share work with your learner group. You will sometimes be provided with individual feedback from tutors on such formative assessments, sometimes with collective feedback commenting on the profile of work across the group. When work is shared with your learner group, you can compare your work with that of others, comment on each other’s work and sometimes work collaboratively on producing joint documents that are then evaluated.

7.4 Submitting Work

Standard Method

- ❑ **You will be asked to submit your summatively assessed coursework in one of two ways – either via The Digital Drop Box facility in Blackboard or the Blackboard Turnitin facility.** Full details on which method to use and how to use it will be provided in by your module tutors in the assignment guidelines.

Back Up Methods

If for any reason you are not able to access Blackboard then you should use one of the following back up methods:

- ❑ *Email your file as a an attachment to the module tutor – you should warn the tutor that this method is to be used (by email or phone message) and then send an email clearly indicating that there is submitted work attached. The tutor will then reply to confirm receipt of the work.*
- ❑ *Print out your work and post it to the module tutor – you should warn the tutor that this method is to be used (by email or phone message) and then post it with sufficient time to meet the deadline and a method of confirming date of posting and guaranteeing delivery.*

7.5 Deadlines

Explicit deadlines for submission of formally assessed work are included in the Module Handbook. It is **vitaly important** that you meet these deadlines when submitting formally assessed work.

Work submitted for formal assessment after the deadline will receive a mark of zero. **ALL** summative assessments **MUST** be received before the relevant final deadline.

You will need to invoke the **extenuating circumstances procedure** if you fail to meet this deadline **in every case and without exception.**

We recognise that there may be times when you are unable to complete work due to circumstances beyond your control e.g. personal illness or personal difficulties. If you find yourself in such a position, you must make a claim for extenuating circumstances (EC). This is a system operated across the University to ensure that all students are treated fairly.

For further details on extenuating circumstances, please refer to this URL:

<http://tinyurl.com/27qwvq>

Send the completed form to Jackie Campbell [Administrative Assistant (Quality) t: +44 (0) 1782 294169 e: j.a.campbell@staffs.ac.uk] or post it to her at Faculty of Sciences, Staffordshire University, Brindley Building, Leek Road, Stoke on Trent, ST4 2DF. The form includes full instructions on how it should be completed and what kind of evidence you will need to support your claim.

Note that there are only three types of claim which you can make:-

- **‘M’, for ‘mitigation’** which means that you were able to hand work in on time but its quality has been affected by your extenuating circumstances. If your claim is upheld you will be given a ‘further assessment opportunity’ i.e. you can submit the assessment again to try for a better mark.
- **‘L’, for ‘late’** which means that you are allowed an extra 10 working days (i.e. week days) to complete the assessment. If your claim is upheld and you submit your work within this time frame there is no mark penalty, but if you submit after the 10 days your work will be marked at zero.
- **‘N’, for ‘non-submission’** which means that your circumstances were such that you were unable to submit the work at all at this assessment point. If your claim is upheld you will then be required to submit your work at the next assessment point. No mark penalty will be incurred.

You must claim either ‘M’ or ‘L’ or ‘N’ against EACH element of assessment for EACH module you want to include in your claim. Attention to this detail is very important if the Faculty’s Extenuating Circumstances Panel (ECP) is to make the correct decisions in relation to your claim.

If you experience difficulty in completing the form or with the process, please ask for advice from the Faculty Office, Students’ Union Advice Centre or from the Student Guidance Officer.

The bases of any successful claim for EC are that:-

-
- the circumstances affecting your assessment were **unforeseeable or unpreventable**.
 - you have provided evidence of these circumstances (e.g. a doctor's note, a statement from a student counsellor or practice nurse, a crime number and police contact, a death certificate, or, sometimes, a supporting statement from your personal tutor.)

Claims *likely* to be approved by the ECP include claims for sickness, personal or family issues (psychological, family illness or problems, relationship breakdown), IT problems, work obligations for part-time students and chronic medical conditions or disability.

Claims *unlikely* to be approved include claims based on holiday commitments, traffic problems, financial difficulties, ignorance of assessment deadlines, poor time management, acute medical conditions outside the assessment period, failure to provide appropriate evidence, foreseeable or preventable problems, minor illness and poor IT practice (e.g. failure to 'back-up' work).

Always remember to submit your claim for extenuation as quickly as possible. Claims submitted after the deadline are only considered as appeals to the Dean of Students, Francesca Francis.

All claims are considered by the Faculty's ECP. This is chaired by a senior Faculty manager. Only this individual and the administrator(s) preparing the information will know the identity of any students submitting a claim.

You will be notified in writing of the result of your claim. If you are not happy with the Panel's decision, we suggest that you contact the Faculty office in the first instance. If you still feel that the situation has not been satisfactorily resolved, then you can appeal in writing to the Dean of Students, Francesca Francis.

Straightforward claims are dealt with by the Chair of the ECP and an administrator soon after they have been received. Decisions relating to these claims are then reported to formal ECP meeting held at the end of each teaching block. This Panel also deals with more complex claims referred to it by the Chair for further discussion.

