



Department of Geography

**Course Handbook
First Year Geography 2024-25**

September 2024

What's in this Course Manual?

1. Welcome.....Page 1
2. Staff in the Department of Geography.....Page 2
3. Programme Structure.....Page 3
4. After First Year.....Page 8
5. Resources for Student Success.....Page 10

1. Welcome

Dear Geography students,

You are very welcome to the Maynooth University Department of Geography. As an ever changing collective of staff and research postgraduates, we have been providing programmes in Geography at Maynooth since 1970. So, each year we call on a long and successful heritage of teaching and learning, of world leading research and a commitment to pastoral care. We are all here to ensure your own personal success in your undergraduate studies.

We also want to congratulate you on making a very important and considered choice in deciding to take Geography, for there has never been a better time to do so. Many aspects of the subject are on offer in Maynooth, each with its own perspective on the multiple overlapping crises the world faces today and tomorrow. These crises in society, climate, biodiversity etc. are all ones that geographers have shown are unprecedented and demand new ways of caring for each other and our planet.

We wish you every success on your own educational journey, tracing the steps of many who have come before you but each in their own way different. We hope you embrace that diversity that Geography offers and emerge a stronger, active, more engaged citizen at the end. To stay abreast of this active and creative Department, you may want to follow us on Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn and, also to sign up for notifications from our blog. You may also want to do some writing of your own either for one of our blogs or for our staff-student journal, Milieu - this year marks the 50th anniversary of the first edition of this (way back in 1975). But, most of all, do talk to us about our research and consider how each part links together to aid our understanding of the Earth, our shared home, and how we can live in it better, together.

Best regards,
Dr Stephen McCarron,
Head of Geography,
Maynooth University.

2. Staff in the Department of Geography

All of us who work in the Department of Geography look forward to meeting you this year, and to getting to know you during your time at Maynooth University. There are over 40 people working in the Department of Geography in total, so we wanted to introduce you to the important people for First Year Geography. You can contact us at any time by email, on Microsoft Teams or by phone, and we are happy to meet you during office hours or by appointment.

Head of Department

Dr Stephen McCarron Stephen.McCarron@mu.ie R-23B

Deputy Head of Department

Prof Mary Gilmartin Mary.Gilmartin@mu.ie R-9

Administrators

Neasa Hogan Geography.Department@mu.ie R-23C

Catherine O'Driscoll Geography.Department@mu.ie R-11

Mick Bolger, Technician Michael.Bolger@mu.ie

Director of Student Success

Dr Adrian Kavanagh Adrian.P.Kavanagh@mu.ie R-6

Lecturers for GY151 and GY152 Living Landscapes

Dr Stephen McCarron Stephen.McCarron@mu.ie R-23B

Shirley Howe Shirley.Howe@mu.ie R-25

Prof Mary Gilmartin Mary.Gilmartin@mu.ie R-9

Louise Sarsfield Collins Louise.SarsfieldCollins@mu.ie R-25

Lecturers for GY161 and GY162 Global Environments

Dr Alistair Fraser Alistair.Fraser@mu.ie R-21

Prof Mark Boyle Mark.G.Boyle@mu.ie R-22

Dr Gerard McCarthy Gerard.McCarthy@mu.ie L-2.7

Dr Ro Charlton Ro.Charlton@mu.ie R-23

R=Rhetoric House (South Campus);

L=Laraghbryan House (North Campus)

Tutorial Coordinator - Caoilfhionn D'Arcy

If you have questions about tutorial group allocations, you can email the First Year Tutorial Coordinator at geogtutorials1@mu.ie. Make sure your email includes your name, student number, the Geography modules you are taking, and your other subject(s).

