GeogSoc Pizza ‘Meet and Greet’
Friday 8th September between 1300 and 1500 in St Mary’s G15
Over the bridge, through the double doors and first on the right. All welcome – your chance to meet some more of our students and staff.

Discipline email address  geography@abdn.ac.uk

School office staff  Mr Thomas Shaw - Secretary
MRS Elizabeth (Betty) Euington – Secretary
Mrs Gill Reid – Senior Secretary
Mrs Ann Simpson – School Admin Officer

School office location  School of Geosciences reception, G05I Meston Building (north entrance, then work left from the foyer)
Open for student queries: Monday-Friday 0900-1200 and 1400-1630

School website  www.abdn.ac.uk/geosciences

Head of School  Professor David Jolley
Director of UG Teaching for School  Dr Tim Mighall
UG Teaching Committee for Geography  Dr Dmitri Mauquoy

Teaching timetable  The first half-session course compulsory for all Geography degrees is:

GG1008: GLOBAL WORLDS, GLOBAL CHALLENGES

The first two lectures are:
Tuesday 12 September 2017, 10 a.m., Arts Lecture Theatre, William Guild Building
and
Friday 15 September 2017, 11 a.m., also in the Arts Lecture Theatre, William Guild Building
Lectures continue at the same times and place until the end of November. You will also have a regular workgroup slot, from the third week of teaching onwards. Once you have registered for your courses, you will be able to pick your workgroup using the MyTimetable widget.

**Choosing courses**

Entrants to Year 1 must take both the two Level 1 Geography courses, GG1008 and GG1510. If you are registered for a single honours MA or BSc degree in Geography you will choose another six courses. Joint honours students will have less choice, as some course will be prescribed for their other degree subject.

[More information on choosing your courses](#) (this link should open up our course tips document)

**Unsure? Need help? Don’t worry!**

The University expects students to work things out for themselves. However, we will be running some help sessions in Welcome Week, at which we will try to answer any questions about course choices and MyCurriculum. Full details to be confirmed (look out for notices or check with the School office), but we have slots pencilled-in between Monday 4 September and Thursday 7 September in St Mary’s G9 (the small computer room in the northern part of the building – over the bridge and straight down the corridor).

**Direct entrants to Year 2**

You must choose from Level 2 Geography courses, plus courses in other subjects from Levels 1 or 2. Please ask us if you would like to discuss your options.

**Your classes**

Your classes will be made up of a variety of lectures, seminars, practicals, workshops, tutorials and field trips. Specific details will be given in the course guides, available on MyAberdeen.

You are expected to attend all classes, and we monitor attendance. Some classes are compulsory – usually those that involve small group teaching, practical work or assessment of some kind. Failure to attend these can get you into trouble. If you miss or are going to miss a class due to medical reasons or other good cause, ensure you complete an absence report via MyAberdeen. Please see the Handbooks for further details.

The educational culture in Scotland is very much focused on independent learning and this is reflected in the number of contact hours that students have with teaching staff. We expect that a significant amount of reading and study will be done outside of the classroom. For more details on what to expect in your first year of Geography, see below.
### Assessment

Courses are assessed by a variety of methods, and these vary between courses. Specific details are given in the course guides, available on MyAberdeen. GG1008 includes coursework – an Excel practical and a presentation – as well as a final exam. Please see the Handbooks and MyAberdeen sites for details of coursework submission. Check the instructions for each piece of work carefully, as requirements will vary.

**IMPORTANT**

End-of-course exams for the first half-session will take place between Saturday 2\textsuperscript{nd} December and Friday 15\textsuperscript{th} December 2017, the last day of term. The exam timetable is set centrally, and will not be published until several weeks into the half-session. If you book transport home before Saturday 16\textsuperscript{th} December, you do so at your own risk.

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### Academic staff

As well as the help provided in classes, you are welcome to contact teaching staff at other times. We all have different responsibilities, so our availability varies. Some staff operate an ‘open door’, some use set office hours, some prefer students to make appointments. Some staff like e-mail, some will prefer to see you in person. Check course guides, or ask. If stuck, ask the School office to help you out, or try one of our trouble-shooters (see below).

Posters listing the School of Geosciences staff can be found in Meston Building and St Mary’s Building.

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### Suggested reading


If you are confident that you wish to continue with Geography beyond first year we recommend:


Both these books are also useful for the Level 2 Geography courses, although this does mean that some of their content is a bit more difficult than some of the dedicated introductory texts. Both are expensive, but you might find second-hand copies of the not-so-different previous editions cheaper.

