


# GEOGRAPHY MATTERS

Studying Geography at the University of Malta

# What is geography?

Geography is the study of the earth's landscapes, peoples, places and environments. It is, quite simply, about the world in which we live.

Geography is unique in bridging the social sciences (human geography) with the natural sciences (physical geography) and applying new technologies for the analysis of spatial information.

Geography puts this understanding of social and physical processes within the context of places and regions - recognizing the great differences in cultures, political systems, economies, landscapes and environments across the world, and the links between them. Understanding the causes of differences and inequalities between places and social groups underlie much of the newer developments in human geography.

Geography provides an ideal framework for relating other fields of knowledge. It is not surprising that

those trained as geographers often contribute substantially to the applied management of resources and environments.

Source:http://www.rgs.org/GeographyToday/What+is+geography.htm

Learn more about Geography and what Geographers do.

Geocube
www.geo-cube.eu

Geocube is an attractive online resource about Geography. Geocube is based on the principle of the Rubik Cube with six faces and 54 topics. It is a virtual and easily accessible website which is available online for free. Move the Geocube around with your mouse and explore the faces and topics. Geocube provides an accessible way to read, see and watch what Geography is and geographers do.

# The Geography Department at the University of Malta

The University of Malta traces its origins during the period of the Knight Hospitalliers of St. John (1530-1798) as the Collegium Melitense founded on the 12th November 1592. A School of Surgery and Anatomy was set up by Grand Master Nicolas Cotoner at the Sacra Infermeria, the hospital at Valletta, on 19th December 1676. The fusion of the Collegium and the School on the 22nd November 1769 by Grand Master Manoel Pinto turned the institutions into a Public University.

The University continued to expand throughout the British period (1800-1964) with Royal patronage awarded in 1937 by King George VI. The post-independence period saw the building of a new University campus at Msida with the introduction of new areas of study and the establishment of Institutes as additional seats of teaching and research to compliment the academic base provided by the Faculties. Emphasizing Mediterranean scholarship, the History of Mediterranean Civilizations and Contemporary Mediterranean Studies programmes paved the way for the Mediterranean Institute to establish new disciplines amongst which was Geography.

The Geography Division was established about two decades ago and to date four hundred students have graduated and are now employed in various sectors in local and European fora. Four full-time and a number of part-time lecturers service the teaching, field and practical programmes. Foreign professors visit the department regularly and complement with the local academics by delivering lectures and practical sessions and enhance the division's local image through public lectures.

The research branch of the department complements the lecturing elements in conjunction with foreign universities, EU funded projects and local institutions. Post-graduate students provide their input into these initiatives.

# The Geography Programmes at the University of Malta

## The Undergraduate Programme

Geography at the University of Malta is offered in two full-time undergraduate programmes of study: B.A. and B.A. (Hons) through the Faculty of Arts and through a Master of Arts post-graduate research programme. The Bachelor of Arts courses are divided into two parts.

**Part ONE** is of one year's duration and common to both programmes. The study-units offered include introductory courses and basic study-units in both physical and human geography. Students will also have to take additional options from another major area of study within the broader B.A. programme, the latter provide an opportunity for students to broaden their academic vision.

**Part TWO** is followed for two years, both for the B.A. degree (in which another subject is taken concurrently as another principal area of study) and for the B.A. (Hons) degree programme. As for the latter the subject is treated in greater detail and includes a dissertation. This is done through study-units in physical geography, human geography, techniques in geography, geo-spatial technologies and the geographies of spatial management. The versatility of the subject is seen through the sections on applied geography and a number of multi-disciplinary units.

The themes can be tackled from a range of scales: the global, the regional, such as Europe and the Mediterranean and the Middle East, the national level such as the Maltese Islands, and the local focusing on a part of the local environment.

**Box 1**

**Literacy:** the ability to write well, this can include the correct interpretation of texts, and the technique of writing geography, giving light to issues using, for example, scale-dependent jargon.

**Numeracy:** the ability to do simple mathematics and to interpret data, this also includes a degree of facility with basic statistics.

**Personality:** the ability to get on effectively with people and confidence in presenting results in public.

**Graphicacy:** the ability to draw a sketch of the field in view, maps on a script and an input/output systems diagram.

**Facility with computers:** hardware skills and an understanding of computers, this includes facility in the use and interpretation of Geographic Information Systems (GIS).