You can find out about all other staff in the Department of Geography on our staff webpage: <https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/geography/our-people>

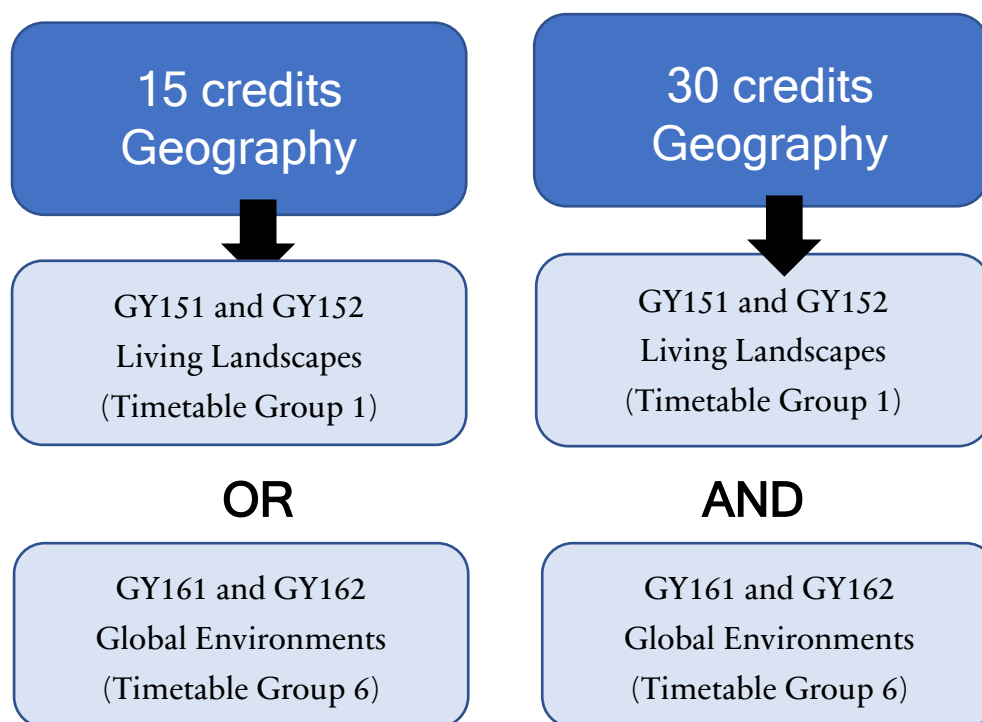
3. Programme Structure

In First Year, we have a number of exciting options that will introduce you to the study of Geography. You do not have to have studied Geography at Leaving Cert to take Geography at university. Even if you have, you will discover that Geography at university is much broader, with many more approaches and topics than you have previously encountered.

In First Year, Geography, there two 15 credit options:

- **GY151/GY152: Living Landscapes** (*Timetable Group 1*)
- **GY161/GY162: Global Environments** (*Timetable Group 2*)

If you are registered on MH101 (Bachelor of Arts), you can take one (15 credits) or both (30 credits) of these options. If you take one option, this is called Single Geography. If you take both options, this is called Double Geography. As long as you pass any 15 credits of Geography (either Living Landscapes or Global Environments), you can progress to Second Year Geography.



If you choose Geography in Timetable Group 6 (GY161/GY162), you may choose a Timetable Group 1 subject (other than Geography) with written permission from the Head of Department (Email or message: Geography.Department@mu.ie for more information).

If you register for 15 credits of Geography in September/October, and then decide you would like to take an additional 7.5 credits in Semester 2, email or message Geography.Department@mu.ie to get permission from the Department in January/February.

See the Maynooth University [First Year Guide](#) for MH101 Arts Students for further information about subject groupings.

GY151/GY152: Living Landscapes

Living Landscapes introduces students to the diversity of human and physical landscapes across the modern world. Landscapes are both ‘vast and past’, shaped by physical and human geographical processes, which are often interdependent. Living Landscapes will allow students to investigate world-forming processes by introduction to the platform geographical skills of analysis, description and communication via diverse assessments and a blend of traditional lecture and small group learning environments. The unit content will examine how humans across the world are part of, and also create, unique landscapes that have issues including rapid environmental change, hazards, poverty and resource depletion.

