# Programme Specification: MPhil/PhD Economic Geography

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| **1. Awarding Body** | LSE |
| **2. Details of accreditation by a professional/statutory body, e.g. ESRC; BPS etc** | ESRC |
| **3. Name of final award** | MPhil/PhD |
| **4. Programme Title** | Economic Geography |
| **5. Duration of the course** | Either 1+3 (4 years) or +3 (3 years) |
| **6. Based in the Department/Institute:** | Geography and Environment |
| **7. Relevant QAA subject benchmark statements** | n/a |
| **8. UCAS Code** | L7ZQ |
| **9. First written/last amended** | November 2012 |

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| **10. The programme aims to:** |
| * To give students a critical understanding of the extent, nature and consequences of spatial disparities in economic performance, and identify appropriate policy responses; * To confront students with a rigorous exposition of relevant analytical, methodological and quantitative tools, and give them proficiency in the application of these techniques to their research; * To expose students to recent developments in the fields of economic geography and spatial economics, and give them the ability to apply knowledge to new problems and contexts; * Provide supportive academic guidance to help students reflect on their central research question and to enable them to carry out doctoral level research; * To prepare students for careers in research and academia, consultancy or government policy, by providing specialist training as well as transferable skills. |

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| **11. Programme outcomes: knowledge and understanding; skills and other attributes** |
| **Knowledge and understanding:**    At the end of the programme students are expected to:   * Have accumulated a broad understanding of traditional areas of economics – such as economic geography, spatial, urban and real estate economics – as well as more institutional approaches to spatial economic disparities– such as regional science and local economic development; * Have acquired a deep understanding of a specialist subject, including a solid command of the literature, as well as the relevant theoretical and methodological approaches; * Have developed the ability to use their knowledge to understand and investigate new topics and issues in economics and human geography; * Have advanced their capacity to study economic geography and spatial economics in a rigorous and quantitative fashion; * Have strengthened their ability to provide policy recommendations which are solidly grounded in evidence based on the best practice in empirical research.  Skills and other attributes At the end of the programme, students will have acquired these more general skills:   * Organisational skills, including the capacity to meet deadlines, remain motivated and make progress while working independently; * Writing and presentational skills, including the ability to organise and communicate   scientific results in an intelligible and structured way. These skills will be acquired both by writing the dissertation as well as by presenting at seminars and workshops;   * The ability to produce a PhD thesis, as defined by the London School of Economics regulations; * Data collection, management and analysis skills, including the ability to use econometric and statistical software; * Research skills, including the ability to browse paper and electronic resources on-line and in the Library; * Information Technology (IT) and computer skills, including the ability to use both general packages and software for specific academic purposes; * Teaching experience which will be gained by acting as class teachers for the courses offered by the Department.   See [information relating to careers](http://www2.lse.ac.uk/intranet/CareersAndVacancies/careersService/Home.aspx). |

