



UCD School of Geography

Taught Masters Student Handbook

MA Geography
MA Geopolitics & the Global Economy
MA Critical Geographies
MSc Geospatial Data Analysis
MSc Risk, Resilience & Sustainability



2024-2025

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Introduction

Welcome to your Masters degree programme in the UCD School of Geography. We hope that you will have both an enjoyable and productive year pursuing your Masters programme, where we expect you will develop your appreciation of Geography, enhance your skill set, and pursue independent research in an area of personal interest. Emphasis is placed on active participation, cooperation with your colleagues, and developing significant independent judgement and work practices.

The School of Geography is diverse in outlook, with leading academics from a range of international backgrounds and subfields in human geography and physical geography, including geopolitics, urban geography, development geography, historical geography, critical and radical geographies, GIS, climatology, and geomorphology, among others. This diversity in geographical research and teaching provides an exciting environment for leading edge and collaborative research and studies.

There are five distinct Masters programmes available within the School: MA in Geography, MA Geopolitics and the Global Economy, MA Critical Geographies, Geospatial Data Analysis, and MSc Risk, Resilience and Sustainability. These programmes offer students the opportunity to specialize in a particular field of Geographical study led by experts.

The Master's programme is subject to College of Social Sciences and Law Graduate School regulations and University policies governing Masters degrees.

There is a range of academic supports available to you as a Masters student within the School as follows:

| Nature of query | Who to contact |
|--|---------------------|
| <i>Module related queries and content</i> | Module coordinator |
| <i>Programme questions related to credit, option module selection</i> | Programme Director |
| <i>Queries related to dissertation component, presentations, supervision and submission</i> | Masters Coordinator |

The School Director of Graduate Studies is Prof. Alun Jones (alun.jones@ucd.ie). You may contact Alun with any other questions, queries or concerns you may have in relation to the Masters programme.

Important dates:

The following key dates should be marked in your diaries now. Students must attend and meet these deadlines unless there are documented extenuating circumstances.

For Students working towards a Dissertation:

- **Monday 11th Nov 2024, 10am-1pm** Dissertation presentations, trimester 1
- **Friday 27th June 2025** End of supervision period
- **Friday 15th August 2025** Dissertation submission deadline

For students working towards a Research Project (MSc Geospatial Data Analysis)

- **Friday 15th August 2025** Research Project submission deadline

The MA/MSc Programmes

The Masters programmes are one year, full-time or two-year, part-time, postgraduate courses, and involve lectures, seminars, extensive reading, and supervised research activities. All our masters programmes are in-person. Students on these programmes will take compulsory modules in research design and geographical analytical techniques, as well as a fieldwork module relevant to their area of study. Some of the programmes require students to select optional credits from a menu of available modules, including – in some cases - those offered by other schools that further promote interdisciplinary study. Finally, students are required to complete a dissertation or research project for some MSc Geospatial Data Analysis students.

Course Structure

The Masters programmes in the School of Geography are 90 credit (ECTS) courses. You will see details of which modules are core and which are options when you are completing your registration in SIS web. Module descriptors can be found on the [UCD Course Search](#), filter by School and select Geography and filter by module level 4 to find a complete list of GEOG modules.

Modules from other schools are individually searchable. The first number in parentheses (1,2 or FY – full Year) after the module code indicates the semester the module is run in, the second (a multiple of 5) indicates the number of credits attached to the module.

Final summer research assessments and their requirements and details depend on the masters programme to which you are enrolled

| Programme | Requirements |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| MA Geography | 35 Credit Dissertation |
| MA Critical Geographies | 35 Credit Dissertation |
| MA Geopolitics & the Global Economy | 35 Credit Dissertation |
| MSc Risk, Resilience & Sustainability | 30 Credit Dissertation |
| MSc Geospatial Data Analysis | 35 Credit Dissertation or 20 Credit Research Project |

Dissertation (35 ECTS Credits)

Students must submit a dissertation based on original geographic research. The subject of this dissertation must be approved by, and determined in consultation with, the School of Geography. The dissertation will normally be between 18,000 and 20,000 words in length, exclusive of bibliography and title page. Please note that the quality of the dissertation's content is more important than focusing on meeting the word count alone. Decisions on

dissertation topics and Research Proposals should be finalised by the completion of the Semester 1 Research Design module and will be presented to the School in mid-November.