Semester 1: GY151 Living Landscapes I (Dr Stephen McCarron and Shirley Howe)

Lectures: Monday 15:00-16:00 – JHL1
Wednesday 12:00-13:00 - L2 (IONTH)
Friday 10:00-11:00 – JHL1

Assessment: 66.7% Continuous Assessment
33.3% Final Examination (1 hour)

Overview: This module introduces you to Geoscience and to Physical Geography. It uses a systems approach to study the Earth and its processes. It covers themes such as what we know (and don't) about the Earth; geological and geomorphological processes that control the Earth system; geohazards; and rock types.

Semester 2: GY152 Living Landscapes II (Prof Mary Gilmartin and Louise Sarsfield Collins)

Lectures: Monday 15:00-16:00 – L1 (IONTH)
Wednesday 12:00-13:00 – L2 (IONTH)
Friday 10:00-11:00 – L3 (JHL1)

Tutorials: Three one-hour tutorials over the semester (sign up through Moodle)
Assessment: 100% Continuous Assessment

Overview: This module introduces you to Human Geography. It looks at the relationship between people and place through case studies of contested landscapes, foodscapes, and migration. Like GY151, it has a regional focus on the Arctic so you can see the links between human and physical geography perspectives on Living Landscapes.

GY161/GY162: Global Environments

Global Environments will introduce students to the issues involved in modern global development within a highly modified, rapidly changing natural environment. Modern environments are globally interconnected physical-societal systems formed by a range of spatially variable processes, which interact to create unique regional and global management issues. Global Environments will allow students to investigate environment-forming processes by introduction to the platform geographical skills of analysis, description and communication via a blend of traditional lecture and small group learning environments. The unit content will examine how humans across the world are part of, and also create, unique locations that have issues including hazard prevention, poverty and resource depletion.

Semester 1: GY161 Global Environments I (Dr Alistair Fraser and Professor Mark Boyle)

Lectures: Monday 11:00-12:00 – JHL2
Tuesday 10:00-11:00 - JLH3
Friday 12:00-13:00 – JLH2

Tutorials: Two one-hour tutorials over the semester

Assessment: 50% Continuous Assessment, 50% written exam 90 minutes.

Overview: This module looks at the relationship between population and climate from the perspective of Human Geography. We will investigate the relationship between human development and rapidly changing natural environments. We will also consider how physical-social systems operate differently in different places, and how this gives rise to unique global, national and local issues.

Semester 2: GY162 Global Environments II (Dr Gerard McCarthy & Dr Ro Charlton)

Lectures: Monday 11:00-12:00 – TSI039
Tuesday 10:00-11:00 - TSI039
Friday 12:00-13:00 - TSI039

Tutorials: Three one-hour tutorials over the semester (sign up through Moodle)

Assessment: 100% Continuous Assessment

Overview: This module looks at the relationship between population and climate from the perspective of Physical Geography. We will investigate the processes that influence patterns of weather and climate; the ways in which human activities affect the climate; the evidence for climate change and how we might meet climate change challenges.

Tutorials

Both of the first-year **second semester** modules have compulsory tutorials. There are three tutorials for each module, and you are expected to attend.

How do I sign up for module groups and tutorials?

If you are taking **GY151/152 Living Landscapes**

- You must sign up for a GY152 tutorials on the GY152 Moodle page at the beginning of Semester 2.

If you are taking **GY161/162 Global Environments**

- You must sign up for GY162 tutorials on the GY162 Moodle page at the beginning of Semester 2.

If there is a **timetable clash** with your tutorial time, you should contact the Tutorial Coordinator, Caoilfhionn D'Arcy by email at geogtutorials1@mu.ie, giving your full name, student number, which Geography module(s) you are taking and your other subject(s).

4. After First Year

We hope you enjoy your experience in First Year Geography and are interested in continuing to study Geography in Second and Third Year. If you are, we wanted to give you an overview of the options for studying Geography.

How to continue studying Geography in Second Year

If you wish to study Geography in Second Year, you need to have an overall average mark of 40% in your First Year Geography modules, and to have met the other requirements to pass the year by the end of the resit examinations period. If you do not pass Geography in First Year, you will not be able to study Geography in Second Year.

Options for studying Geography

These are your options for continuing to study Geography in Second and Third Year.