## Skills in Geography

However it is the skills that one develops throughout the years at university that are important for the development of the personality and the flexibility and reliability needed to compete on the career market. Box 1 highlights the basic skills that a geography programme of studies normally imparts to students. Geography skills are catered through courses in surveying, cartography, field practical sessions and laboratory work - these incorporate map reading and interpretation and laboratory techniques. The analytical and scientific investigation is examined through units and practical sessions in Statistics, Geographic Information Systems, Remote Sensing and Spatial Analysis.

Finally investigating the interrelationships and linkages between different disciplines is done through units on environmental management and ecological communities. These will also help to consolidate the academic and technical experiences into a spatially coherent whole.

## Field Studies

Fieldwork is a very important element in the geography programme. Field sessions are held regularly throughout the year and the urban, coastal and rural geographies are investigated under the supervision of members of staff. Students normally work in small groups.

## Student exchange programmes

Student exchanges with foreign universities are encouraged and available through the Erasmus programmes with a number of European Universities. These include the Universities of Liverpool Hope, Portsmouth and Canterbury at Kent and soon with Oxford Brookes in the UK, the French Universities at Lille, Paris Diderot and Limoges, the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia in Italy, the Universities of Santander in Spain, Salzburg and Innsbruck in Austria. Students are encouraged to follow courses in any of these institutions for one or two semesters normally during the second year of their studies.



# The Undergraduate Programme of Study

## First year

### Human geography

- POPULATION, CULTURE AND SOCIETY I
- POPULATION, CULTURE AND SOCIETY II
- APPLIED HUMAN GEOGRAPHY

### Physical geography

- CLIMATE AND BIOGEOGRAPHY
- OCEANOGRAPHY AND GEOMORPHOLOGY
- APPLIED PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY

### Practical techniques

- TECHNIQUES IN GEOGRAPHY I: CARTOGRAPHY AND CARTOMETRY
- FIELDWORK I: PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY
- FIELDWORK II: HUMAN GEOGRAPHY

## Second and Third years

### Human Geography

- HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY
- ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY
- TRANSPORT GEOGRAPHY

### Regional Geography

- PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY OF THE MEDITERRANEAN
- GEOGRAPHY OF THE MALTESE ISLANDS
- ECOLOGY AND CULTURE OF THE MEDITERRANEAN

### Geology and Geomorphology

- GEOLOGY
- APPLIED GEOLOGY
- APPLIED GEOMORPHOLOGY
- ECOLOGICAL COMMUNITIES
- PEDOLOGY
- HYDROLOGY

### Multidisciplinary study-units

- ENERGY RESOURCES
- LAND DEGRADATION AND REHABILITATION
- OCEAN AND COASTAL MANAGEMENT
- SUSTAINABILITY AND DEVELOPMENT

### Techniques in Geography

- TECHNIQUES IN GEOGRAPHY II: AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY INTERPRETATION
- GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS
- PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY LAB

### Independent research investigation

- DISSERTATION

Access to Geography study programmes is open to all students from a range of academic backgrounds, including the arts, languages, humanities sciences, mathematics and ICT.

# Post-graduate Studies in Geography

## MA by Research

The course is a post-graduate qualification which extends over three semesters of full-time study or the equivalent in part-time study. Students are required to submit an individual dissertation of approximately 50,000 words under the guidance of a supervisor. The research will be related to the department and candidate's main areas of research and has to support and contribute to the knowledge gained by the candidate in his/her area of expertise.

Ninety ECTS credits are assigned to the course. Four ECTS credits are awarded after following ATS5202 Methods of Research; six ECTS credits are assigned to GEO4001 Directed Studies in Geography where students prepare an academic paper under supervision. The paper must be of the level for possible publication. The candidate will also be required to present the research orally in a public venue or event. The dissertation (GEO 5099) carries a value of 80 ECTS credits.