You will be assigned a supervisor who may be consulted for general academic advice. The actual research and compilation of the dissertation is your responsibility, and you should drive the topic and engagement with it. The dissertation should occupy much of your time, particularly from the second semester onwards. However, the basic preliminary work will begin from September, particularly in the Research Design course.

The dissertation deadline for submissions is **Friday 15th August 2025**. Theses will be submitted on Brightspace, and you will also be required to submit a declaration confirming that this is your original work. Part of the discipline of undertaking a dissertation is learning to manage a project and to meet hard deadlines. **There will be no extensions to the dissertation deadline unless there are documented extenuating reasons and you have formally received approval from the Masters Coordinator.** The coordinator for August 2024 submission is Dr Jonathan Turner (jonathan.turner@ucd.ie, E001a)

Dissertation supervision

Members of staff and contact details are available on the school website. You should discuss your research proposal with a staff member who may be willing to be your supervisor. You will have a dissertation supervisor by the end of the Research Design course in Semester 1.

Meeting your dissertation supervisor

It is important that you see your supervisor twice per term if you are to benefit from the supervisor-student arrangement, and to respond promptly and fully to any requests by your supervisor for information on your progress. The duration and regularity of such meetings will depend to some extent on the nature of your research and your academic progress. You should agree with your supervisor the frequency with which meetings should take place. It is also important that you prepare in advance for pre-arranged meetings and that you keep any appointments that have been made.

You are expected to meet all deadlines and to submit work on time. You should consult your supervisor about any difficulties, academic or personal, which may be affecting your studies at the earlier opportunity. We can provide better support locally within the School if we know about issues as they arise. Your supervisor's role is to advise, give help and encouragement. The dissertation is, however, your own work, and you must accept the responsibility for its eventual success or failure.

Supervision deadline

As the summer term is designated as a research term for our staff, and you are expected to conduct a significant part of your dissertation work independently, there is a deadline for requesting your supervisor's support. Dissertation supervision is provided from trimester one until **Friday 27th June 2024**. Any work that you wish to have renewed by your supervisor should be submitted well in advance of that date to allow feedback.

You should ensure that your project plan takes account of this deadline and be prepared to work independently during July and up to the August deadline.

Research Project Report (20 ECTS Credits option for MSc Geospatial Data Analysis programme)

Students must submit a research project report based on original geographic research. The subject of this research project must be approved by, and determined in consultation with, the School of Geography. The research project report will normally be around 5,000 words in length, exclusive of bibliography and title page. Please note that the quality of the research project's content is more important than focusing on meeting the word count alone. Decisions on research project topics and Research Proposals should be finalised by the end of the Autumn Semester.

You will be assigned a supervisor who may be consulted for general advice. The actual research and compilation of the research project report is your responsibility, and you should drive the topic and engagement with it. The research project should occupy much of your time, particularly from the second semester onwards. However, the work can be incorporated in individual project-based learning that occurs in the course modules.

The research project report deadline for submissions is **Friday 15th August 2025**. Project reports will be submitted on Brightspace, and you will also be required to submit a declaration confirming that this is your original work. Part of the discipline of undertaking a research project is learning to manage a project and to meet hard deadlines. **There will be no extensions to the research project report deadline unless there are documented extenuating reasons and you have formally received approval from the Masters coordinator.**

You should ensure that your project plan takes account of this deadline and be prepared to work independently during July and up to the August deadline.

Your responsibilities

The school's full-time Master's Programmes are one-year programmes that require a very substantial time commitment. Full-time students should consider this commitment if they are undertaking any part-time work inside or outside the university. Your work must fit around your academic timetable and study – we do **expect full attendance and engagement** with the campus unless there are extenuating circumstances.

While contact hours may be relatively low, you will be expected to conduct significant amounts of independent work, both for core and optional modules and for your dissertation. In a postgraduate environment, such self-guided work programmes are the norm, and you will be expected to set and meet deadlines, complete significant written and other assessments, and make consistent progress in completing your dissertation research and writing. In addition, your responsibilities include:

- Complying with postgraduate and university regulations and any other College or School procedures.
- Discussing with your supervisor the type of guidance you find helpful.
- Agreeing a schedule of meetings with your supervisor(s) and attending arranged meetings; Taking the initiative in raising problems or difficulties, however elementary they may seem; Attending training and any forms of instruction as required by your supervisor or the masters coordinator,
- Attending and presenting at seminars in trimester 1 as required by the School.
- Maintaining the progress of the work in accordance with the stages agreed with your supervisor.
- Presenting written material as requested by your supervisor by agreed dates.