- **Double Major** students take Geography as one of two subjects to degree level, with equal study of each
- **Single Major** students specialise in Geography after first year
- **Major with Minor** students take around two thirds of their modules in Geography after first year, and take a second subject as a minor
- **Minor** students take around one third of their modules in Geography after first year, and take two thirds of modules in their major subject

Note that some of these options will require you to take compulsory modules in Geography in addition to optional thematic modules.

Can all 2nd Year students do a Single Major in Geography, or a Geography Major with Minor? As long as you have passed 1st year geography, you can sign up for the Geography Single Major or Geography Major with a Minor in another subject.

Is a Single Major or a Major with Minor Degree Less Valuable than a Double Major Degree? No, Double Honours, Single Honours and Major with Minor all result in the same qualification – i.e., a Bachelor in Arts or B.A. degree.

Is a Single Major or a Major with Minor Degree More Valuable than a Double Major Degree? No, for the same reasons as the previous question. However, depending upon what you want to do after you graduate, there may be some advantages in doing a Single Major, Major with Minor, or doing Double Major degree if you are interested in teaching Geography at secondary school.

Do Double Major, Single Major or Major with Minor Students Do Less Work / More work? The workload in the Double Major, Single Major and Major with Minor programmes should be the same. The main difference is that Single Major Students take 60 credits in Geography each year, Major students take 40 credits in Geography and 20 in another subject, Double Major Students take 30 credits in each of two subjects, while Minor students take 20 credits in Geography.

Do Single Major Students Need to Give Up Their Other Subject(s) Completely? No. Single Major students may take 5 or 10 credits each year in another subject (or subjects) in lieu of 1 or 2 of the 5-credit thematic modules, subject to approval of the Heads of both Departments by completing the appropriate [R7 form](#). You could therefore retain an interest in aspects of another subject whilst specializing in Geography.

Is There Anyone with Whom I Can Discuss This Further? Yes. Alistair Fraser, Room 21 Rhetoric House, looks after the Single Major and Major/Minor Programmes and is available for consultation by appointment. You can contact him by email: Alistair.Fraser@mu.ie

5. Resources for Student Success

Your first year at university can be overwhelming. In this section of the course manual, we want to highlight important information to help you succeed at university. We also provide links so you can learn more about these topics and get additional support if needed. You will find all this information on our webpage (<https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/geography/handbooks>) and on Moodle.

1. Keeping in touch with the Department of Geography

You can keep in touch with the Department of Geography on Moodle, by email, by Microsoft Teams, during drop-in/office hours, and through the Department of Geography website. Click [here](#) for a quick guide on how to communicate with staff in the Department.

Drop in/office hours are times that your lecturers have reserved for you. They are the best time to contact your lecturer for a quick chat about any questions or concerns you have. Every lecturer has drop in/office hours every week, so we encourage you to use them.

2. Using Moodle

Moodle is the VLE (Virtual Learning Environment) used by Maynooth University. We use Moodle to provide information about each year of study, and about each individual module. You can learn more about using Moodle [here](#). Each of your modules has its own Moodle page, and there is also a Moodle page for [First Year Geography](#)

3. Using Microsoft Teams

Maynooth University uses Microsoft Teams, and so you will have access to Teams: you can use it to send a message to your lecturer or classmates, to set up online meetings, and to attend online meetings, tutorials and lectures (if necessary). You can learn more about Microsoft Teams [here](#).

4. How to do well in Assignments

Your lecturers will give you detailed instructions on assignments. You should read these carefully and follow them closely. Sometimes, lecturers will provide you with 'grade-related criteria': this gives information on what is expected if you are to be

awarded a particular grade. If the instructions or grade-related criteria are not clear to you, you can contact your lecturer to ask for clarification.

In First Year, there are some practices that will be new to you. These are academic standards of referencing and citation, and the need to avoid **plagiarism** and **collusion**. Learning how to reference and cite correctly, and how to avoid plagiarism and collusion, is really important if you are to succeed at University.

Because of this, we have prepared guides to both. Click [here](#) for *The Reference Point*, the Department of Geography's guide to referencing and citation. Click [here](#) to learn more about plagiarism and collusion, and how to avoid it.

