

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION

Awarding Institution: Institute of Education, University of London

Teaching Institutions: Institute of Education, University of London

Name of final award

MA Master of Arts (MA)

Postgraduate Diploma

Postgraduate Certificate

Programme title

Geography Education

Language of study

The Institute of Education teaches and assesses participants through the medium of the English language. Competence in English language is required of all applicants. Programme regulations may indicate the level of competence required of each applicant and may make its achievement a condition of admission.

Participants

The MA Geography Education is aimed at geography educators at all levels. Participants normally have some experience of geography education either in the primary or secondary sector. Participants can be located anywhere around the world as long as they have good internet access.

Educational Aims of the Programme

The MA Geography Education aims to enable all participants to develop a personal response to the challenges they encounter in the field of geography education. The field of geography education is unique in its concern to merge the disciplines of education and geography, as an academic pursuit. The graduate of the MA Geography Education will be informed by relevant literature and research from both these fields and able to undertake an active and influential role in the geography education community, able to describe and articulate practice. With this main aim in mind, the MA Geography Education will achieve this through ensuring that graduates:

- engage with theoretical perspectives in education studies;
- are stimulated and challenged intellectually with developments in geography;
- are able to critically reflect on their current practice and those of others in the practice of situated curriculum making.

These broad aims will be achieved through:

- encouraging students to develop a critical understanding of the literature and concepts of geography education;
- stimulating interest and enjoyment so that teachers continue a personal and professional development beyond the programme;
- encouraging the development of autonomous, reflectively thinking

- individuals, capable of taking a leading role in education;
- preparing teachers for the successful completion of their coursework assessments and thus the achievement of a valued and widely recognised further qualification;
- ensuring engagement with professionally relevant elements of knowledge, understanding, skills and values;
- enabling geography educators to interact with colleagues from all over the world;
- supporting students meet the assessment criteria for the award of an MA Geography Education.

The programme aims to prepare the Geography Educators of 2020. In other words it takes a view (and asks participants to do likewise) on what kind of contribution geography can make to educating young people in the year 2020.

Learning Outcomes

A graduate with an MA Geography Education will:

- ask critical questions about policy and about practices which are often taken for granted;
- be well equipped to understand professional challenges and professional encounters and how to respond to them;
- have a wide range of intellectual resources to draw upon (particularly from the field of geography education);
- be analytical and be able to understand and use different approaches and traditions in geography education;
- Be discriminating and evaluative about their professional actions;
- Understand current practices and appreciate the broader contexts of their professional practice;
- Have a broad range of strategic perspectives;
- Be actively involved in contributing to the field of geography education;
- Be active and creative in curriculum development at a local level;
- develop their capacity to make good judgements, concerning content, balance, choice of pedagogy, and the role of assessment in the field of geography education;
- understand the value of the contribution of research in geography education and what constitutes quality in research.

Criteria for admission

Candidates hold a good honours degree, normally of geography or cognate discipline, and can show a commitment and genuine interest in the teaching of geography and its place in education. Normally candidates will have (or have had) teaching experience.

European or international applicants are expected to have qualifications at an equivalent level.

Those who do not meet these criteria have to show an ability to meet the demands of the programme through a qualifying essay.

All applicants are considered on an individual basis. Applicants are encouraged to make informal contact with the programme leader to discuss expectations and other matters of detail.

Applicants whose first language is a language other than English may be required to provide evidence of their English language proficiency.

The Institute of Education is committed to admitting and supporting participants with disabilities and welcomes applications from them. Participants do not need to be “registered disabled” to draw on these services, though in order to provide services in the long-term we will need to ask for medical or other evidence, as appropriate. Disabilities Support can also support people who have a temporary mobility / dexterity impairment / other difficulty as a result of an accident, injury, illness or surgery. We aim to treat every person as an individual, with needs which may differ from those of other people with a superficially similar disability. We do not therefore have standard procedures for participants with dyslexia, nor standard procedures for visually impaired participants: each person's needs are considered individually.