If you want new books, unless you are desperate to get ahead, we recommend that you wait until you get here and buy from the University branch of Blackwell’s. If you do have the cash to spare, having your own books can be a big help/confidence booster/incentive to study! But remember that the University’s library stocks multiple copies of key textbooks. Reading a quality newspaper and (judicious!) use of the Web can also provide much useful material.
Troubleshooting
If you have a question or a problem, please ask your personal tutor, course tutor, lecturer, course coordinator or Infohub staff. But, if you need help quickly, and are not sure whom to ask, or cannot find the appropriate person, please try our trouble-shooters:

DR NICK SPEDDING
Room B10, basement north. Tel: 01224 273481. E-mail: n.spedding@abdn.ac.uk
or
DR DMITRI MAUQUOY
Room G23, beside Map Control. Tel: 01224 272364. E-mail: d.mauquoy@abdn.ac.uk

For first year students: what to expect once teaching starts (this is an extract from our Handbook, which you will find on My Aberdeen once teaching starts)

The move from school to university study is a big step. The work will be more challenging, and you will be expected to develop more disciplined, independent study habits. The chance to acquire new knowledge and new skills is, of course, the main reason why you are coming to study at Aberdeen, so – although you may be slightly nervous about this prospect – we hope that you will also find it exciting. And please don’t worry too much! Our courses are designed to become progressively more demanding as you move up through the four years of your degree programme – we do not expect you to be reading articles in cutting-edge research journals and writing 10,000-word reports right away. There is lots of support available from course tutors, course coordinators, your personal tutor, and – if you would like additional support for a particular study skill – our colleagues in the University’s Student Learning Service (see below).

Of the three undergraduate subjects taught in the School of Geosciences, two – Archaeology and Geology – are rarely, if at all, taught in schools. We expect that many of you, whatever your degree plans, will have studied Geography at school, but even then you will find that large chunks of the courses are new, and topics familiar from your Higher or A-Level syllabus will reappear in different ways. The days of annotating diagrams of coastal cliffs, glacial troughs or river flood plains are long gone, although we might, for example, ask you to write an essay evaluating the relative contributions of coastal, glacial and fluvial action to the shaping of Scotland’s landscape. By all means bring your school notes and textbooks with you, but please do not rely on them too much when doing your work. If you do find yourself repeating something from your school work, please stop and think: is it appropriate to the task you have been asked to complete? Sometimes the subject matter will be OK as a basis for your answer, but you will need to present it in different, more sophisticated ways to get good marks – whereas, for other pieces of work, you will be using concepts and examples that will be new to you.

Some of the most important differences between school and university study are:

- Material will be presented at a more sophisticated level: the ‘facts’ of say, global warming or meander formation, will be different to those you may know already.
- But, increasingly, you will move away from learning facts to discussing concepts and theories – and you will find that there are often different theories to explain the same thing, with no obvious answers to which are right and which are wrong.
- You will be expected to find your own examples to back up your arguments, rather than rely exclusively on those presented in class. You will find that work set for you is often less formulaic, and that you are expected to take on more responsibility for planning your work’s structure. For example, in an exam you might have to write an essay with little clue as to what should go into it, other than the essay question itself.
– as opposed to a typical Higher exam question broken down into several clearly-defined parts.

- You will have to take more responsibility for managing your studies, juggling your time between lectures, tutorials, practical classes, private study, perhaps a job – and your friends and family. The national standards for full-time higher education anticipate study for 40 hours per week – just the same as having a full-time job. It is likely that formal classes will account for under half of this notional 40 hours in your first year, which gives you plenty of time to fill up for yourself with study of your own. Getting used to this new regime, and making effective use of your time without parents and teachers to keep an eye on you, is perhaps the most challenging aspect of the transition to university.

**Study skills**

To do well, and make the most of your new knowledge, you will need to work on key skills, such as:

- Note-taking
- Locating information and referencing your sources
- Writing essays and reports
- Critical thinking
- Graphical and verbal presentations
- Time management
- Effective revision / exam preparation strategies

We will help. Tutorials and practicals at first and second year emphasise acquisition of new skills, so it is important that you attend. If you would like further support beyond classes, please contact the University’s Student Learning Service:

[http://www.abdn.ac.uk/sls/](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/sls/)

The SLS’s Academic Skills Advisers run workshops and individual advice sessions. See also the ACHIEVE site on MyAberdeen (under ‘Organisations’). Two useful books, recommended by the SLS are: *The Study Skills Handbook*, 4th edition, and *Critical Thinking Skills: Developing Effective Analysis and Argument*. Both are written by Stella Cottrell, and published by Palgrave. See also: [https://he.palgrave.com/studentstudyskills/](https://he.palgrave.com/studentstudyskills/). We also like *Study Skills for Geography, Earth and Environmental Science Students*, 3rd edition, by Pauline Kneale (Hodder Education, 2011).