7.6 Getting feedback

You will receive feedback on submitted work. We will normally supply this within 20 working days following submission - occasionally this might not be possible but our aim is to work to this timescale. Feedback is usually by email to your university email address, although, for some work, the use of postal mail or telephone may be more appropriate. You will be advised which method is to be used for particular pieces of work but in the absence of other information then assume that it will be by email. Marks will be given in a grade point format along with tutor comments on the strengths and weaknesses of the particular assignment.

At this stage, all marks/grade points must be considered as provisional until they have been confirmed by the Award Board. Once the Award Board has confirmed the grade points for the modules and, where appropriate, the degree classification, you will be sent a letter confirming the outcomes. Please note: ***If you are classed as a debtor by the University, your results will be withheld until we are told by Finance that we can release them.*** This may mean that you will not receive details of referral work and this may impact on your progression to the next stage of your award.

7.7 Withdrawals and Intermitting on Awards

7.7.1 Withdrawal initiated by Student

Under the University's Postgraduate Regulations(1.2.5), you may not withdraw from a module later than 2 weeks after the start of the module (for continuing students) or 3

weeks (for new students) unless you are changing from full-time to part-time or intermitting.

If you do not formally notify us that you wish to withdraw from a module within 2/3 week period, and then fail to submit one or more of the summative assessments then you will be deemed to have attempted the module. Under these circumstances you would receive a zero mark for the module, leading to module failure, and be referred (unless a claim for extenuating circumstances is received and subsequently upheld).

You are permitted to intermit on awards in the usual way, taking into account the above position with regard to module withdrawal and return of any resources.

If you apply to withdraw within the 2/3 week period but do not return the correctly completed withdrawal [module or award], or the award intermitting paperwork, in a timely manner, then you will normally be withdrawn from the module(s)/award concerned by the Award Leader.

7.7.2 Withdrawal initiated by Award Leader

You may be withdrawn from the Award on academic grounds if your progress during the year is deemed to be unsatisfactory. A guideline schedule is provided for each module which encourages you to undertake regular weekly work and contribute to discussions with other learners and the module tutor. However there may be cases when this is not possible. You will need to e-mail the Module Tutor regarding any special circumstances. If there is no record of your engagement with the module **10 days after it has started**, you will be contacted and asked to account for your apparent lack of engagement. Unless you respond to this communication immediately, the Award Tutor reserves the right to formally withdraw you from the module at the 2 or 3 week point [depending upon whether you are a new or continuing student].

7.8 Assessment Regulations

A copy of the University Assessment Regulations -- the current University Postgraduate Academic Award Regulations -- can be obtained here:

http://www.staffs.ac.uk/assets/postgrad_regs_tcm44-26797.pdf

These assessment regulations specify the levels of performance that can be achieved – in the case of this award; these are pass, merit and distinction. The Regulations also contain valuable information about how modules may be compensated and what happens if you are referred in one or more modules.

Normal University Postgraduate Assessment Regulations apply to these Awards except with regard to compensation. There are also additional rules regarding progression to Diploma and Masters levels.

For this award the following compensation rules are in operation:

Compensation between modules

- ❖ there is NO compensation allowable between modules. This means that students have to pass ALL of these modules with a grade point 7 or higher;

Compensation within modules

In the case of a multi-component assessment, internal compensation can normally be applied within the module. In addition there are further conditions:

- ❖ for all modules with multiple assessments students need to achieve at least a grade-point 4 (compensatable fail grades: 4, 5, 6) for each of the summative assessments. Again, students may achieve a module average grade-point of 7 or more, but still be referred in one or more components if any element of assessment is grade-point 0 or 3. This is to ensure that all students demonstrate engagement with the full range of learning objectives and assessments for each module;

-
- ❖ for 30 credit modules, the majority of the assessment has to achieve at least a grade point 7 (pass)

Progression

For students to progress to Diploma level, they are required to have undertaken and passed at least 30 credits at Certificate level.

For students to progress to Masters level, they are required to have undertaken and passed 60 credits at Certificate level, and at least another 30 credits at Diploma level.

Please also note the assessment criteria set out in Sect. 7.1 of this document.

Students studying the two IEMA accredited modules and ALSO wishing to apply for Associate Membership of IEMA will have to both complete and pass BOTH of the accredited modules to be eligible.

Below, you will find a précis of the criteria (Grade Point and description) that apply to these levels of performance in each module.

- **Pass (Grade Point 7-9)** - You will demonstrate a sound awareness and understanding of the subject matter. Assignments are expressed reasonably and coherently. Work is academically sound, evidencing focussed observations and acknowledging key questions. There is evidence of sound reading and thorough critical analysis of the available literature.
- **Merit (Grade Point 10-12)** - You will demonstrate a very good awareness and understanding of the subject matter. Assignments are expressed cogently and lucidly. Work is of good quality academically, evidencing well-focussed observations and the addressing of all of the obvious key questions. There is evidence of sound reading and a thorough critical analysis of the available literature, leading to an output which may have potential for wider use.
- **Distinction (Grade Point 13-15)** You will demonstrate an excellent awareness and understanding of the subject matter. Assignments are well argued and excellently organised. Work is academically excellent, evidencing perceptiveness, insight and

demonstrating creativity and originality. There is evidence of excellent reading and systematic review.