- Postgraduate students may be required to take part in other School activities as an integral component of their responsibilities.

Help and Support

As well as the support network in place in the School outlined in the Introduction section, we do know that there are occasions when specific issues arise that require additional help and support. Some of these are noted below.

Failing Taught Modules

While we expect all students to be as successful as possible in their studies, from time-to-time students do fail (i.e., do not achieve at least a D- overall grade) in taught modules. You will be provided with an opportunity to resit the module, usually in the following teaching trimester. A resit is graded as Pass/Fail and is capped at a GPA of 2.0 for a pass. A student resitting a module would not be expected to attend classes again but would be required to complete an assessment. Please note that registering online for a resit is ***your responsibility***. If a student does not register for, or fails a resit, they will be required to repeat the module the next time that it is offered. This does involve attending all classes again though the GPA remains capped at 2.0. Alternatively, a student failing an option (not core) module may, in some circumstances, substitute for an alternate module.

Please note that resits are NOT set in the summer research period. Students who fail a trimester 2 module will be required to resit that module in the next teaching semester (i.e., Trimester 1 of the following academic year). There are fees associated with repeating, or substituting a module, and these can be found on the [UCD Fees](#) website.

Delays in your progress

If you run into difficulties which cause you to fall behind in your research, it is essential that you let us know as soon as an issue arises. The first thing you should do is to speak to your supervisor, who may be able to suggest a solution. For example, if you are being hindered by difficulty in getting access to source material, it may be possible to make other arrangements to let you get on with your work. If your supervisor cannot help, he or she should advise you as to what you should do next, or you can approach the Director of Graduate Studies if necessary.

Difficulties with your supervisor

Normally, your supervisor or module coordinator will be your first port of call for any queries. In some exceptional cases with regard to the dissertation, you might feel that there is substantial disagreement on the project to be conducted, or difficulties in communication that you feel unable to manage alone. In these cases, you should talk to the Masters Coordinator, Dr Jonathan Turner (jonathan.turner@ucd.ie, E001a), who will endeavour to support.

Ethics in Research

UCD maintains the highest standards of integrity in its research activity. Ethical standards are given paramount importance in the University's Research Policy and Strategy and imbue its research culture: "All research should be conducted within an ethical framework consistent with the traditional principles of academic freedom". UCD promotes ethical research practice, emphasising integrity and rigour, and seek to sustain a culture in which the following general principles are understood and observed; honesty; openness; leadership and cooperation; supervision and training; guidance from professional bodies; best practice in the ownership, recording and storage of primary data samples; best practice in publication. For further details, see the [UCD Research](#) website.

All students will have to receive ethical approval for their dissertation research during trimester 2. As an initial step, students and their supervisors should meet as early as possible to identify whether their study will require ethical approval. The University Code should inform this conversation of Good Practice in Research and information on the UCD Research Ethics website relating to when a Low Risk/Exemption is appropriate and when full ethical approval might be needed. Ethics submission is a two-stage process and must be completed on the most recent version of the appropriate ethics application form.

The School Ethics Committee will review these applications, and decisions will be notified to students and their supervisors. If the decision is that supplementary information is required, students will have two weeks to provide this. No research can begin until the ethics process is complete – poorly completed applications will be returned until they meet the standard required. A dissertation which does not have ethical approval will not be graded. View the full Student Code.

Academic integrity

Personal and academic integrity is critical to your success as a person and a scholar. This includes writing and drawing ideas from those in your class, supervisor and readings. Plagiarism is using others' ideas and words without clearly acknowledging the source of that information. You should realise that your dissertation must be your own work and all quotations from other sources, whether published or unpublished, must be properly acknowledged. Plagiarism is a serious offence and, when proven against a student, may result in disqualification from the examination for their degree and exclusion from all future examinations of the University. Some joint work is permitted, provided it is properly acknowledged as such. For further information regarding what constitutes plagiarism, see the UCD library's guide on [Academic Integrity](#). Details of the School's plagiarism policy are available from the School website.

