



**UNIVERSITY  
OF LONDON**  
INTERNATIONAL  
PROGRAMMES

**Information for registered students**

# Petroleum Geoscience

Programme  
handbook

2017–18



**ROYAL  
HOLLOWAY  
UNIVERSITY**  
OF LONDON

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# Introduction



Welcome to the Programme handbook for Petroleum Geoscience, which is offered by Royal Holloway and the University of London International Programmes.

The University of London is a federal University comprising 18 member institutions and nine other smaller specialist research institutes, based in and around London. The International Programmes are the suite of flexible and distance learning programmes that the University offers in partnership with its member institutions, one of which is Royal Holloway.

The University of London handles the administrative aspects of the Petroleum Geoscience programme, such as helping you to register and pay your fees, organising examinations, and despatching your study materials, while Royal Holloway determines what you will study and provides academic guidance and support.

This handbook aims to give you academic guidance along with information and advice that is specific to your studies in Petroleum Geoscience, or at least to point you in the right direction.

Alongside this handbook, you should also read the **Student guide to the International Programmes**, which will guide you through the practical and administrative aspects of studying as an International Programmes student. The Student guide is available on the website:

[www.londoninternational.ac.uk/guide-handbooks](http://www.londoninternational.ac.uk/guide-handbooks)

## Programme Specification and Programme Regulations

Other important sources of information about the programme are the Programme Specification and the Programme Regulations.

The Programme Specification includes the aims of the programme and the learning outcomes students achieve as they progress. It is available on the programme web page:

[www.londoninternational.ac.uk/courses](http://www.londoninternational.ac.uk/courses)

The Programme Regulations are the rules which apply specifically to the Petroleum Geoscience programme.

The General regulations apply to all students registered with the University of London International Academy and include general rules such as those for the conduct of assessments.

You should make sure that you have read the regulations, and refer to them throughout your time as an International Programmes student. They can be viewed on our website:

[www.londoninternational.ac.uk/regs](http://www.londoninternational.ac.uk/regs)

We hope that we have covered everything that you need to know about during your studies, but if you require any additional information or support, or wish to provide feedback, please do not hesitate to contact us.

# Contacting us



The delivery of this programme is shared between Royal Holloway and the University of London International Programmes.

## Academic queries

Royal Holloway looks after all academic matters and the administration of your coursework. All correspondence on these matters should be addressed to:

Lynne White  
Postgraduate Administrator  
Department of Earth Sciences  
Royal Holloway, University of London  
Egham, Surrey  
TW20 0EX  
United Kingdom  
Telephone +44 (0)1784 443 581  
Fax +44 (0)1784 471 780  
Email [lynne.white@rhul.ac.uk](mailto:lynne.white@rhul.ac.uk)

## Administrative queries

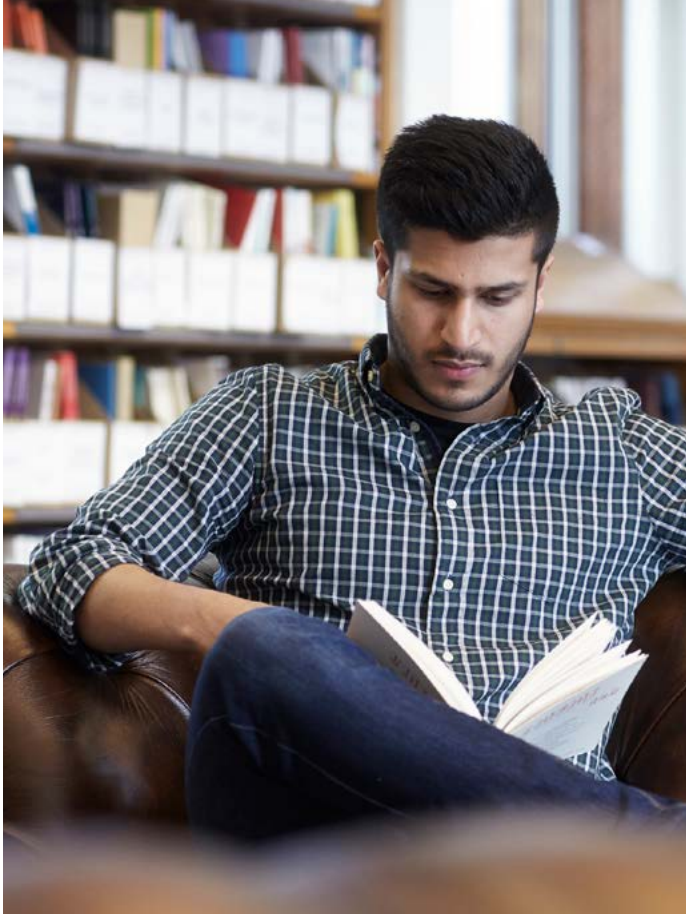
The University of London International Programmes look after all administrative matters relating to admissions, registration, examinations, progression, fees, graduation and transcripts.

All correspondence on these matters should be through the 'Ask a question' tab in the Student Portal:

<http://my.londoninternational.ac.uk>

You can read more about this, and about other ways to contact the International Programmes, in the Student guide.

# About the programme



## Academic direction – Royal Holloway, University of London

Royal Holloway, founded in 1879, is one of the University of London's six largest member institutions and is home to more than 9,000 undergraduate and postgraduate students, studying over 100 different degree programmes. It is one of only a few colleges nationally that is allowed to use the 'Royal' title.

Royal Holloway stands as a monument to two Victorian visionaries, Elizabeth Jesser Reid and Thomas Holloway. Both played a crucial role in the development of equality in education through the creation of two colleges for women: Bedford College in London and Royal Holloway College in Surrey.

Thomas Holloway founded Royal Holloway College in 1879 after initiating a public debate inviting suggestions as to 'How best to spend a quarter of a million or more'. It was his wife Jane who suggested a college for women as the means by which Holloway's money might effect 'the greatest public good'.