If you fail a module (including the project/dissertation), you have the right to be reassessed in the failed component(s) on one subsequent occasion (to a timescale determined by the Award Board at the time of initial failure) within the period of two calendar years from the date of the examination board.

7.9 Criterion Referencing

Please refer to the following pages:

Criterion Referencing for assessment grading

Grade	Theory/ Practice/ Professional Relationships	Methodological Awareness	Organisation and Presentation
Fail Grade Point 1 - 3	Some awareness of relationship between theoretical perspectives and context but insufficiently articulated to illuminate either the theory or the practice.	No or weak account of process for selection of methodology and justification. Techniques for analysis of data generally inappropriate. Candidate shows no or limited awareness of limitations of work or research design. No reference to any ethical dimension.	Organisation is weak and study route is unclear. Supporting evidence is not fully available and referencing is unclear/ weak.
Compensatable Fail Grade Point 4 - 6	Some awareness of relationship between theoretical perspectives and practice context with some articulation. A recognition that one might inform the other.	Adequate account of process for selection of methodology but limited justification. Techniques for analysis of data appropriate but weak. Awareness of limitations of research design but no indication of how these might be addressed. Limited reference to any ethical dimension.	Organisation is just sufficient to support the study. Most evidence is represented in appendices and referencing is adequate. Limited bibliography.
Pass Grade Point 7 - 9	A sound awareness of the relationship of theoretical/ conceptual perspectives to practical circumstances and a clear articulation of this relationship. Indication of how one informs the other.	Appropriate methodologies selected with justifications. Techniques for analysis appropriate. Awareness of limitations of research design and some indication of how these might be improved. Recognition and illustration of importance of an ethical dimension.	Organisation fully supports the study. All supporting materials are well selected, ordered and presented. There is an appropriate bibliography. Syntax is lucid and spelling/ grammar is accurate.
Merit Grade Point 10 - 12	A sound understanding of the relationships between the theoretical perspectives and the practical circumstances and a clear articulation of this relationship. A clear expression of the particular features of chosen specialist area in relation to general theory and practice.	Appropriate methodologies selected with sound justifications. Techniques for data analysis are appropriate and well used. Sound appreciation of ethical dimensions with illuminating illustration. Awareness of research limitations and evidence of self-critical reflection.	Organisation fully supports the study. All supporting materials and evidence are well-selected, ordered and presented. The referencing is accurate and appropriate to a high degree. Bibliography is comprehensive. Inclusion of appropriate and illuminating illustrations from chosen specialist areas
Distinction Grade Point 13 - 15	An excellent understanding of the relationship between theoretical/ conceptual perspectives and the practical consequences; a clear articulation of this relationship. A distinctive analysis of the illumination offered by each to the other and an articulation of practice, informed by theory that might challenge existing professional behaviour/ practice within context of specialist area/ topic.	Appropriate methodologies selected with good reference to alternatives. High level of technical skill in data analysis. Sound understanding of strengths and weaknesses of research design. Ethical considerations and examples include discussion of wider considerations.	Organisation is excellent, both supporting the study and also any arguments. All supporting material/ evidence is well presented and illuminates the arguments. The referencing is accurate and transparent and any bibliography is impressive. Evidence of independent study is clearly embedded in the arguments and matched to existing sources.

Criterion Referencing for assessment grading (continued)