The use of artificial intelligence (AI) or other automated writing tools to write the dissertation is strictly prohibited. Any evidence of the use of AI writing will be considered a violation of academic integrity. This does not include AI-assisted spelling or grammar checkers.

Helpful links and policies

There are a number of different sources of help and advice on various aspects of postgraduate study. Your first point of contact should normally be your supervisor, who should be able to answer many of your queries or to direct you to another source of help. The School office can also be an important source of information or be able to direct you to the relevant UCD unit who can address administrative queries. However, the contacts below may be useful:

| Nature of Query | Sources of Advice |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Academic Regulations | Please refer to the Academic Regulations policy |
| Disability Supports | UCD Access and Lifelong Learning |
| Enrolment and Registration | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The School Office • UCD Student Desk |
| Dissertation Submission Form | The Graduate Minor Dissertation Submission Form can be found here . |
| Equipment and Facilities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your Lecturer • Your Head of School |
| Examination schedules | Assessment Unit in UCD Registry |
| Financial Issues | Financial Information Services, contact through your Student Adviser and the Students' Union |
| Graduation | UCD Conferring Unit |
| Student Health | UCD Student Health Service |
| Personal Difficulties | <p>Your Supervisor, Masters Coordinator or Director of Graduate Studies. The following may also be of assistance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registrar's Office • Student Advisers • University Chaplaincy • UCD Student Health Service • Students' Union • Niteline |
| Student code of conduct | The full student code is available here . |
| Tuition Fees | Fee and Grants Office |
| International Students | UCD Global |

General Information

School Masters Coordinator

The coordinator for Masters programmes is Dr Jonathan Turner (jonathan.turner@ucd.ie, E001a) and he is your first point of contact if you are experiencing any research/dissertation/supervisory related issues.

Prof Alun Jones is the School Director of Graduate Studies and should be contacted with any other general issues.

For any query related to the programme you are attending, Programme Coordinators are:

MA Geopolitics and the Global Economy: Prof Alun Jones alun.jones@ucd.ie

MA Critical Geographies: Prof Kath Browne kath.browne@ucd.ie

MA Geography: Prof Alun Jones alun.jones@ucd.ie

MSc Geospatial Data Analysis: Asst Prof Jeremy Auerbach jeremy.auerbach@ucd.ie

MSc Risk, Resilience and Sustainability: Dr Jonathan Turner jonathan.turner@ucd.ie

Extenuating Circumstances

Students are expected to meet the academic demands of their chosen programme. However, they may experience a range of serious and **unanticipated** difficulties, which adversely affect their ability to study, complete assessments or attend their required classes and other learning activities.

The [Extenuating Circumstances Policy](#) provides a framework through which these difficulties can be addressed in a fair and equitable manner.

Forms and Supporting Documents

- [Guidance Notes for Students](#)
- [Guidance Notes for Staff](#)
- [Apply Online](#)

Staff-Student Committee

Each year, postgraduate students nominate representatives to become members of the staff-student committee. The Staff-Student Committee will meet regularly and is an appropriate place to raise general concerns.

Facilities

The Library has some workstations available for postgraduate students in its Humanities and Social Science Research Centre. For more details, visit the [Library Website](#)

Administrative Queries

Your first point of contact on all administrative matters should be the School's Senior Administrator, who is based in E001, in the Newman Building and can be contacted at geography@ucd.ie, phone: +353 1 716 8179

Please refer to the School website by clicking [here](#) for answers to commonly asked questions.

Checklist

In preparation for your course, you should ensure that you:

- Register with the University and obtain a student card (which is also your library card)
- Get a UCD Computer Account from IT Services.
- Attend one of the *free* induction courses provided by [UCD IT Services](#). Visit their website for information on where and when these are being run.
- Become familiar with the resources in the Library through its [Guides by Subject](#).

- Apply for an ALCID card, which allows you to use the libraries of some other universities.
 - Details are available from the [Library](#).

Appendix 1: Dissertation Presentation Guidelines

The student will prepare a dissertation under the direction of a supervisor. The student must be a fully registered student and fees compliant at the time when the dissertation is submitted for examination. Your dissertation should be submitted through Brightspace (Module code GEOG40520) and the contact person for all queries related to this submission is Masters Coordinator. Please ensure to read all of the guidelines on the dissertation submission and check the module FAQ's in Brightspace (Module tools > FAQ) before sending an email.