Prospective students are encouraged to look at the full regulations on: https://secure.um.edu.mt/registrar/regulations/faculties/arts/ma-arts-bl-2009

### Completed Master's Dissertations

Calleja Ivan (2011) *Solution subsidence structures in Malta: their physical development and human use.*

Sultana Mark (2010) *Near-shore processes along shingle beaches in the Maltese Islands.*

Galea Claire (2010) *A conceptual approach to managing floods in Malta: Case Study of Birkirkara – Msida Catchment Area.*

Satariano Bernadine (2009) *A geographical analysis of poverty and deprivation in Valletta.*

Buhagiar Sarah (2008) *The geography of yacht marinas. Case Study: Grand Harbour Marina Vittoriosa.*

Debattista Marouchka (2007) *Sustainable Tourism – A geographical approach to safeguard the Maltese Environment.*

Muscat Josianne (2006) *The Geography of soil potassium status in Gozitan soils.*

Brincat Aimee (2005) *An investigation of the relationship between coastal sandy soils and the surrounding geology in the Maltese Islands.*

Al Shoucalry Nidal Akram (2005) *Coastal Zone Management Strategies in Rural Areas in Malta - Imgiebah Case Study.*

Marmara Graziella (2004) *Development of Coastal Karst Terrain in Malta.*

Axisa Glorianne (2002) *Mosaic: Application of Landscape Ecology in the analysis of ir-Ramla Valley, Gozo.*

Said George (2001) *A geomorphological classification for the Gozitan coast.*

Abela Ritienne (2000) *Relative sea level change: a coastal vulnerability assessment of Malta.*

Bonavia Maria (2000) *Transport and Urban Growth: The effects of transport and urban development in Malta.*

# M.A. Geography of Cities

This part-time taught Master's course is aimed towards graduates and practitioners in the fields of geography, city administration and planning. With its multi-disciplinary approach, this course offers a comprehensive understanding of the city with topics ranging from environmental externalities to city ecology to transport issues.

The course covers 90 ECTS credits over a period of three years. Sixty ECTS credits are awarded by following two years of taught study-units whilst 30 ECTS credits are awarded for the presentation of a 25,000 word dissertation.

## Learning Outcomes

The learning outcomes of the postgraduate degree in Geography of Cities include:

- acquiring extensive and broad knowledge about all the aspects related to urban environments.
- demonstrate competence in the use of geographic tools and techniques for research and field study.
- acquire effective writing skills in a variety of sub-disciplines.
- the interdisciplinary nature of this Master's Programmes bridges social dimensions through its concern for the dynamics of cultures, societies and economies as well as the physical aspects of pollution and ecologies within cities. Students therefore acquire transferability skills and flexibility in applying their knowledge.
- display management, organisational, teamwork and leadership skills.

## Details of career opportunities

The skills learnt in an interdisciplinary degree, such as the M.A. in Geography of Cities are of potential interest to a range of employers.

Graduates from the M.A. in Geography of Cities are very flexible and develop transferable skills which are a requirement in many workplaces today.

Graduates of the M.A. Geography of Cities are mainly employed in areas of management, statistics, spatial planning, tourism and transport planning. Some of the agencies that employ our graduates include the Malta Environment and Planning Authority, Transport Authority, Tourism Authority, Public Service, Education Department (schools), and a number of private consultancy firms.

## Details of target audience

This interdisciplinary post-graduate degree programme attracts fresh graduates from Geography, Environment/Science, Arts and Management that wish to specialise in a specific area of study. However anyone with an interest in the spatial understanding and management of cities can follow the degree programme with profit.

This degree programme could also support professional development for mid-career professionals in the areas of land use planning, city administration and for those who are interested in furthering their educational qualifications. For this purpose the degree programme is structured for the evening and on a part-time basis.

# The Geography Department Research Programmes

## Human Geography

- Maltese localities: evolution, morphology and population movements;
- Transport and accessibility: transport projects, road pricing, transport policy, public transport, urban transport;
- A technical appraisal of modern censuses in Malta: changing geographies and boundaries;
- Coastal zone management in the Maltese Islands;
- Agriculture: changing patterns of employment and crop production;
- Quality of life in Malta

## Physical Geography

- Sediment processes: shingle and fine particulate matter along Malta's coastline;
- Shore platform surface erosion at a micro-temporal scale on selected sites around the Maltese Islands;
- Solution Subsidence Structures (Dolines) in Malta: Their physical development and human use; and,
- Geomorphological investigation and monitoring of landslides along the north-west coast of Malta