Mode of study

Distance Learning (with some optional face-to-face sessions)

Programme structures and requirements, levels, modules, credits and awards

The programme is studied over two years part time (or one year full time). The programme is divided into study units called modules, four of which are taught modules each counting for 30 credits of the 180 credit award. The dissertation, which counts for 60 credits, is entirely research based although is supported by personal tutors.

Participants who successfully complete 180 credits as shown above are awarded an MA Geography in Education. Participants can, for good and unavoidable reasons, apply for deferral of coursework elements.

Core modules / Programme elements¹	Credit Value
Reading Research in Geography Education	30
Making the Geography Curriculum	30
Communicating Geography in Education	30
<i>And either</i>	
Report on Geography Education	30
<i>or</i>	
Dissertation on Geography Education	60

¹ This is the normal expectation for each student unless they have 90 credits from the IOE Geography PGCE, when it can be waived.

Optional modules / Programme elements

Credit Value

Issues of Concern in geography education

30

The MA Geography Education accepts credits obtained from a PGCE with a specialism in Geography as deemed appropriate by the Programme Leader. The IOE Geography PGCE Programme modules have been designed so that the content and coverage are comparable with the MA modules. However, the number of credits that can be transferred from applicants from other programmes will depend on the transcripts of those programmes.

Students who for academic or personal reasons are unable to successfully complete the 180 credits required for the masters award may exit with the completion of 60 or 120 credits respectively (achieved through taught elements) and be awarded a Postgraduate Certificate or Postgraduate Diploma in the subject area.

The Institute of Education uses the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), as a guide to support periods of study undertaken abroad and to assist student mobility. Currently it is assumed that two UK credits equate to one ECTS. Therefore a module of 30 credits would typically equate to 15 ECTS credits.

It is anticipated that most students will be part-time but the current MA Geography Education has recruited full-time students successfully.

In accordance with IOE's policy guidelines for the assurance of Master's level work, the MA Geography Education is taught so that it:

- significantly contributes to students' systematic understanding of knowledge, and a critical awareness of current problems and new insights, informed by the forefront of geography education;
- includes the comprehensive and critical examination of complex material, research, ideas and theories specific to policy, knowledge and practice of teaching and learning in geography education;
- develops conceptual understandings that enables students critically to evaluate practice, research and scholarship in teaching and learning;
- develops the ability to evaluate and modify appropriate methods for investigating and researching teaching and learning;
- enables students to deal with complex issues and to make sound judgements, and to be able to communicate that decision making effectively and clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences.

Teaching, learning and assessment strategies to enable outcomes to be achieved and demonstrated

The MA is modular in form and is taught by distance learning. Weekly sessions are posted on Blackboard containing an explanation of the unit, reading materials and written tasks (these tasks do not form part of the assessment for the programme). Students complete their weekly studies, produce the required submission related to the activities and post this work to other students and the relevant tutor/s. Students can then interact, sharing their work and ideas on the written activities. The tutors provide feedback. In this way, the style of a seminar is maintained. Basic readings are provided and students should have access to the set texts and the

recommended texts. Each module lasts for 10 weeks.

All students are welcome to arrange to visit the Institute of Education to meet tutors and supervisors and discuss their progress and use the main library and the geography resource room, though this may not be possible for many.

Assessment: Various forms of coursework are employed, fit for purpose in relation to specific module objectives. These include a literature review, an article for Geography journal and a detailed evaluation of a curriculum artefact. In addition a dissertation (or report) is part of the scheme of assessment:

- A Report: an account (normally not exceeding 10,000 words) of the study of a specified topic based on experiments, observations or review of literature. A relevant bibliography would normally be expected. (30 IOE credits).
- A Dissertation: An ordered and critical exposition of existing knowledge in any field or part of a field of study. It may vary in length but should not normally exceed 30,000 words unless otherwise stated in the Regulations for a specific degree. There should be evidence that the field has been surveyed thoroughly. A full bibliography and references would normally be required. (60 IOE credits).