Grade	Intellectual Focus of Assignment	Data Collection, Results and Analysis	Assimilation and Inclusion of Background Reading and Material
Fail Grade Point 1 - 3	Some sense of focus but not articulated in key questions. No reflection on relationship of key questions to study and little awareness of issues involved. No sense of direction and no conclusions.	Limited focus for observation/ data and inadequate framework for recording. Minimal material to support focus of assessment. Inability to make sense of data from other research.	Some reading but weak selection and uncritically presented. Unable to select appropriate reading for specialist area
Compensatable Fail Grade Point 4 - 6	Some sense of focus and partial articulation in key questions. Little reflection on relationship between questions and study and limited awareness of issues involved. Limited relationship between key questions and conclusions.	Limited focus for observation/ data and limited framework for recording material to support focus for the assessment. Data are limited in quantity and results poorly presented	Evidence of adequate reading but limited critical presentation. Little recognition of issues apparent in reading. No attempt to go beyond basic relevant literature
Pass Grade Point 7 - 9	Key questions acknowledged and reflection on relationship between questions and study. Some awareness of the issues involved and discernible relationship between objectives of the study. Some awareness of how work relates to wider issues.	Observations are focussed and there is good framework for recording. Framework limited to this assignment. The focus of the work is clearly supported by appropriate evidence. Own findings are reliable and valid.	Sound reading. Some critical presentation and recognition of the issues implicit in the background. Acceptable reference to specialist topics. Thoroughness of critical analysis and evaluation of existing research or current thinking. Clarity and detail in the exposition of the work
Merit Grade Point 10 - 12	Key questions clearly stated and sound reflection on relationship of questions to process of study. Issues well covered and conclusions informative in relation to assignment goals. Work shows innovation and imagination.	Observations are well focused and there is a good framework for recording. Framework has wider application. The focus of the assessment is well supported by the materials and evidence collected. Research/ Independent study has potential for wider use.	Good reading – well selected from key texts and supporting information. Critical analysis and good exposition of issues. Some evidence of systematic review of specialist topic.
Distinction Grade Point 13 - 15	Good questioning with clear expression of relationship between questions and process of study. Good range of issues identified and distinctive approach to dealing with them. Conclusions clearly related to assignment goals with some discernible originality. Innovative and imaginative articulation of arguments coupled with lucid reasoning.	Observations show perceptiveness and insight. The focus of the assessment is fully supported by the materials and evidence collected. Framework should be exemplary and material shows originality in specialist areas.	Excellent range of well-selected background reading. Good, critical analysis of supporting texts including original and perceptive observations. Issues implicit in the background reading made explicit and integral to the arguments. Evidence of systematic review and meta-analysis of literature where appropriate.

Criterion Referencing for assessment grading (continued)

Grade	Clarity of Reasoning and Style
Fail Grade Point 1 - 3	Immanent sense of argument but poorly expressed thinking.
Compensatable Fail Grade Point 4 - 6	Sense of argument but conclusions do not always follow from premises. Lines of thought discernible but weak. Some sense of connection between sections and sub-sections. Achieves some conclusions, but these are limited in scope / not discussed.
Pass Grade Point 7 - 9	Arguments reasonably expressed. Most conclusions following from premises. Lines of thought clearly discernible and reasonable connection between sections and sub-sections.
Merit Grade Point 10 - 12	Arguments reasonably expressed. Conclusions clearly follow from premises. Well-organised submission. Findings from assignment task clearly expressed and their implications for practice clearly expressed
Distinction Grade Point 13 - 15	Well argued throughout. Clearly, lucidly, concisely and logically argued. Excellently organised. Findings, and their implications for practice in real-life situations, are clearly expressed.

7.10 The Reflective Learning Log (RLL) within the ERARM module

One element of the assessment procedure for students on this module is a **reflective learning log** which will contribute 40% towards the overall module grade. Your submission for this assessment element will be considered (in this context) against the criterion referencing details on the preceding page. Bearing this in mind, it will be up to you to decide how you formulate the content so that it contains the depth and breadth of coverage that will be required to address all of the learning outcomes to the necessary degree.

The reflective learning log is designed to encourage you to think deeply and critically – thereby improving both your understanding and your writing skills. Improved learning will be brought about both through the process and the outcome of the writing. An RLL takes advantage of the fact that you are able to reflect on the course content and then write about this experience. We envisage that it will be possible for most participants on this award to be able to submit a reflective learning log for this module. We think that an RLL is a good vehicle for learning.

The completed RLL should be submitted through the normal Blackboard assignment submission procedure. It is important to bear in mind that your entries should be made regularly and frequently, and you should date them accordingly. You are prompted about contributing to your RLL at the end of each of the activities within the module.

In principle, keeping a log of this type is one aspect of a personal (environmental) management system and an integral component of your personal development planning. You are keeping a record and then undertaking (through reflection) a personal management review and feeding this back into the system (you!); and this, in turn, provides one aspect of (your) continual improvement. Although explaining the reflection through introspection and self-diagnosis are important, the real issue is what you intend to *do* about things as a consequence of these processes. This is what you must try to express in the RLL.

The **content** of your RLL will consist of your impressions and deliberations in respect of how you might *apply* the knowledge that you are gaining (whilst studying the module) in your work. It is *this* that we are interested in, rather than simply a reflection upon the process by which you approach and assimilate the content of the module. Your RLL needs to consider the *application* of your knowledge rather than simply the procedure by which you acquired it.

As far as the **format** of your RLL is concerned, you may, for example, decide upon a “double-entry layout”, where initial thoughts and reactions noted on one page (prompts, rough notes and sketchy ideas) are then collated, rationalised and reflected upon on the opposite page. This second page would then serve as your description of how you might apply your new knowledge into your job or workplace to bring about change. A template that you might consider using for such a ‘second page’ is offered in Appendix D of this handbook.

At the end of the module, you might then choose to compile a short report covering the whole period, reviewing how your accrued knowledge will enable you to modify your skills and to make some strategic differences through your job within your workplace. Even if the changes at work cannot happen for some reason, then we want to understand from you how (under other circumstances) you might wish for them to happen. You should develop this theme to explain what you would do to *make* them happen, and what you would look for (or hope for) as a consequence of their happening. Remember the page/word limit though, no novels please – keep it concise!