Since Queen Victoria presided over the grand opening ceremony of Royal Holloway College on 30 June 1886, the College has continued to grow in size and status to become one of the top research-led universities in the United Kingdom. In 1900, both Bedford and Royal Holloway were admitted as Colleges of the University of London and in 1965 they both admitted male undergraduates for the first time, while retaining their commitment to women's education. The Colleges merged in 1986 and have since adopted the name Royal Holloway, University of London.

## Studying petroleum geoscience

### Department of Earth Sciences

The Department of Earth Sciences at Royal Holloway is an internationally recognised centre for petroleum geoscience teaching and research. With over 30 years of experience training more than 500 geoscientists for the oil and gas industry, the department is a leading provider of advanced studies in petroleum geosciences.

- ▶ The degree offered through distance and flexible learning has the same curriculum as the MSc Petroleum Geoscience offered at the Royal Holloway campus.
- ▶ The department is ranked highly in national research assessment exercises as having a research output of international excellence.
- ▶ The programme has been developed by and is supported by a team of 12 academic staff, who are all active researchers and tutors in the field of petroleum geoscience.
- ▶ Tutorial support is provided for each module by Royal Holloway staff.
- ▶ With experience of supervising hundreds of independent projects for MSc students, Royal Holloway staff can provide expert advice to help plan projects to be carried out using industry data.

### The MSc in Petroleum Geoscience

Hydrocarbons are a precious resource. Finding new reserves is becoming ever more challenging and the enhanced recovery of reserves from existing fields is becoming increasingly important. Well trained petroleum geoscientists, with the ability to integrate geological and geophysical data and to apply it on a variety of scales, have a vital role to play. The MSc in Petroleum Geoscience provides graduates with training in the practical and technical skills required to address a range of questions, from understanding the distribution of hydrocarbons in sedimentary basins to quantifying the complex structural, stratigraphic and sedimentological architecture of individual reservoirs.

### Programme outline

- ▶ The programme is an online version of a well-established programme with an international reputation for excellence in the petroleum industry.
- ▶ It is primarily suited to hydrocarbon industry professionals who wish to further develop their knowledge and skills while continuing full-time work.

- ▶ You receive comprehensive learning materials, delivered via a dedicated web portal, that include video clips, animations, audio-visual presentations, fully-illustrated manuals, self-assessment quizzes, exercises and computer-based practicals.
- ▶ A field trip and intensive study seminars will be held in the United Kingdom each year as part of the sixth module, Petroleum systems (PGM651).
- ▶ There is an option to be awarded a Postgraduate Diploma (PG Dip) in Petroleum Geoscience if you do not undertake the Independent Research Project.

### Postgraduate Diploma in Petroleum Geoscience

Six compulsory core modules:

1. Tectonics and lithosphere dynamics PGM151
2. Geophysical analysis PGM251
3. Structural analysis PGM351
4. Sedimentology and stratigraphy PGM451
5. Reservoir geoscience PGM551
6. Petroleum systems (including fieldwork) PGM651

### MSc in Petroleum Geoscience

Six compulsory core modules and an independent research project:

1. Tectonics and lithosphere dynamics PGM151
2. Geophysical analysis PGM251
3. Structural analysis PGM351
4. Sedimentology and stratigraphy PGM451
5. Reservoir geoscience PGM551
6. Petroleum systems (including fieldwork) PGM651
7. Independent Research Project element PGM051.

## Prerequisites and progression rules

There are some restrictions on the order in which you may attempt modules.

1. Progression to PGM551. Students must have attempted PGM251.
2. Progression to PGM651. Students must have attempted PGM151, 251, 351 and 451 and must be registered for, or have completed, PGM551.
3. Progression to PGM051. Students must have completed PGM151, 251, 351 and 451 and must be registered for, or have completed, PGM551 and 651. Students must not have more than two course marks below 40%.

Attempted means: must have submitted coursework and sat an examination.

Completed means: must have a mark of at least 40% (i.e. a condonable mark).

## PGM651 field trip

The PGM651 classroom session and field trip usually take place in May at Royal Holloway and in the field on the coasts of Dorset, Somerset and North Devon, all in southern England. The trip is a compulsory element of the PGM651 course, so attendance is obligatory. The focus is on teaching integrated sedimentology, structural geology and petroleum systems evaluation, based on both subsurface data and outcrop analysis. Total costs, additional to the usual module registration fees, are in the order of £1,000 and this covers accommodation during the field trip (but not travel to get to and from the UK if required), hotel and guest house accommodation in shared rooms, plus breakfast and evening meals. Non EU-citizens will need to check whether they need a visa and organise this well in advance if necessary.



# About distance learning



There are many ways in which online distance and flexible learning is different from traditional classroom-based teaching, and it is important that you understand how it will work so that you can get the most out of learning in this way.

Having an awareness of the advantages and disadvantages of studying this way will help you to learn more effectively. We outline these in this section, with information about how this programme has been designed to help you overcome any potential difficulties.

## Advantages

### Convenience

With this study method you can study from the location of your choice, at a time that suits you. You do not need to leave your home or your family in order to complete the programme, nor do you have to stick to a completely rigid timetable. You should plan your studies around your other life commitments so that you don't feel overwhelmed by doing everything at once.

### Pace

Although there will be some timetables and deadlines in place (for example, for tutor support on the courses, online seminars, coursework submission and examinations) in general you can decide when you want to go through the study materials. By studying at your own pace you will learn more effectively than if you had to moderate your learning to the speed of a class. Take your time, and allocate your time wisely to allow more for topics that you might struggle with, and less for those you find comparatively easy.

### Access to materials and progress monitoring

Study materials are always available. If you study on campus and you miss a lecture, you may struggle to catch up or obtain a copy of the lecture notes. With an online programme you can access the materials whenever you want, over and over again. The study materials have been designed to provide you with frequent opportunities to assess what you have learnt and what you haven't.