In addition, the development of key and transferable skills is supported particularly through the tutor-participant relationship, especially through comment on, and the annotation of, the participants' writing and peer group review.

Information about assessment regulations

All coursework, including the dissertation, is assessed according to the grade-related criteria for MA programmes. These criteria are intended to do duty for a large and wide range of programmes and modules. They need to be interpreted in the context of the stated learning outcomes for programmes and modules. In particular, not every criterion will apply to each module assignment. However, it is expected that there will be considerable overlap in the criteria deployed for individual assignments and that the full range of criteria will be utilised across an individual's programme. The key skills (scholarly skills, critical analysis, methodological and research skills and communication) are built into the assessment criteria. ICT skills are not explicitly referred to as they are embedded in all aspects of the programme.

Participants must successfully complete all elements of the programme, to achieve the minimum credits required for the award, e.g. 180 credits for a masters award. All coursework, is assessed according to the grade-related criteria for the programme level, found in the programme handbook.

All assignments are independently marked by two staff members, who meet to discuss and reconcile the marks and comments for each individual. Assignments are graded from A to D, with D being a failing grade. Participants are permitted to represent a failed assignment on one further occasion, within 12 months of the original submission.

An external examiner is appointed by Senate and plays an important role in monitoring the quality of the programme and evaluating the effectiveness of the

teaching and support provided for the programme participants and the reliability of the judgements made in assessing them.

Support for learning

The programme team is conscious of the characteristics of the student body, which is dominated by full-time practising teachers, many of whom have been away from formal educational experiences themselves for an extended period. Support for participants is also mindful of the fact that participants are also autonomous and responsible professionals, sometimes in senior positions, and includes:

- An online induction activity at the commencement of the programme informs participants of the programme content, methods and expectations, and introduces them to Student Support Services and the Academic Writing Centre
- Programme and module handbooks offer full guidance and advice on studying, writing and submitting both assignments and dissertations
- The programme leader is available to advise all participants on academic matters, and to refer them to the support services available at IOE
- Formative feedback is provided on draft assignments to take forward to their final submission
- Peer support and networking is facilitated in the group by the use of virtual learning environment (VLE) and collaborative projects
- Access to the full range of welfare and union facilities is afforded to all Institute students
- Participants are all advised on the use of the library and information services, and of the VLE operating system

Methods for evaluating and improving the programme

Mechanisms for review and evaluation of teaching, learning, assessment, the curriculum and outcome standards include:

- Module evaluation by participants
- Termly meetings of the Programme Committee or Programme Team
- Annual programme review prepared by programme team and considered by Faculty Quality Assurance/Quality Enhancement Committee
- Periodic programme review and revalidation involving external panel member
- Staff review and development
- Peer observation of teaching
- External examiner reports

Committees with responsibility for monitoring and evaluating quality and standards:

- Programme Committee
- Board of Examiners
- Faculty Quality Assurance/Quality Enhancement Committee
- Teaching Committee
- Validation Sub-Committee
- Equal Opportunities Committee
- Academic Board
- Senate

Mechanisms for gaining participant feedback on the quality of teaching and their learning experience:

- Participant module evaluation (sessional and programme)
- Representation on programme committees

Indicators of quality and standards

- Promotion. Former participants have become HMI, senior managers in school, teacher educators and trainers, heads of department, and textbook writers. Participants also testify the significance of the MA for preparing for threshold and AST assessment
- Research. Several research studies have found published form in academic and professional journals
- The programme team continue to have national and international status in their fields
- Progression to higher level award programmes
- Programme participants teaching other practitioners in their own institutions or on a regional or national basis
- Participation in continuing professional development programmes
- Publication of outstanding programme work in peer reviewed journals
- External examiner's appraisal of how standards compare with other universities

Date of completion/amendment of specification

July 2011