It is important that we try and clearly define the outcomes that both you and the assessor (us!) should expect from the exercise. The assessment criteria will (to an extent) embrace the *construction* of the log *as well as* its content. At Masters level, we are interested in the development of your own methods for creating a suitable RLL (based on the outline in the preceding paragraphs.) We anticipate prompting you during the module (let us say, on three occasions, spaced at one-third, two-thirds and at the end) for some form of interim

statement about your log and your thoughts about the purpose, direction and outcome of the reflection process. Evidence of ‘thinking-through’ and ‘application’ of the contents of the activities and any associated assignments will therefore be an important aspect of the log, as will your conclusions (which should either define some change in your outlook as a consequence of the task, or a justification for the need for a period of further reflection prior to application.) we would also be interested in seeing evidence of your learning having been applied within the workplace. This could involve, for example, submitting a work-related report or memo relating to the themes that we have developed during the module. We will go into more detail about this at the appropriate time. Each learning log will be as diverse as the individual who writes it (and so it should be!). This makes it difficult for me to provide you with absolute standards against which it will be assessed. You should carefully read the criterion referencing section (Sect. 7.9 of this Student Handbook) for explicit statements about the expected content and benchmarks. In addition, we will expect to see all of the following develop during the course of the module, and be reflected within your RLL:

- * Clarity – a clear, concise account of what you feel that you are achieving and what new knowledge you have found within the module.
- * Honesty and self-assessment – faithfully report if/when you come up against challenges relating to the implementation or enactment of anything that has been covered during the activities and through the application of any new knowledge and skills that you acquired during the sessions. Go on to explain what you did to deal with these and/or overcome them.
- * Reflection and self-awareness – don’t just recite what happened to you, but rather discuss what you think/feel about it, and what you’ve learned from it.
- * Creative and critical thinking – don’t just be prepared to accept findings or opinions, but rather assess them critically and look for alternative solutions and applications.

7.11 The Research Dissertation/Project

The research dissertation is the culmination of the Masters course and the significance accorded to this piece of work is reflected in the number of credits allocated to it within the Masters programme. It is worth 45 Masters level credits – reflecting 450 hours of

work. Your dissertation topic should be appropriate to your award title. At the outset, we will discuss and agree upon a member of staff here at the University who will act as your project advisor, and the 'title' and scope of the project will be determined by agreement between you and your advisor. During the completion of your project you can expect up to 15 hours of supervision from your project advisor which can include exchange of emails discussing your progress, reading of draft chapters, provision of emailed comments on draft work that you submit, phone calls or skype (or equivalent) to discuss your research.

The role of the project advisor can be summarised as follows:

- I. Oversee the general development of the student project.
- II. Advise the student on the academic feasibility of the project including its resource implication.
- III. Advise the student on academic matters regarding the progress of their project.
- IV. Monitor and evaluate student progress and advise the examination board of any matters of an unsatisfactory nature.

The dissertation consists of an extended project of academic work (up to 12,000 words or the equivalent) on an approved topic chosen by the student. The dissertation may involve fieldwork, library work or a combination of the two. Where relevant and appropriate, the research may be linked to your workplace role, and in this case there may well be support and a contribution to the organisation and management of the project by a third party (who would normally be your 'line manager' - see later under Work-based Projects).

The prelude to the Research Dissertation/ Project Module of the MSc. study programme consists is the taught Understanding Sustainability Research module. During the latter part of this module you will carry out the preliminary preparative work for your dissertation proper, including a review of the Health and Safety implications, a simple Risk Assessment and a review of ethical considerations. You need to obtain ethical approval for your project proposal and this is often quite a straightforward formality unless your research

work involves other people (especially the disadvantaged or minors) where issues of consent, confidentiality and the research participants' welfare are involved.

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7.11.1 Management of the Dissertation/Project

The knowledge and skills that you develop during the *Understanding Sustainability Research* module will underpin the research, information gathering, collation and reporting/discussion elements of your subsequent dissertation.

You will need to select and agree a project topic (in conjunction with your advisor), and, as the final component of the *Understanding Sustainability Research* module, to complete a project pro-forma that will specify the intended structure for your research, as well as providing information about questions that you might ask and/or methods that you intend to use.

From that point onward, you will be expected to maintain regular contact with your advisor for the remainder of the dissertation module for guidance and feedback sessions. During this period, you will complete your research, analysis and write-up. Further guidance is always available, and you are encouraged to maintain regular contact with your advisor. During this period of the project/dissertation module, you will be required to submit a total of **four** progress reports. These progress reports will contribute a maximum of 20% toward your overall assessment mark for the module, and a pro forma giving you the headings and points that you will need to address in each report will be distributed and discussed with you beforehand if necessary. You are also encouraged to submit draft versions of any completed sections of your project for comment at any time.