You should make the most of these resources in order to ensure that you fully understand each topic before you move on.

### Confidence

Studies have also shown that students who may be shy about offering opinions in a traditional classroom often feel less reticent about expressing themselves in an online discussion. By joining in the discussion forums that are provided to you, you can develop the confidence to give your opinion and join in debates with your peers.

### Suits different types of learner

The programme has been designed to give you the opportunity to learn in a variety of different ways. Study materials use a combination of text and audio with some interactive activities. Online seminars and discussion areas provide you with the chance to discuss the content of the programme with fellow students and tutors. You should make the most of the different ways in which information is presented: by doing so you will find out how you learn best, which will make your progress on the programme, and throughout your career, much easier. It will also add interest and variety to your learning, which can help to keep you motivated. We hope that the use of different techniques means that people with different learning styles can all learn in the way that most suits them.

### Learning from your peers

You should take the opportunity to learn from your fellow students all around the world. Your online discussions with them take place in open environments where they remain for the duration of each course, so that you can always refer back to them for ideas and inspiration.

## Difficulties

### Technology

One of the most obvious challenges for online learners is technology. Due to the nature of this programme, you are probably fairly familiar with using information technology. However, technology does not just cause problems for inexperienced users.

We have implemented various strategies to overcome difficulties with this, such as specifying a minimum set of technical specifications. Please check the IT requirements on the programme web page.

### Isolation

The greatest challenge with distance and flexible learning is probably the potential for isolation and the lack of face-to-face interaction with staff and other students. We have therefore designed the programme to offer plenty of potential for interaction with other people. You can use discussion areas on the virtual learning environment (VLE) to get in touch with other people on the course and talk about your

experiences with distance and flexible learning or any difficulties you might have encountered with specific aspects of the programme. It is your responsibility to use the tools and activities provided to reduce any sense of isolation you might begin to feel. We encourage you to take advantage of all opportunities to meet and work with the tutors and your peers online.

### Keeping motivated

Any type of flexible learning requires a high degree of self-motivation. It takes a lot of effort to study on your own and keeping your motivation high may be difficult over such a long period of time. It may help if you identify some short- and long-term goals to aim for during your studies. Again, other students and tutors can help to motivate you so remember to make use of the opportunities to interact with them.

### Organisation

Online distance and flexible learning is probably different from any other learning experience you have had before. Unlike traditional campus-based programmes, which provide a rigid structure of lectures and seminars, it only gives you fixed dates for tutor-supported delivery of the modules, coursework submission and examinations: the rest is up to you. Although the study materials are structured to give you an indication of how much time you should spend on them, you will need to plan your own study timetable and decide how much you will study each week.

It is best if you develop a steady commitment and apply self-discipline to create a habit of regular study.

## The programmes online and on campus

Petroleum Geoscience is a taught programme on campus at Royal Holloway. We regard the programme that you have enrolled on simply as a different way of teaching the same material. Indeed, all practical activities on the campus programme have direct equivalents online and in many cases they are identical.

### Is the quality of teaching the same?

We believe very strongly that it is and, in fact, in some respects you gain significant advantages by studying online.

We develop the on-campus and flexible distance learning programmes together, and keep their syllabuses as closely matched as possible. Royal Holloway and the University of London subject all programmes to rigorous quality assessment to ensure that the same academic and teaching standards are met and maintained, both for students studying at Royal Holloway and those studying off-site.

The learning and teaching materials are regularly updated to help preserve a match with those on campus.

### Is the qualification the same?

Upon completion you are awarded a University of London degree. The same degree is awarded both to students attending Royal Holloway and to International Programmes students. The final certificate you receive indicates that you were registered with the University of London and awarded a University of London degree. It also gives the name of the member institution which conducted the examinations. There is no reference to the fact that you studied by distance and flexible learning, except on the accompanying marks transcript.

# Dates to note

<b>Dates to note</b>	<b>Things to do in the year ahead</b>
<b>At the time of initial or continuing registration</b>	Start planning which examinations you intend to enter for. You will be able to download a personalised examination entry form from the Student Portal from mid-December.
<b>Examination Centre closing date</b>	Check with your Examination Centre what their closing date is for making an examination entry.
<b>1 February</b>	All entries from Examination Centres must be received by the University of London no later than this date. Entries received after 1 February will only be accepted, in exceptional circumstances, at the discretion of the University.
<b>1 May</b>	Submission deadline for the Project Report (PGM051).
<b>May–June</b>	The field trip for Petroleum systems PGM651 usually takes place in May in southern England.  The examinations take place. Note that the University is unable to take religious and/or public holidays into account when setting the examination dates.
<b>Three to four weeks before examinations</b>	You will receive your Admission Notice, which confirms the dates and times of your examinations and your candidate number.
<b>10 days before the examinations start</b>	If you have not received an Admission Notice by this time, please use the online enquiry system (see the Student guide) to contact the Student Assessment Office.
<b>Three weeks after the last examination</b>	Last date by which the University will accept information about, and corroboration of, any medical condition and/or other mitigating circumstance that may have affected your examination performance.
<b>1 August</b>	Deadline to notify the Programme Director if you wish to transfer from the PGDip to the MSc.
<b>August</b>	The results of most examinations will be released during this month and will be sent directly to the Examination Centres, which are responsible for forwarding them to you.
<b>September/October</b>	Time to pay continuing registration fees, although you may wish to wait until you have your examination results.
<b>1 September</b>	Register for the Independent Research Project (PGM051) by 1 September in the year prior to submitting it.
<b>30 September</b>	The deadline to request an administrative recheck of your examination mark. Please note that this will not be an academic re-mark but purely an administrative recheck.
<b>1 November</b>	Submit the Independent Research Project (PGM051) proposal form and research plan to the Programme Director.

# Preparing for study



Before you begin your studies you will need to make some preparations to make sure that you gain the maximum benefit from the time you have available. The following sections will give you some guidance.