The Department of Geography policy is that, unless a member of the teaching staff explicitly gives you permission for a specific assignment, you are not permitted to use '**generative AI**' software or services (such as Chat-GPT) to create any text, in part or full, for any of your assignments. Failure to follow this ruling will be considered, and treated as, plagiarism. In line with university policy, where there is any suspicion of plagiarism, the examiner will have the opportunity to examine the student in an oral examination, which will then be a compulsory part of the examination process for that student.

We understand that life is complicated, and sometimes you may miss an assignment deadline or tutorial or examination, or you may be unable to attend class. Because of this, we have set up a system called **Personal and Medical Circumstances (PMC)**, which you **should** use if you have missed deadlines, classes or are experiencing other issues that are making it difficult for you to do your best. Click [here](#) for more information about the PMC system, including how to [submit a PMC form](#) through Moodle.

5. Marks and Standards

'Marks and Standards' is the term Maynooth University uses to indicate what you need to pass a year of study, and what grade you will be awarded. You can learn more about marks and standards for the University by clicking this [link](#).

6. Using the Library

It is very important that you become familiar with the Library over your first year at Maynooth. The Library has a wide range of study spaces for you to work on your own or with others. It has resources that include laptops, books, journals – some physical, some online – and it has a range of tutorials and training courses to help you find the support you need for your studies. Your MyCard (student card) gives you access to the library and allows you to borrow material, and you can also access library resources off campus by logging in.

To get familiar with the Library, you should explore the Library homepage: <https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/library>; and sign up for [LIST \(Library & Information Skills Tutorials\)](#). You should also check out the Subject guide for Geography: <https://nuim.libguides.com/geography>

7. University Resources

We wanted to highlight the different supports that Maynooth University provides to help you during your time here. There are two types of support that are available to all students: Academic Supports; and Student Supports.

Academic Supports

- The [Academic Advisory Office](#) provides general help for students who are encountering difficulties. You can email advisory.office@mu.ie or completing the enquiry form [here](#)
- The [Programme Advisory Office](#) helps students with programme-related decisions. The email is programme.choices@mu.ie
- The [Maths Support Centre](#) offers help with Maths to undergraduate students. Check out the services and resources available [here](#).
- [Academic Writing Support](#) offers help with writing to any students. You can make an individual appointment online. Details on how to book an appointment are [here](#).

Student Supports

Student Services offers a wide range of supports from their base in the Student Services Building on the North Campus. The full range of supports is detailed on their [website](#).

- To make an individual appointment with the Student Support Officer, email student.support@mu.ie or click [here](#)
- The Student Counselling Service has self-help resources and information on making an appointment with a counsellor on its [website](#).
- Information about the Health Centre, including how to make an appointment, is available [here](#).

- You can book an appointment with the Student Budgeting Advice Service [here](#); you can also find out about the Student Assistance Fund, laptop and emergency loans and other financial supports.
- Learn about the supports and resources provided by the Chaplaincy [here](#).

In addition, there is specific support for particular groups of students, including International Students, Mature Students, HEAR and DARE students, and Maynooth Access Programme students. The Access representative for the Department of Geography is Dr. Conor Cahalane (Email: Conor.Cahalane@mu.ie, Tel: 01-708 3748; Rhetoric House Room 7).

8. Getting involved with the Department of Geography

There are lots of opportunities for you to get involved in the Department of Geography, such as the Geography Society and the Staff-Student Committee. Find out about these opportunities [here](#).

9. Careers in Geography

A degree in Geography opens up all kinds of possible careers. We've prepared a guide on careers for Geography graduates, and you can access it [here](#). You can also read about the diverse careers of (just some) of our Maynooth Geography graduates here: <https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/daro/our-graduates>

10. What to do if you have a problem?

[In this guide](#), we provide information on what to do if you have a problem that we in the Department of Geography can help with.

11. Athena Swan

The Athena Swan Charter is a national strategy to promote gender equality in higher education and was launched in Ireland by the Higher Education Authority in 2015. The Department of Geography has committed itself to the Athena Swan process. You can read more about Athena Swan in the Department of Geography [here](#).