## Applied Geography

- Agriculture and the shift form full-time to part-time employment;
- Sea-level change and its impact on coastal urban areas;
- Carrying capacity of dive-sites;
- Maritime traffic: ports, harbours, bays and Comino;
- Students' performance in geography MATSEC examinations
- Teaching GIS: GIS in Education

## Selected Staff Publications


Attard, M., Schembri, J.A. (2011) Malta: GIS and Geography Teaching in the Context of Educational Reform. In International Perspectives on Teaching and Learning with GIS in Secondary Schools. Milson, A.J., Demirci, A., Kerski J. (eds). Springer.

Furlani, S., Schembri, J.A., Bondesan, A. (2011) The siege of Malta: geography and war. Geoitalia 2011, Torino, 19-23 Settembre 2011. VIII Forum Italiano di Scienze della Terra, Torino.

Attard, M., Enoch, M.P. (2011) The role of policy transfer in the introduction of road pricing in Valletta, Malta. Transport Policy. Vol. 8/2 pp 544-553.

Attard, M. (2010) Thematic Networks as Toolboxes: The case of the HERODOT Network for Geography in Europe. Documents d'Anàlisi Geogràfica. Vol. 56/2 pp 325-357.

Role, A. (ed.) (2010) Resources for Geography Teachers– Print and CD versions (April 2011) Geography Teachers Association; GTA Malta.

Attard, M., Ison, S.G. (2010) The Implementation of a Road User Charge – The Case of Valletta, Malta. Journal of Transport Geography. Vol. 18/1 pp 14-22.

Soldati, M., Buhagiar,S., Coratza,P., Pasuko,A., Schembri, J.A. (2008) Proceedings of the Italo-Maltese Workshop on Integration of the geomorphogical environment and cultural heritage for tourism promotion and hazard prevention. Malta, 24-27 April 2007. Geogs. Fis. Dinam. Quat., 31(2)

Buhagiar, S., Coratza, P., Magri, O., Pasuto, A., Schembri J.A., Soldati, M. (2007) Abstracts and Field Guide. Dipartimento di Scienze della Terra, Universita degli Studi di Modena e Reggio Emilia.

Attard, M., Enoch, M.P. (2007) Valletta dumps V-licence for state-of-the-art road pricing scheme. Traffic Engineering and Control. Vol. 48/6 pp 262-264.

Schembri, J.A., Attard, M. (2007) Manoel Island: An island with a fort.... and a future. In Mercieca, S. (ed) Mediterranean Seascapes. Malta University Press.

Attard, M. (2005) Developing undergraduate GIS study-units – the experience of Malta. In Donert, K. and Charzynski, P. (eds) Changing Horizons in Geography Education. Herodot Thematic Network for Geography in Higher Education.

Attard, M. (2005) Land Transport Policy in a Small Island State – the Case of Malta. Transport Policy. Vol. 12/1 pp 23-33.

Said, G., Schembri, J.A., Bird, E.C.F. (2004) The Maltese Islands. In The World's coasts on line, E.C.F. Bird (ed). Kluwer Online Publishing.

Attard, M., Hall, D. (2004) Transition for EU Accession: The Case of Malta's Restructuring Tourism and Transport Sectors. In Hall, D. (ed) Tourism and Transition, CABI International.

Attard, M., Hall, D. (2003) Public transport modernisation and adjustment to EU accession requirements: the case of Malta's buses. Journal of Transport Geography, Vol. 11/1 pp 13-24.

Schembri, J.A. (2000) The changing geography of population and settlement in the Maltese Islands. In Vella, C.C. (ed) The Maltese islands on the move: a mosaic of contributions marking Malta's entry into the 21st century. Malta, Central Office of Statistics, pp 29-46.

Schembri, J. A., Bonnici, K. (2000) Il-Geografija ta' Hal Kirkop. In Vella, H.C.R. Hal Kirkop u inhawi ta'madwaru, pp 150-161.

Schembri, J.A., Attard, M (1999) The role of transport in urban environments. Proceedings of Atmospheric Pollution Seminar. University of Malta, Department of Physics, pp138-147

Schembri, J.A., Borg, M. (1997) Population changes in the walled cities of Malta. In Fsadni, C. and Selwyn, M. Sustainable tourism in Mediterranean islands and small cities. Medcampus, Malta and Euromed (London), pp114-123.