## How long will it take?

Our programmes offer you a great deal of flexibility in organising and pacing your studies. You should decide at the outset whether you want to try to complete in the minimum time of two years or whether other commitments mean that you should aim at a slower pace. Three years is the average amount of time students take to complete the programme. Keep in mind that these programmes include some flexibility to allow you to change the pace at which you study at any time, but try to be realistic in assessing how much time you will have for studying. Completing the programme in two years requires a significant amount of time per week, and it can be demoralising if you are over-optimistic and then find that you are falling behind.

### Taking a break from your studies

Provided that you complete your programme within the maximum period allowed from your effective date of registration and you follow the rules of progression given in the Programme Regulations, you can study at your own pace. For instance, you do not have to take examinations

every year. You should be careful, however, about taking a prolonged break from your studies, unless it is unavoidable. A break still counts towards your maximum period of registration, and thereby reduces the amount of time you have left for active study. You may also lose momentum and find it difficult to resume your studies.

If you do have to take a break, then please tell the Programme Administrator and the International Programmes (see p.2) so that we can keep up to date with your plans and advise you of any implications of your decision. Then, get in touch again when you resume your studies.

If you take a short break in your studies you will need to pay attention to the various deadlines that might affect you when you take up studying again. For instance, if you are planning to take examinations you must make sure that you have submitted the appropriate coursework by the deadlines listed for the coursework on the VLE. If you do not submit your coursework in time you will still be able to take your examinations but your overall mark for the module will be capped at 50%, unless we have granted you an extension. Extensions to coursework deadlines are only given in exceptional circumstances and must be applied for in good time. If you request an extension on the grounds of ill health you must supply a doctor's certificate to confirm this.

## How much time should you commit?

Because individuals differ in terms of how many hours per week they need to devote to their studies and how quickly they wish to complete the programme, it is difficult to be precise about how many hours you require. A rough guide, however, is that in order to complete the programme in three years, studying two taught modules per academic year, you should be prepared for up to 20 hours of study per week.

## Finding time to study

You will probably find it easier to keep up with your studies if you are organised and work out a timetable to guide when you will study.

To create a timetable for yourself, you can start by using the weekly planner provided in this section. Fill in all your usual weekly activities: work, food, household tasks, sleep, etc. Then decide how you might fit your study into the gaps that are left. Try to make your study periods neither too long nor too short: unless you have exceptional powers of concentration, you are unlikely to be able to study effectively for more than an hour or (at most) two hours at a time, and a very short session will not give you enough time to take in new ideas and think about them critically. Add up the hours you have identified as available for study; if they are not sufficient you may have to sacrifice some of your usual leisure pursuits during the study year. However, do

leave yourself some time for rest and relaxation – if you are too mentally or physically exhausted when you study you will not be alert enough to absorb knowledge and concepts and reflect on them critically.

Let your family and friends know when you will be studying and that you should not be interrupted at those times if possible. Even a short interruption can cause you to lose quite a lot of time, as it can take a while to get your concentration back.

## Finding a place to study

Finding a place to study can be just as important as working out when you will study. You will need to concentrate for quite long periods, and a congenial place to work can be just as important in helping with this as your ability or motivation. Create a comfortable working environment for yourself. Find a place where you feel comfortable and alert, and then make a habit of working there.

Establishing a routine can help a great deal when studying, but variety can also provide interest and new sources of stimulation. If you have access to a quiet room in a library then working there may create a sense of academic involvement and motivation, even if you are not actually consulting the books in the library.

Wherever you choose to work, you will need to ensure that:

- ▶ it is quiet and there are no interruptions

- ▶ you have a desk or table and a chair that is comfortable
- ▶ the lighting and ventilation are good
- ▶ you have the right equipment – pens, paper, books, computer with internet connection, your study materials, etc.

## Example study calendar

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday											Total
00.00–02.00																		
02.00–04.00																		
04.00–06.00																		
06.00–08.00																		
08.00–10.00																		
10.00–12.00																		
12.00–14.00																		
14.00–16.00																		
16.00–18.00																		
18.00–20.00																		
20.00–22.00																		
22.00–0.00																		
Hours for study																		

# Study resources

## Study materials

All of the study materials have been developed and written by academics who are not only experts in their specialist field, but are also committed to meeting the specific needs of International Programmes students. Please refer to the Student guide for advice on how to request your study materials and maintain your registration.

### Study guides

Study guides are provided on the course pages on the VLE. The study guide authors teach students on the MSc programmes at Royal Holloway, so they have experience of the difficulties you are likely to encounter. The study guide is designed to help you to learn. Like a tutor, it will identify those issues that are important and the problems you will encounter as you study the subject. You should see your study guide as your core teaching aid. It provides the perspective that we think is important and it is written in a plain and simple style.

Many of the study guides also contain recommended or further readings, should you want to delve deeper into certain subjects. It is important to remember that these study guides, together with the textbooks and readers, are comprehensive and therefore it is not necessary to purchase any further reading materials. However, when you prepare your research report, you may find it useful to find other information relevant to your specific study.

## The VLE

The VLE is an essential resource for your studies and much of your interaction with Royal Holloway will be through this site. You will find links to the different modules available to you and links to the online seminars as well as to all support services, making this an important facility that will enrich your learning experience on our programmes. You should therefore ensure that you visit the VLE on a regular basis.

The VLE user guide explains how to get started using the VLE and how to explore its functionality. This guide can be found on the Portal homepage:

<http://my.londoninternational.ac.uk>

To make the most of the resources available on the VLE you will need access to a personal computer with internet access and an up-to-date web browser (see 'Accessing our resources' in the Student guide for further details). Some of the information supplied on the VLE may be in the form of word processed documents, slide presentations, spreadsheets or databases, so you will need the appropriate software to read these (Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, Excel and Access). Go to the 'Information Centre' on the VLE and click on 'Software Downloads'. Here you will find a number of links to some of the software you will need as well as a number of other useful tools.