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| **12. Teaching, learning and assessment strategies to enable outcomes to be achieved and demonstrated** |
| **Teaching and learning strategies**  **The programme is offered in the following alternative formats: 1+3 or +3. The** 1+3 format delivers comprehensive methods and subject-specific training. This is aimed at students graduating with an undergraduate degree in economics or a closely related subject. The +3 format is suitable for students who have already completed a graduate degree in a relevant subject and want to focus on more advanced training and research. The criteria for admission to the programme (in its alternative formats) are discussed in detailed in section 14.  ***First year of the 1+3 route:***  During the first year of the *1+3* mode, students will acquire detailed knowledge and understanding of the core topics in their selected MSc programme of entry: MSc Local Economic Development or MSc Real Estate Economics and Finance.  For students in the MSc ‘Local Economic Development’ (LED), these will be ‘GY404: Seminar in Local Economic Development’, and possibly both (but at least one) ‘GY407: Globalization, Regional Development and Policy’ and ‘GY408: Local Economic Development and Policy’. These courses are meant to develop students’ critical understanding of both local economic processes and globalization forces which shape spatial disparities in socio-economic endowment and performance. Additionally, students are expected to take one full unit of methods training approved by their supervisor. This could include the course ‘GY428: Applied Quantitative Methods’, as well as courses offered by the Methodology Institute (courses labelled as MY) or other units offered by the School. It is expected that different students will specialise in different areas of research and thus need different methodological training. The possibility of combining both in-house courses with those offered by other departments and institutes of the School should guarantee that every student get a solid, yet personally tailored training.  For students in the MSc ‘Real Estate Economics and Finance’ (REEF), the core modules are ‘GY457: Applied Urban and Regional Economics’, ‘GY462: Real Estate Finance’ and ‘GY458: Real Property Market Practice’. These will introduce students to the fields of urban and real estate economics, and will present them with the basic methods for undertaking independent research in related topics. Additionally, students will learn about financial and asset markets while taking ‘FM429: Asset Markets A’ or ‘FM473 – Finance I’, and will strengthen their econometric skills by normally taking the ‘GY428: Applied Quantitative Methods’ module.  ***Second year of the 1+3/First year of the +3 route:***  **Based on their research interests and methodological approaches, all students are assigned a**  **(principal) supervisor – with prime responsibility for their research progress – and a review supervisor.** While it is expected that the main supervisor belongs to the Department of Geography and Environment, joint-supervision with members of staff from other departments (e.g. Economics or Social Policy) can be arranged subject to the approval of both departments, their Programme Directors and the staff involved. **Students are required to have regular meetings with their supervisors. These are likely to be more numerous at the beginning of registration. Supervisors have their own norms, but as a rule research students can expect to see their supervisors every few weeks in the first two terms, and every month or two thereafter. Meeting lengths typically vary from 30 minutes to two hours, depending upon progress and stage of registration. Review supervisors are involved less frequently, being primarily responsible for monitoring progress and participating in review and upgrading decisions (see description of assessment strategies below).**  During the second year of the *1+3* structure or the first year of the *+3* programme, students will sit one additional full-unit of relevant specialist training (approved by their supervisor). It is expected that students from the MSc REEF will take one of the core modules of the MSc LED programme (e.g. ‘GY408: Local Economic Development and Policy’) and that student progressing from the MSc LED programme will take the core module of the MSc REEF programme (mainly ‘GY457: Applied Urban and Regional Economics’). However, different choices can be envisaged subject to the approval of the supervisor.  Similarly, students entering the programme via the *+3* option from another department or university will be expected to take one of the core modules of either MSc programme offered by the cluster. However, different choices can be envisaged subject to the approval of the supervisor.  It is further expected that students will attend the Geographical Information System (GIS) workshops organised by the Department and take one additional unit of methods training. The half-unit ‘GY460: Techniques of Spatial Economics Analysis’ offered by the Department can be included as part of the methods training, as well as other courses offered by other clusters within the department and by the Methodology Institute.  Students might also be allowed to take some specialist training courses or methods courses in other Departments (e.g. the Department of Economics or Social Policy). However, any arrangements to take modules from other Departments will be individually discussed and will need to meet the following criteria: (a) the supervisors’ approval; (b) the responsible teacher’s approval; (c) evidence of suitable qualifications (e.g. a strong statistics background for econometrics courses).  In terms of methods of delivery, formal lectures on the core modules in the first and second year develop and illustrate the key concepts; these are coupled with small-group classes to reinforce understanding, enable effective interaction with students, and provide students with some formative feedback. Lectures will be predominantly taught by LSE or visiting faculty. Given the staff’s considerable strength in research and experience in policy work, this will give the graduate programme an advanced and up-to-date flavour. Classes will be taught either by faculty or by teaching assistants. The latter are usually senior research students who have had previous teaching experience at the undergraduate level, and are in a good position to bridge the gap between more advanced research and core learning.  Starting from Year 2 of the *1+3* structure or in Year 1 of the *+3* programme, students will also be required to attend the ‘GY502.B: Economic Geography Cluster Research Seminar’ and the ‘GY500.B: Economic Geography Cluster Doctoral Student Research Presentations’ modules. The first module consists of a series of seminars organised by the cluster jointly with the Spatial Economics Research Centre (SERC) where speakers from both inside and outside the Department present selected topics of their own research. The seminar series has attracted very distinguished researchers in the fields of economic geography and spatial economics. Students will be required to attend presentations and enrol in meetings with speakers, thus benefiting from further exposure to some outstanding scholars and a wide range of topics and approaches.  ‘GY500.B: Economic Geography Cluster Doctoral Student Research Presentations’ is a work-in-progress one-hour weekly meeting which students are required to attend and where  students are asked to present their research in progress at least once per year. This setting is very informal and allows students to get fresh feedback during the early stages of the development of new research ideas. Additionally, although at least three members of staff will always attend these sessions, it is expected that students will take an active role in chairing the meetings, asking questions and providing comments. This should give students a chance to learn the useful ‘art of attending a seminar’ (not just presenting).    Finally, students will be given a chance to develop a broader set of transferable skills (e.g. writing and organisational skills) by attending a series of compulsory courses developed by the Methodology Institute, i.e. the series in ‘Authoring a PhD and Developing as a Researcher’ (MY5A) and the ‘MY512: Information Literacy: Tools for Research’ module.  ***Subsequent years:***  **In the subsequent years of the MPhil/PhD Programme, students will be required to take the more advanced modules of the Methodology Institute ‘Authoring a PhD and Developing as a Researcher’ course (MY5A2 and MY5A3). They will also continue to present each year to the Doctoral Student Research Presentations and to participate to the** Economic Geography Cluster Research Seminar **seminar series.**  **Assessment, feedback and support strategies:**  *Summative assessment*  During the first year of the *1+3* structure, most courses for both the MSc LED and MSc REEF programmes will be assessed by 3 hour unseen examinations, together with a course work component. There is also a 10,000 word dissertation (see course regulations for details) usually to be handed in during the month of August. Similarly, it is expected that the additional units taken during the second year of the *1+3* programme or the first year of the *+3* route will be assessed during a 3 hour examination with some contribution from a course work component. The exact details vary according to the units chosen by the students. Note that in order to guarantee good practice in assessment, exams are double-blind marked according to solution guidelines provided by the teacher responsible for the course. Finally, the PhD thesis is assessed in accordance to the London School of Economics regulations.  In addition, as described in 3.2, students will go through a formal First Year Progress Review taking place in the Summer Term of their first research year. The student submits a written progress report containing an extensive and updated research proposal and either a comprehensive literature review or a substantive draft of a chapter/paper as evidence of progress made during the year. The work is reviewed by the student’s main supervisor and review supervisor and has to reach an acceptable standard to enable them to progress to the second year. Normally, there will also be a progress review meeting between the student and the supervisors, to discuss and provide feedback on the written material presented.  In line with LSE standards, research students are initially registered for an MPhil and have to be upgraded to PhD status. The upgrade from MPhil to PhD usually occurs during the second year of full-time registration (or its equivalent), with timing dependent on the student’s progress. This is Year 2 for students in the +3 programme and Year 3 for students in the 1+3 route. Students are required to submit a formal written upgrade report consisting of an extensive revised research proposal, two substantive draft papers/chapters, of which one can be a literature review, and a detailed plan for completion. Students are also asked to discuss their research paper/thesis outline during an Upgrade Meeting in front of an Upgrading Committee normally formed by main supervisor, review supervisor and a third member of staff with relevant expertise. This will provide students with an opportunity to get further specialised feedback on their work, as well as to learn how to present their research in front of a demanding audience. The material is evaluated by this Upgrading Committee which will recommend transferral to PhD registration if the work is judged to be of sufficient quality and quantity. The upgrade is also dependent on students having completed all required training courses and having made a satisfactory research presentation in their doctoral presentation workshop.  *Formative assessment and supervision*  The first type of formative assessment takes the form of feedback from tutors and teachers on seminar work undertaken by students during the MSc year. This usually includes short presentations to be given by students in front of their colleagues, which can be developed individually or in small groups. Additionally, students receive support and feedback from an assigned MSc supervisor while writing their 10,000-word dissertation. This usually takes the form of one-to-one tutorials where feedback is provided on the general suitability of the ideas under investigation and the chosen approaches. Dissertations should draw together students’ intellectual skills as well as their understanding of fundamental issues, and may be based on original statistical analysis and/or original fieldwork. Feedback on these issues should also be expected during supervisory meetings.  During the MPhil/PhD years, students will hold regular meetings with their supervisor and review supervisor. Students will also further receive feedback on their research while presenting some work-in-progress at the ‘GY500.B: Economic Geography Cluster Doctoral Student Research Presentations’. These seminar series will be regularly attended by members of the staff as well as other PhD colleagues (including the most senior ones) who will provide feedback on both research and presentational aspects.  Finally, each year during the Summer term and throughout the course of their studies, all PhD students and their supervisors have to complete a yearly Progress Report Form, detailing progress made, problems arising and plan/timeline for completion. |