Your advisor will provide you with some more detailed guidance about the style and the timetable for preparation for, and the completion of the *Understanding Sustainability Research* and the *Dissertation* modules, but its basic structure is as follows:

- An initial **pre-dissertation** workshop at the University
- The taught *Understanding Sustainability Research* module
- Project identification and production of project outline
- Data/information collection and collation during the subsequent Dissertation module
- Submission of **four** progress reports according to a template that will be provided at the beginning of the module
- Production of dissertation
- Verbal presentation of project – the ‘oral’ or ‘viva’

You will negotiate and agree a dissertation submission deadline with your advisor/supervisor. This will normally be late March for consideration at the May Award Board and late August for consideration at the October Award Board, to allow sufficient time beforehand for the submitted dissertation to be first and second marked and also for the viva to take place.

7.11.2 Assessment Criteria

The distribution of the assessment within the module will be as follows:

- 20% allocation relating to the production, timeliness and content of **four** (monthly or two-monthly) progress reports to the project advisor during the course of the second stage of the project/dissertation module
- 80% allocation relating to the production and content of the final report/thesis
- The dissertation viva is graded either pass or decision deferred – you **MUST** pass this element of assessment in order to pass the dissertation as a whole [please refer to next section in this handbook]

The dissertation thesis will normally be 1st marked by your project advisor and 2nd marked by another member of the course teaching team. The agreed mark will be the one that is provisionally awarded for that component of assessment.

The assessment of the dissertation will specifically take into account:

- the clarity of the identification and specification of the chosen topic;
- evidence of the library skills necessary to research previous literature on the chosen topic;
- the quality of the selection and analysis of appropriate theoretical, methodological and empirical literature relevant to the topic
- the originality and quality of the personal research undertaken
- the quality of the conclusions drawn from the analysis
- the quality of the presentation of the report
- the relation of the topic/problem to appropriate conceptual and theoretical issues
- the various different theoretical and empirical contributions to the chosen topic
- the construction and maintenance a coherent approach to the problem
- the contribution to the field of inquiry through the reconsideration of different theoretical expositions and/or the creation and analysis of useful data sets.

Just in case you were wondering, candidates who fail the project normally have the opportunity to re-submit on one subsequent occasion and to a timescale determined by the examination board at the time of initial failure. This is usually within the period of two calendar years from the date of the examination board. The project either should be in a revised form, or based upon a new title. Any new title must be approved by the Award Tutor. A second failure results in a failure at the Masters stage of the award. For more detailed information about grading, look at the 'Criterion Referencing for Assessment Grading' table in this Student Handbook.

7.11.3 The Viva

This is a compulsory part of the dissertation module and will normally take place at the University (alternative arrangements will be made if you are based outside of the UK) 4-6 weeks after you have submitted your thesis.

The viva is designed to enable you to:

- ❖ Provide evidence of critical evaluation of knowledge relating to the dissertation topic
- ❖ Articulate the importance and relevance of the work that you have undertaken, clearly outlining its scope and placing it in context with the chosen topic area
- ❖ Demonstrate an ability to explain and interpret any new knowledge that has been acquired, and to present this at a suitable postgraduate standard
- ❖ Discuss the theoretical and applied relevance of your work
- ❖ Discuss in a clear and coherent manner about all aspects of your dissertation topic

You viva will normally take place with two tutors – one will usually be your dissertation advisor/supervisor and the other will be someone who has some experience or interest in the topic area.

Your advisor/supervisor will guide you through the process of planning for your viva by discussing a list of key issues that are likely to be covered. Your thesis will be the starting point for the questions so make sure that you are familiar with the content, and read through it before the viva starts in order to familiarise yourself with the important points and also the things that either didn't work so well or that left questions unanswered. Some of the questions may relate to your approach to the topic [methodology, sampling, analysis, survey etc.] whilst others may search beyond the scope of your written work to

confirm that you understand the broader context in which the work was carried out. It is useful to try to think of the questions that might be asked during the viva.

Typical questions might include:

Which parts of your dissertation are you most proud of, and why?
What would you say are the weaknesses of your dissertation?
What would you do differently if you could redo your empirical work for the dissertation?
What have you learnt most during your time carrying out a Masters dissertation?
What have been the main challenges?
Would you please summarise your key findings?
What do you think is your main contribution to knowledge in this area resulting from your research work?
Why did you decide on this type of methodology, and do you still think it is an appropriate approach?
What are the limitations of your studies?
Where do you see further research in this area going?
How have you developed professionally as a result of completing this Masters dissertation?

The outcome of the viva will be used to check the probity of the dissertation report/thesis and to moderate the provisional grade point for the report/thesis. A pass in the viva will result in the thesis grade point either remaining unaltered, or it can either raise or lower the mark for the report/thesis by a maximum of one grade point depending upon your performance.

A deferred decision on the viva [which, since a pass in the viva is compulsory in order for you to pass the module as a whole] will result in a deferred decision on the outcome of the module. Reasons for a deferred decision could include, for example, non-availability of the student or tutor on the date/time specified for the viva, suspicion of academic dishonesty etc.