### Information Centre

The Information Centre is a section on the VLE. You can access this area from the front page in the same way you access your modules. It provides you with all the necessary administrative information and links to useful support services that you will require during your studies. It is extremely important that you visit this section of the VLE on a regular basis. By doing this, you will ensure that you have the latest information regarding all administrative matters.

### Submitting your coursework via the VLE

Please see the 'Student VLE Helpfile' in the 'Information Centre' section of the VLE for step-by-step information on the submission of coursework.

## The Online Library

The first place to go to access library resources remotely is the University of London's Online Library, which has a homepage dedicated to Petroleum Geoscience students to enable you to access the most relevant resources quickly. Read the **Student guide** to find out more about the kinds of resources it can offer, or visit the Petroleum Geoscience gateway at:

<http://onlinelibrary.london.ac.uk/programme/petroleum-geoscience>



# How to study



The techniques described below should help you, whatever you are aiming to achieve – reading, coursework, revising for examinations or planning/writing your research report.

## General tips

### Make sure that you know the requirements

By ensuring that you have read and understood the Programme Regulations you avoid many administrative problems, which can take time and effort to resolve and may distract you from your study.

### Planning

It is probably a good idea to create your own weekly calendar to guide you through the modules you are taking so that you use your time effectively. You should plan what you want to cover in a given period of time. Be realistic in your targets: don't set targets which you have no chance of reaching. If you set attainable targets you will still get a psychological boost each time you achieve your goal. Your plan should not be totally inflexible: you will never keep to it exactly and must be prepared to alter it along the way.

### Concentration

If you find it difficult to concentrate, try studying in short bursts to start with. You could start with 60 minutes or even less, but give yourself a very definite target to achieve in that time.

### Breaks

Take a break of between five and ten minutes in every hour, or perhaps take two shorter breaks: stand up, walk around, and turn your mind to something else.

### Day dreaming

If you find yourself day dreaming or drifting away from the task in hand, stop, and unless you are clearly due for a break, force your attention back to the task in hand.

### Ending

Try not to finish a study session at a difficult point as it might make you reluctant to start again. If you have to stop when you encounter a problem, note down why you find it difficult and perhaps talk it over with someone. Use the last five minutes of any study session to recall or check through what you have done.

## Effective learning

Not everyone learns in the same way, so we can only offer you suggestions as to effective ways to study.

When looking at study guides, textbooks and readers you may think that there will be a lot of reading. Don't be discouraged – you don't have to read it all in one go. If English is not your first language, you may well find it difficult at first, especially as each subject area has its own specialised vocabulary. Do persevere; you will find it tough at first but it should become easier and quicker as you go along. Make sure that you

have a good dictionary to hand so that you can look up words that you don't know.

It is important that you develop a clear understanding of what you should be achieving as you study. You will find specific learning objectives at the beginning of each chapter of the study guides. You should make yourself familiar with the objectives of the particular chapter you are reading, and when you have finished studying it check them again to see whether you understood everything and have accomplished what was expected.

When reading your study material, choose a section that you want to complete in the time that you have available. Many students then find that the following sequence of activities can make their time much more productive.

- ▶ Skim read the study guide, looking at headings, introductions, conclusions and questions raised. For an average chapter this should take no more than 10 minutes. Note any problem areas or issues of importance in the margins.
- ▶ Read the study guide carefully once more to get a clear picture of the material and cross-reference readings in study materials.
- ▶ Where there is a textbook, skim read the recommended section, marking off any areas that look particularly difficult. Now re-read those sections and refer back to the study guide to help you understand.

- ▶ With journal articles it is also good practice to mark off important citations to other readings. Also note the citation that you think is the most important, and perhaps try to locate and read it when you have a chance.
- ▶ Once you have completed your textbook reading, return to the study guide and attempt to answer the questions at the end of the chapter based on what you have learnt from the study guide, textbook and related readings.
- ▶ Revise your work regularly. We suggest that at the start of each week you review the material you have studied so far. Concentrate on the tricky bits and do not linger over those areas you clearly understand.

## Taking notes

You may feel that it is not enough just to mark up your study guide or textbook. Some students like to take written notes when studying in order to:

- ▶ help concentration
- ▶ provide a record that will help you to remember and recall
- ▶ summarise an argument
- ▶ gather material on a specific topic
- ▶ record information/ideas
- ▶ provide summarised material for revision.

If you are someone who likes to take written notes, feel free to do so.

However, it is a waste of time just to copy out large chunks of the study guide or textbook word for word. It is tempting to take notes as you are reading for the first time, but this is not an efficient technique as you are likely to take down too much information and simply copy without understanding. Why not follow this guide instead?

- ▶ Read a section of your study guide, a textbook chapter, or article in a journal.
- ▶ Read just enough to keep an understanding of the material.
- ▶ Do not take notes at first, but focus instead on understanding the material.
- ▶ Review the material.
- ▶ Locate the main ideas, as well as important sub-points.
- ▶ Paraphrase this information: putting the information into your own words forces you to become actively involved with the material.
- ▶ Write the paraphrased ideas as your notes either in linear form or as a spider diagram.
- ▶ Do not copy information directly from the study guide or textbook.
- ▶ Add only enough detail to help you understand.
- ▶ Review and compare your notes with the text, and ask yourself if you really understand.
- ▶ Record the source of your notes carefully.

# Preventing problems



Learning off-campus is not an easy option and it can sometimes be difficult to keep yourself motivated. It might help if you think in advance about the sorts of problems which might arise and how you might overcome them, or better still, how you can prevent them happening in the first place.

## You feel isolated

Isolation is one of the most common problems that distance and flexible learning students face. The best way that you can avoid this is through positive engagement with fellow students and tutors on this programme, via the VLE. In the unlikely event that all your best efforts to do this have failed, then you should contact us for further advice.