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| **13. Programme structures and requirements, levels, modules and awards** |
| See the [MPhil/PhD Economic Geography](http://www.lse.ac.uk/resources/calendar/programmeRegulations/mPhilPhD/EconomicGeography.htm) programme regulations. |

**Additional information**

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| **14. Criteria for admission to the programme** |
| *For admissions to the 1+3 PhD programme via MSc LED or MSc REEF*  For applicants who are graduates from British Universities, a good 2.i or equivalent in Economics (single of joint), or a closely related subject. Applicants with qualifications from other countries will be expected to have a similar academic background. They will also normally submit a GRE or GMAT score. There is no threshold score, but a high score will count in the applicants’ favour (students are usually in the top 10% on the quantitative part and in the top 20% on the qualitative component of the tests).  Applicants must also meet the School’s minimum English language requirement.  *For admissions to the +3 PhD programme*  Students with MSc degrees in related disciplines (e.g. economics, economic geography, regional science, local economic development) are welcomed. It is normally expected that students will have achieved a solid overall merit (i.e. 65+ out of 100 or equivalent) in the MSc classification and obtained a distinction in their MSc dissertation (i.e. 70+ out of 100 or equivalent) where this applies. Under exceptional circumstances, students not meeting these requirements will be considered (e.g. on the basis of an outstanding dissertation not matched by a solid merit in the MSc programme overall; or on the basis of a narrowly missed 70 in the dissertation coupled with a remarkable performance in all other relevant courses; or on the basis of an outstanding research proposal; see next).  Students must also meet the School’s minimum English language requirement.  All prospective students are expected to submit a three-page long research proposal (excluding references and appendix), which will form part of their application package.  Submitted proposals should briefly address: research questions and hypotheses; relevant literature and previous research in the field; likely methods and approaches to be adopted; likely data and information sources to be used. An outline three-year research timetable must be included as an appendix.  Selection is based upon the quality of the research proposal, references, prior achievement, and the appropriateness of the research to the Department’s focus. Only PhD topics that are close to staff interests are accepted; students are strongly advised to check staff publications and current research agendas (the departmental website lists key research topics). |