The following general guidelines apply, and these may be supplemented by School-specific guidelines:

1. Quality and Typographical Detail

1.1 Layout

Margins at the binding edge shall be not less than 30mm and other margins not less than 20mm. One-and-a-half spacing shall be used, except for indented quotations and footnotes, where single spacing may be used.

1.2 Font

The recommended font used shall be a sans serif font (including Arial, Helvetica, Tahoma, Times New Roman or Trebuchet) and shall not be less than 12pt. Footnotes shall not be less than 10pt.

1.3 Length

Normally between 18,000 and 20,000 words, exclusive of bibliography and title page. *Dissertations should not exceed the maximum word count as there is a skill in learning to write within word limits.*

1.4 Page Numbering

Pages shall be numbered consecutively throughout the substantive text of the dissertation, including appendices. Prefacing pages shall also be numbered consecutively, but using the Roman numeral format (i., ii., iii., iv., v., etc.). Page numbers shall be right justified at the bottom of the page.

2. Preliminaries

2.1 Title Page

The title should describe the content of the dissertation accurately and concisely. The title page shall give the following information in the order listed (see Appendix 1):

- The full title of the dissertation and subtitle, if any.
- The full name of the author (followed, if desired, by any qualifications).

- That "The dissertation is submitted to University College Dublin in part fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of... ..".
- The School(s) in which the research was conducted.
- Name of the supervisor of the research.
- The month and year of submission.

2.2 Table of Contents

The table of contents shall immediately follow the title page. It should list the title of each chapter and the main sections in each chapter together with the relevant starting page numbers.

2.3 Abstract

There shall be a summary abstract of the dissertation (of approximately 300 words) immediately following the table of contents page(s).

2.4 Collaborations

Where the research activity for the dissertation was undertaken jointly with others, the name of such collaborators or co-authors must be listed immediately following the summary abstract page, including a short description of the nature of the contribution made by each author, including the student.

2.5 Submission

The final submission date will be **Friday 15th August 2024**.

Appendix 2: MSc/MA Dissertation as a Scientific Publication

Masters taught masters students in the School of Geography can **prepare Master dissertations in the form of a scientific article** that is to be submitted to a suitable peer-reviewed journal. This is an alternative to the traditional dissertation in the form of a monograph. However, **this format can only be adopted if the research proposal is of high standard and the student has achieved high grades in relevant modules. It will be decided in full agreement with the main research supervisor.**

The following conditions apply:

- The **supervisor must be fully supportive of the approach**. Students wishing to explore this option should consult with their main supervisors and follow his/her advice. The supervisor's decision is final and cannot be subject to appeal.
- **If there are any doubts** as to whether the research findings can be published (informed, among other things, by the objective and scope of the research, the anticipated findings and the overall student's performance during the academic year and his/her commitment to the research), a precautionary approach will be adopted, and the student will be requested to **submit the dissertation in the traditional format**.
- **If agreed** with the supervisor that **the research is publishable**, the student shall **agree on a suitable journal** with his/her supervisor in the early stages of the writing process.
- The **student must be the first author** of the article, drive its preparation and fully draft it. The main supervisor and any other contributor (e.g., co-supervisors, research/project partners) should provide feedback at key stages and contribute to the article as appropriate. These contributions will be duly acknowledged as co-authors.
- The **scientific article should be submitted to a peer-reviewed journal before or at the same time of the dissertation deadline**, when it will also be submitted as part of the dissertation programme for grading (with some additional content as described below).
- The supervisor and the students will **agree on a research plan** that contains internal deadlines for submitting the various sections of the article.
- The **format of the article shall follow the instructions given by the chosen journal**. It will normally conform to introduction (succinct literature review and focused research question), research methodology (concise and brief, focused on methods/techniques applied rather than their justification), results (key data and main finding, and their interpretation), discussion (concise and supported by literature), conclusions (summary of findings and key recommendations), and references (reference list according to the journal's specific standards).
- **When an article is proposed for submission as a dissertation, a separate introductory part is to be included in the work**, in which the student describes the research approach, process and methodology and discusses the significance of the research results from a broader viewpoint than would be possible in the article. This is to follow the provided School template, which is based on the format of the research proposal, and it is complemented with additional sections to report on the results and discuss them.
- **Both the article manuscript and the introduction are examined and evaluated as parts contributing to the master's dissertation.**