For those students who are unable to travel to the University for their viva, alternative video conferencing arrangements may be arranged (or we can discuss whether we can use a webcam), but it will **not** be possible for us to accept a written submission as an alternative to a physical presentation of the project by you, the author of the dissertation report/thesis.

7.11.4 Work-based Projects

Some of you will wish to carry out work-based projects, and we encourage this. In these circumstances, after discussion with the University advisor, we will agree with you how best to nominate a second 'work-based advisor'. This will usually be your line manager (or another appropriately qualified work colleague who has been agreed between you and your University advisor). This work-based advisor will not be involved in any formal 'summative' assessment relating to the production and delivery of the dissertation but should keep in regular contact (Telephonic/email) with the University advisor during the duration of the project. They will also be expected to fill out a pro forma at the end of the project work that will be reviewed by your project advisor and, in this way, their views will feed into the overall assessment considerations.

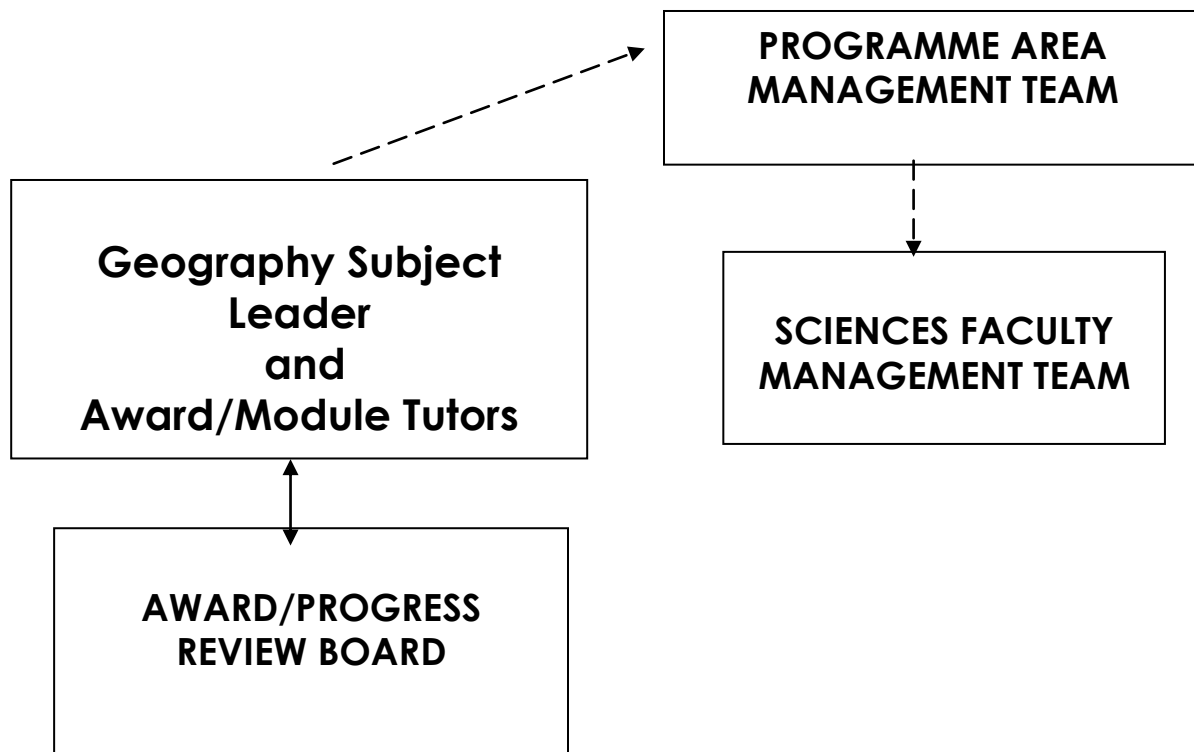
8 HOW IS THE AWARD MANAGED?

There are a number of people with key roles in the management of this award. They are:

Award Manager – has overall responsibility for managing the postgraduate award.

Module Tutors – have responsibility for the writing, delivery, support and assessment of individual modules in the programme.

These staff are involved in a number of formal committees and boards which meet to oversee the running of the award and to make decisions on assessment. The diagram below shows how these are interconnected:



All modules will be formally evaluated using an online feedback form. These evaluations are then fed into an annual process of quality monitoring which examines student feedback and how the course team is responding to this.

An Award/Progress Review Board will be convened at specified times in order to review progress, decide upon module grades and the overall level of performance of students. The external examiner will normally attend the Award/Examination Board on these occasions.

9 APPENDICES

Appendix A

Distance/Distributed Learning Module Speak- A Guide

Masters level education at University requires, like many other new lifestyles, a grasp of a distinct vocabulary. Sorry about this – but here goes.....

Activity: The weekly allocation of material for the module.

Award/Progress Review Board: The committee that meets at the end of every assessment period in order to review your progress and agree award outcomes.