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| **15. Indicators of quality** |
| The MPhil/PhD programme will be run by the Department of Geography and Environment that received a 5 rating in the 2001 Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) exercise. According to the 2008 RAE, the Department has made further progress with 70 per cent of the department's research judged as either world-leading or internationally excellent, and ranking seventh in the country (1st in esteem indicators, 2nd in output, 16th in research environment). Furthermore, the Department hosts a holder of the prestigious European Investment Bank (EIB) - European Prize in Regional Science, several holders of the Royal Society-Wolfson Research Merit Award, the August Lösch prize, the Geoffrey Hewings Award for Regional Science Research, the recipient of a Major Leverhulme Research Fellowship and three holders of the highly competitive Philip Leverhulme Prize Fellowships for researchers under 36.  Within the Department, the ‘Economic Geography’ cluster has performed very well in international ranking of research groups in the fields of economic geography and spatial economics. A study for the European Economics Association in 2002 shows that the ‘Economic Geography’ cluster ranked as either 9th, 6th or 4th best 'economics sub-centre' in Europe depending on the weights attached to the various indicators used for the benchmarking exercise. This was well ahead of any other economics group in the UK.  The vast majority of the staff in the cluster is also involved in the activities of the Spatial Economics Research Centre (SERC). This centre was founded back in April 2008 and awarded an initial £2.4m of funding jointly by the Economic & Social Research Council (ESRC), the Departments of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS). While the SERC is based at the LSE, it has close links with the universities of Oxford, Newcastle, Glasgow and Swansea.  Finally, the MSc in Local Economic Development (LED) is recognised by ESRC as specialist programme and by the Institute of Economic Development (the leading United Kingdom organisation for economic development practitioners) as the 'short route' to their Diploma of Economic Development. Similarly, the MSc in Real Estate Economics and Finance (REEF) has recognitions from both the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) and the Investment Property Forum (IPF). |

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| **16. Methods for evaluating and improving the quality and standard of teaching and learning** |
| **16.1 School-wide Mechanisms**  School quality assurance processes include:   * regular staff appraisal and review; * improvements in teaching technique are effected by the Teaching and Learning   Centre (TLC) through observations, advice and further training;   * induction programme and mentoring scheme for new members of staff; * Staff/student liaison committee; * centrally administered student satisfaction questionnaires by the Teaching Quality Assurance and Review Office; * an improved system for ensuring that External Examiner’s comments/recommendations are fed through to Departments and acted upon; * the School’s Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee (TLAC) which regulates all aspects of teaching quality; * annual monitoring of courses and periodic reviews every 3-5 years. The outcomes of the annual reviews are presented to TLAC; * the School’s Undergraduate Studies Sub Committee and Graduate Studies Sub Committee which oversee all taught programmes and ensure that significant changes to programmes and courses pass through a sequence of formal stages to ensure that curricular changes are appropriate and compatible with other developments.   **16.2 Departmental Mechanisms**  A Teaching Committee within the Department is responsible for assigning teachers to courses. Primary responsibility for course content and delivery rests with course proprietor(s). They receive feedback on the course, their teaching and the teaching of other faculty and tutorial fellows via the School’s teaching Quality surveys.  Students on the existing environmental MSc degrees are assigned an academic advisor (previously called ‘tutor’), whose main responsibility is to advise on course choices, write letters of reference, and provide career advice and pastoral care. The allocation of academic advisors to MSc students lies in the responsibility of each MSc programme director.  Research student feedback and consultation takes place via the termly PhD Staff/Student Liaison Committee. In between times, the PhD Programme Director acts as the conduit for student comments and complaints.  The Department has also recently introduced a PhD task force, which is specifically responsible for:   * Programme monitoring and review (degree structure, course content); * Examination issues (external examiners, outcomes, progression, time of completion);   Graduate experience (admission, teaching, tutoring). |