## Your family doesn't understand

Ideally your family and friends are behind you all the way and, in theory, they are very supportive. But small difficulties can quickly build up into genuine problems.

Probably the best way to avoid this is to negotiate time for studying and time for family and friends – and keep to it. When a problem arises, you need to go back and review the arrangements you have made. Are you keeping your side of the bargain? What compromise could you make to keep everyone happy? When examinations are approaching, you must explain to everyone that you need to spend more time studying, but then plan to spend extra time with them when the examinations are finished.

## Your employer isn't supportive

If you are combining work and study you may find that your employer is initially supportive, but is later reluctant to spare you sufficient time to study or to attend examinations. This can lead to conflicting and stressful pressures on your time.

If your employer is supportive of your studies (perhaps even providing some funding) then it is definitely in their interest to help you to succeed. The most important thing

you can do is to make it clear to your employer exactly how much time you will need and at what periods of the year you are particularly under pressure. Plan your needs carefully, in advance, with the cooperation of your employer: for example, ask them well in advance for any time off that you may require to concentrate on your studies.

Planning your studies may also involve making arrangements to catch up on work, gently reminding your employer of the advantages to the organisation of having you complete the programme and apply your new skills and knowledge for the benefit of all. Balancing study and work may be challenging. Sometimes your study time may have to accommodate problems at work, but in exchange it may be possible for you to ask for compensatory time later.

Some of you may have less cooperative employers, or may even have chosen not to inform your employer that you are studying this programme. If so, you may simply have to consider taking lighter study loads and also be prepared to sacrifice some of your holidays or leisure time in order to complete your studies.

## You can't find the time to study

Finding the time to study and maintaining study schedules can be a real problem for some students. This is where you may have to work hard to improve your personal discipline and efficiency.

If you have problems finding time to study, review your weekly schedule to see if you can make some small changes in lifestyle that could result in an extra few hours for study. For example, could you use your commute? Could you use your lunch hour?

Another way of recovering some time is to try to study more efficiently. There are no prescriptive rules for efficient study because it comes down to your own personality and study skills. However, there are some suggestions in the section above, 'How to study', which should help you to become more efficient with your time.

## You fall behind

If you fall behind the pace at which you have chosen to study this programme, or something unexpected happens that puts you seriously behind your study schedule (such as work commitments, an illness or an accident) then you have several options.

Revising your schedule is one option. This might involve delaying when you will sit an examination or adjusting your entire study schedule to a slower pace – perhaps deciding to take an extra year to complete, for example.

If you have fallen behind because you did not give yourself a fixed study schedule or set yourself specific goals, you should try to do this now. Having prearranged deadlines and milestones might give you the impetus and discipline you need to finish.

If you do find you are having difficulties and are not sure what to do, then contact us for advice.

## You don't understand the study materials

If you don't understand the materials, you may be able to get help with your question from one of your peers by using an online discussion forum, as you might when studying on a campus. If other students cannot help, you can always get in touch with your tutor.

Sometimes it's simply that you have let yourself get too tired and you just need a rest – so take a break, get some fresh air and come back to it later. Depending on the subject, you might be able to move on to the next topic or module and then return to the troublesome one later. Maybe it's a question of lacking the background knowledge in a particular area, in which case you probably need to go back to study that subject for a while to get up to speed.

# Assessment



## Marking

Assessment will be conducted by two internal markers, and moderated by the External Examiner. Each examination, coursework assignment and dissertation will be marked according to the assessment criteria given in the Programme Regulations. The criteria for the awards of pass, merit and distinction are also detailed in the Programme Regulations.

## Coursework

Coursework is set for each module and accounts for 20 per cent of the total mark for that module. If you do not submit the coursework or if your coursework is received at the University after the deadline, you may not receive a mark for that element of the assessment and it may count as an attempt at the assessment. If you make more than one attempt at an element of assessment the overall mark for the module will be capped at 50%.

See the Programme Regulations for details:

[www.londoninternational.ac.uk/regs](http://www.londoninternational.ac.uk/regs)

Coursework is also a very important way for you to receive tutorial comments, guidance, help and advice from your tutors, in order to measure your progress.

### Submitting your coursework

Your coursework must be submitted in English and must not contravene the University's plagiarism rules.

If you want to receive feedback on your coursework or make sure that the assignment mark will count towards the final assessment, the assignment must be submitted and received by the deadlines stated in the information provided in the Information Centre on the VLE.

## The Independent Research Project

The Independent Research Project element (PGM051) is a very important part of your MSc: it is an opportunity to learn and practise research and writing skills that you

will need in your career. It is the part of the programme where you can apply the analytical and problem-solving techniques you have acquired during your studies. Students find the project demanding but at the same time one of the most rewarding aspects of their MSc.

The research report consists of up to 15,000 words, and is likely to be on a topic related to your work. You should start considering the nature of your project as soon as possible after beginning the programme. It is essential that a suitable data set is identified well before you are due to start the project. If the data belong to the company that you work for you need to ensure that you have the necessary permission to use the data for your project: check with your line manager.

### Your adviser and monitoring your progress

On the VLE course page for the PGM051 module you will find instructions for how to submit your research plan to the Programme Director, who will decide whether you have a feasible project with sufficient scope for an MSc-level thesis.

The research plan must be submitted by **1 November** to be considered as part of the following September's examination. However, we strongly encourage you to start the process well before that. Once you have developed the initial idea for your project and the Programme Director has approved it, a specialist adviser from Royal Holloway will be allocated to you. You will be informed of the name of your adviser and how you may contact them. It is your responsibility to keep in contact with your adviser, preferably by email, otherwise by fax or letter. Do not expect to reach your adviser by phone. Once you have made initial contact, your adviser is expected to respond within an agreed period of time.

You will also have to submit progress reports to your adviser every month while you are doing the project. These will not form part of your final assessment, but are an essential study requirement. If you do not submit the required progress reports, it will be assumed that you have withdrawn from the module.