Award Tutor/Leader: The staff member in charge of a particular Award. He/she has overall responsibility for the management of the programme and acts as your source of information for technical aspects of the programme, and advice about pathways, modules etc.

Compulsory: Any module that you have to take in order to obtain your MSc. PgD or PgC – in this case, for IEMA accreditation, two of the designated accredited modules must be taken and passed.

Core: See Compulsory.

Co-requisite: Any modules that must be taken at the same time as some other module.

Complaints:

The University has a comprehensive Complaints Procedure if you need to pursue something that you feel cannot be resolved through other channels. You can find full information here:

[http://www.staffs.ac.uk/assets/Complaints %20Procedure%201_tcm44-26818.pdf](http://www.staffs.ac.uk/assets/Complaints%20Procedure%201_tcm44-26818.pdf)

Credit: The basic unit of study that accumulates towards your final award. One credit is supposed to correspond to 10 total learning hours (teaching time, independent study time and assessment preparation time). This system of credits (called CATS) is widely recognised, and allows you to change Universities in mid-degree more easily, since another University will know thereby exactly the weighting of the modules you have taken.

External Examiner: A distinguished academic from outside the University who reviews the modules we offer and the marks we give for your work, in order to ensure that its standards are on a par with other study programmes around the country.

Module: The basic academic unit of study.

Module Tutor/s: The individual or team responsible for teaching, managing and assessing any given module.

Personal Tutor: The University operates a 'Personal Tutoring' system for all campus-based students who operate in a pastoral role and can provide representation for learners. For distance learners, this kind of role has a different applicability but it is nevertheless important that you have a suitable point of contact at the University. This will normally be your Award tutor, but, if needs be, an alternative point of contact will be made available to you. This is not to suggest that you will *need* this, merely that the option is available *should* you ever need it.

<http://www.staffs.ac.uk/personaltutoring/>

Task(s): Work to be carried out within each weekly activity.

Appendix B

Some Background Information on Your Module Tutors:

Dr. Dave Moreman (Award Manager)

Graduate and Post Graduate Qualification

BSc. (Hons.) (University of Wales – Aberystwyth) 1987

PhD. (University of Wales – Aberystwyth) 1990

Areas of Special Interest or Expertise

Sustainable Communities, Resource Depletion, E-learning technologies, Biochemistry, Water and Wastewater Treatment.

Dr. Glynn Skerratt

Graduate and Post Graduate Qualification

Graduateship of the Royal Society of Chemistry, Staffordshire Polytechnic 1976

PhD (Chemistry) Staffordshire Polytechnic/University 1986

Chartered Chemist, Chartered Water and Environmental Manager, Chartered Environmentalist, Chartered Scientist, ex-UK Government Envirowise® Helpline Advisor, Member of the Institute of Learning and Teaching in Higher Education

Areas of Special Interest or Expertise

Environmental technology, water/wastewater treatment process/technology, environmental management systems and sustainable business development

Derek Pratts

Graduate and Post Graduate Qualification

BSc (Hons.) in Geography, Loughborough University 1979

Post-graduate research into human impacts on fluvial systems

Areas of Special Interest or Expertise

Water resource management, environmental policy and planning, local sustainable development strategies and indicators

Dr. Liz Young

Graduate and Post Graduate Qualification

BA (Hons) in Geography, Trinity College, Dublin

PhD in Geography, Syracuse University, New York

Areas of Special Interest or Expertise

Gender Studies; Development Studies - Developed and Developing World;

World Hunger; Historical Geography

Dr. Janet Wright (Geography Subject Leader)

Graduate and Post Graduate Qualifications

BSc. (Hons) in Geography, The Queens University of Belfast, 1989

PhD in Geography, The Queen's University of Belfast, 1993

Areas of Special Interest or Expertise

Environmental issues in urban environments, urban sustainability, applied physical geography, the contribution of applied physical geography to the development urban sustainability strategies.

Appendix C

MODULE DESCRIPTORS

Current descriptors are at:

[http://www.staffs.ac.uk/current/student/modules/index.php?section=SC
&level=7](http://www.staffs.ac.uk/current/student/modules/index.php?section=SC&level=7)

Appendix D

Reflective Learning Log

Following on from one of the outline formats given in one of the RLL web references that we pointed you to, we offer the following layout that could be used as a template – but of course you are free to choose your own style if you feel that this would be more relevant to you and your specific circumstances.

1. Write an account of the specific points and issues that have come out of this activity/task, which you would regard as significant and important to *you*.

- What have been the key learning points for you from this session?

2. List any conclusions that you have reached about the application of the learning points that you have identified in 1.

- What implications are there (or might there be) for your department and/or your organisation, and what have you learned that impacts on your current role?

3. Write out an action plan for yourself– based on how your new knowledge could or will be included in your thinking and your approach to your work.

4. At the end of the module, write a summary paragraph to explain what you would/will do to *make* the action plan materialise, and what you would look for (or hope for) as a consequence.