You must submit your research plan to the Programme Director via email, preferably one week or more before the deadline, in order to allow time for feedback and revision.

## Writing your research report

The thought of writing a project report of 15,000 words (about 100 pages of text) might seem quite daunting at first, but you will get plenty of help. Your adviser will help by examining your research proposal and giving you an opinion on the viability of your proposed subject. Your progress reports are opportunities for us to make sure that your research is keeping on track and that your report will be up to standard.

The most important general points to remember about your research report are:

- ▶ Make sure that the data set is not too large and that you are sufficiently interested in it to keep your motivation high.
- ▶ Make sure that the data set that you have chosen offers sufficient scope for analysis to make an interesting project.
- ▶ The background literature report and the methodology section can be written early in the project time period, and revisited later if necessary.
- ▶ Start writing as soon as possible: your first attempts do not have to be perfect, you can come back and improve them later on.
- ▶ Don't get stuck on writing a particular chapter. Remember that you need to manage your time in order to complete the whole thesis. Press on and complete the entire report before going back and revising earlier chapters.
- ▶ Make use of a referencing guide (see below) when citing articles, books and internet material that you have used, and to help you in compiling your bibliography.
- ▶ Ensure that you concentrate, in particular, on the 2,000 word executive summary which is key to getting the best possible mark.

## Format of the report

For detailed guidance on selecting a topic and other related information, see the **Guide to the MSc Independent Project** on the VLE.

For the rules and the required format, see the **Rules and guidelines for preparing the project report** on the VLE.

For guidance on what you need to do to achieve a good mark, see the **Project marking criteria** on the VLE.

## Submitting your research report

You will submit your report by electronic submission through the VLE; dissertations submitted in other ways will not be accepted. Full instructions for how to do this will be available on the VLE.

## Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the use without acknowledgement of the words or ideas of others. Plagiarism is treated as a major offence by the University of London. This applies equally to copying directly from books, articles and other works and to copying work by another student. Copying material from the internet is also considered to be plagiarism.

You must be very careful to ensure that all words, diagrams and ideas that you get from outside sources are fully acknowledged in your work by including appropriate references.

Plagiarism is punishable in a variety of ways: you may not get a mark for the piece of work concerned and you may be awarded zero per cent for the module as a whole. The most severe consequence available is your dismissal from the University of London.

For further details on plagiarism see the Regulations relating to examination offences in the General regulations.

Please remember the rule: if in doubt, acknowledge!

## Examinations

As you progress through the programme you will be examined by the University and will earn your qualification through hard work, intellectual endeavour and by convincing us that you have reached the high standard we demand.

The information that follows is for your guidance and information only.

All core modules will be assessed by a two-hour unseen written examination in addition to the coursework. The examination will count for 80 per cent of your final mark for the module. Examinations will be held once a year, normally in early June. You must submit the coursework for each module before you sit the examination for the module and in the same academic year. If you submit the coursework and then cannot sit the examination you must notify the Student Assessment Office as soon as possible. You will be expected to attempt the examination at the next available opportunity. The minimum number of modules you may sit at each examination is one and the maximum number of core modules is four.

Information about how to enter for examinations is in the Student guide and on the website:

[www.londoninternational.ac.uk/exams](http://www.londoninternational.ac.uk/exams)

## Revising for examinations

### Be organised

During the course of the study year it is a good idea to go back and periodically review material you have worked on; in this way you are more likely to retain the knowledge you acquire. However, you will probably want to set aside some time for concentrated revision before the examinations. Decide very early on how much time you will need to spend on each subject and make yourself a revision timetable. Do not avoid topics that you found difficult: spend extra time on them. Likewise do not

become over-confident about topics you thought were easy and neglect them. You will need to balance priorities and demands between the various modules and topics you have chosen to work on in detail.

Remember to leave some time in your revision timetable for relaxation. If you rest your brain it will have the chance to recuperate and in doing so gain strength. Do not go to bed straight after revision. If you do you may have trouble sleeping as thoughts are rushing around your brain. It is not a good idea to work right up until the examinations – especially the night before a morning examination. Last minute cramming may clog up your mind and make it harder to recall other knowledge.

### How to revise

Make the revision process distinctive in some way. The more distinctive it is, the greater the probability that you will remember it at the vital time. For example:

- ▶ Generate and write down questions about the material and any terms that you need to know on one side of a set of cards. Write the answers or definitions on the back of the cards and use them to test yourself later.
- ▶ Generate a set of keywords that will help you to remember lists of information.
- ▶ Make spider diagrams which process information rather than just reiterating it; this will aid your memory and also your understanding of the material.

### Test yourself

Try some of these ideas for testing yourself.

- ▶ With a large blank piece of paper, write a topic name in the centre and then build up a spider diagram around it. Add ideas by drawing in lines to show how they relate to one another. Once you have finished, look back at your study guide or notes to see if you have missed anything.
- ▶ Practise answering examination questions – use specimen examination papers or past papers if they are available, or think up your own questions. Make a

detailed outline plan of the answer. Refer back to your study guide and notes to see what you have managed to remember and what you have not. Only include what is relevant to the specific question, not everything that you know about the topic.

- ▶ If you have not taken any examinations recently, try doing some questions under examination conditions in the same amount of time that you would have in the examination itself. Some people find it very difficult to get their ideas together in a structured form quickly enough, so it is good to get used to this.

## Tips for sitting examinations

### Getting to the examination room

Get to the examination room well in time. If you have not been to the place where the examinations are being held before then it might be a good idea to visit it in advance of the day of the examination so that you know exactly where you have to go. If you have some distance to travel, allow yourself plenty of time and make sure that you will be there on time. You won't want any extra anxiety on the day of the examination itself.

Make sure that you have enough pens and pencils with you, and any other equipment that you might need. A watch so that you can easily allocate time to each answer would be a good idea.

Avoid talking to other students just before the examination if you think that it might agitate you.

### In the examination

The Examiners want to see that you can:

- ▶ demonstrate knowledge of the key topics relevant to the question
- ▶ apply these concepts and tools in answering the question
- ▶ demonstrate critical thinking and analytical skills in exploring the question and giving relevant examples (from your own experience if that is possible).



Make sure that you:

- ▶ **Read the questions carefully.** Read the question paper through once and then go back and read it again more thoroughly, marking the questions that you feel that you could answer. Read the questions that you have marked very carefully and decide exactly which ones you are going to answer and the order in which you are going to answer them. Split the remaining time equally between the questions.
- ▶ **Plan the answer.** Before answering a question, identify the key issues relating to it. Then select those concepts and methods you believe are most relevant. Do not start writing until you have planned out your answer. Make the plan detailed, showing the content of the introduction, the main body of the answer and the conclusion. Read through your planned answer. Is it logically argued? Are the main issues covered? Does it really answer the question? This process should take no more than five minutes and will ensure that your answer is relevant, logical and concise.
- ▶ If you have made a good plan you will find that you write the answer very quickly as all you have to do is put in the words to link the point-by-point plan together. Cross out the plan neatly when you have finished your answer, but ensure that your Examiner can read it. You will not be penalised for a bad plan, but it can help your mark if you do not have time to finish answering the question properly.
- ▶ **Keep to the allocated time** and within the time that you have allocated for each question. It is easier to get the first few marks of a question than it is to get the last few of another one. If you run out of time on a question, consider leaving it unfinished and go on to the next one. If you get the chance then go back and finish the unfinished questions, even if this is in note form. An Examiner may see from your rough plan that you meant to go further than you could manage and may reward you accordingly.
- ▶ **Answer the right number of questions.** The easiest way to fail an examination is not to answer enough questions. Every examination paper will ask you to

answer a certain number of questions, and marks will be allocated to each question. If you are asked to answer four questions, and only answer two, you would have to get full marks on each just to pass. It is not a good idea to spend a lot of time over one question at the expense of the others.

- ▶ **Answer the question that is asked.** Most marks in examinations are lost through a failure to answer the question properly. All too often students see a question on one particular aspect of a subject, and then just write down everything that they know about that subject, rather than the specific aspect that was requested. Read the question carefully and note down what aspects are being asked for. If the question looks similar to one that you have revised, check to see whether it differs in some important respects. Look for keywords in the question, as these will help you to understand what you are being asked to do.
- ▶ **Answer all parts of the question.** Some questions contain several parts. Make sure that you answer all the parts that are required: it may be that you need to answer two out of three sub-questions, or an either/or question. Spend enough time on each of the main parts of the question.
- ▶ **Cite research.** You get marks for citing relevant examples and ideas from books and articles you have read, so always give examples of research to back up your arguments – even when the question does not explicitly ask for them. When answering a question in an examination you are not expected to give full bibliographical references for your sources. You should nevertheless acknowledge the name of any author you cite. If you can give examples from your own work experience, that is also a good idea.
- ▶ **Write clearly.** If English is not your first language, don't worry that you might read and write more slowly than your peers. Even if this is the case, remember that you get good marks for writing clear, critical and well-organised answers. Very short answers can still get good marks if they are clear and to the point.

## Permitted materials

In the examination you may use only such books, notes, statutes, statistical tables, instruments or other materials as are specifically permitted in the Admission Notice. No other aids whatsoever may be introduced into the examination room or be handled or consulted during an examination. Any such materials or aids in the possession of a student on entry to the examination room must be deposited immediately with the invigilator before the examination starts. It is an examination offence to introduce unauthorised materials into the examination room, and you may be severely penalised for this.

You may use your own electronic calculator in the examination, where specified. Your calculator must be of the hand-held type, quiet in operation and compact, and must have its own power supply. You are entirely responsible for ensuring that it is in working order for the examination and for providing alternative means of calculation in the event of the calculator failing during the examination. Calculators will not be provided by the University.

When you use an electronic calculator in an examination you must state clearly on your examination script the name and type of machine used. Calculators which display graphics, text or algebraic equations are not allowed. Your calculator must not be programmed prior to the examination, unless specific permission to do this has been given. The unauthorised use of material stored in a pre-programmable memory constitutes cheating.

## What happens if you fail a subject?

In the unlikely event that you do not pass one of your examinations, you are permitted to resit that examination one more time. Since examinations are scheduled once a year, resits have to be taken one year after the first attempt. If you sit an examination on a second occasion, having failed on the first occasion, you do not need to pay again to register for the module but you will have to pay an examination re-entry fee. You cannot sit an examination for any module on more than two occasions.

If you fail the examination on a second occasion your registration on the degree scheme will cease. For this reason it may be better to not attend the examination if you feel ill-prepared.

# Exit awards and intermediate awards



If you are registered for the MSc degree or the Postgraduate Diploma and you have not been able to complete the required number of modules in the time that is available then you should check to see if you qualify for an intermediate or exit award.

An intermediate award can be granted by the Board of Examiners to students registered for the MSc who complete the six modules of the Postgraduate Diploma but who do not complete the independent research project.

An exit award can be granted by the Board of Examiners to students registered for the MSc degree or Postgraduate Diploma who have made progress but who do not meet the requirements of the degree or Postgraduate Diploma. You may qualify for a Postgraduate Certificate in Petroleum Geoscience if you have completed at least three modules.

To see the rules in detail please refer to the regulations:

[www.londoninternational.ac.uk/regs](http://www.londoninternational.ac.uk/regs)

If you would like any advice about these awards, or wish to be considered for one, please contact the Assessment Office through the Student Portal.

For further information on the range of programmes we offer, please visit our website or contact us at:

The Student Advice Centre  
University of London  
Senate House  
Malet Street  
London WC1E 7HU  
United Kingdom

Telephone +44 (0)20 7862 8360  
[enquiries.londoninternational.ac.uk](http://enquiries.londoninternational.ac.uk)

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