Lockhart,D.G., Drakakis-Smith, D. and Schembri, J. (eds) (1993) The development process in small island states. Routledge, London and The Commonwealth Foundation, London and New York.

Schembri, J.A., (1993) Coastal Zone of the Maltese Islands: Character and Conservation . Politika, 1: 48-62.

Anderson E.W., Schembri J.A. (1991) Coastal Environment Research Programme: Baseline study on erosion and weathering of coast and beach profiles. Preliminary report. Malta Council for Science and Technology.

Anderson, E. W., Schembri, J.A. (1990) The Maltese Islands: a threatened coastline. In Lockhart D. and Drakakis-Smith D. (eds) Monograph No 6, Developing Areas Research Group: environmental and economic issues in small island development. The Commonwealth Foundation, pp. 5-24.

# Geography and the World of Work: The employability of geographers

Geography as a discipline can open a number of career opportunities. The growing concerns over land, sea and mineral resources, energy consumption, sustainability, pollution, climate change and economic growth has increased the need for graduates able to observe and have a wider perspective on both the human and the physical world. It is evident now that the growing problems facing mankind are multi-disciplinary and would require skills

**DANIEL JACOB TABONE** is a Geography graduate currently reading for his Masters in Waste Management with Northampton University. He decided to follow a career path in the waste management sector following the completion of his undergraduate dissertation in this subject area. This enabled him to successfully find employment as an Operations Manager within GreenPak – the national packaging waste compliance scheme which is responsible for 28 local councils and 1300 companies. He believes that a B.A. in Geography provides the required skill set to pursue several options within the environmental sphere.

"Geography has always been a topic of interest for me. I got first introduced to the subject when I chose it at secondary school and I have had no regrets ever since. The variety of Geography intrigues me apart from the fact that it refers to the world around us, and its application for everyday life. I am a Human Geographer and with time I narrowed my interests to specialise in Transport Geography and use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS). The diversity of the discipline has allowed me to enrich my career and experience. I have worked within various sectors and on national projects. Geography has allowed me to pursue my dream and indulge further in research areas that interest me most."

**THÉRÈSE BAJADA** is an Assistant Lecturer at the Institute for Sustainable Development, University of Malta and a PhD research candidate at University College London (UCL).

"Geography was by far my favourite subject in my secondary school years and it was easy to choose which course to follow at tertiary level. I graduated B.A. (Hons) in Geography and went on to follow a P.G.C.E so I could pursue a teaching career. I have been teaching geography at St. Aloysius' College for 11 years now and would definitely say that the experience gained during my university years helped me in delivering the subject with passion to my students. I try to instill a love for the subject in the students I teach and there's nothing more rewarding than seeing my ex-students graduating from university in the subject that shaped my life.....GEOGRAPHY!"

**IVAN CALLEJA**

university of malta geographical society

The University of Malta Geographical Society (UMGS) is a student organization which aims to promote the relevance of geography. We try to do this by organising academic and social events and provide academic support to advance geographical research. As a society we aim to develop awareness about the importance of geography and enhance public knowledge about the latest research, as well as providing international opportunities for its members. Some of our past events include:

**Academic events**

- Seminar with Dr Camille Schmoll about migration with a special focus on the Mediterranean
- Video Conferencing talk in collaboration with the American Embassy in Malta and the USGS Volcano Hazards Program in Washington DC which explored volcano hazard management with William Burton, an associate of the program.

**Social events**

- Cookie Sale with all cookies having a geographical theme: trees, mountains, volcanoes, raindrops, clouds.
- Quiz Game, in collaboration with Tourism Studies Association, in order to promote the idea that you know more than you think about the world around you.
- Parties and social events for Freshers, end of exams, with the aim of getting members to meet in an informal place.

**Academic support to University Geography students**

- Taking care of complaints
- Informing them of changes to lectures
- Collecting all the Geography notes
- National Geographic Resource Centre where members can make use of over 200 magazines: all the issues from 1993 to 2010 and others dating back to 1949.


**Promoting Geography**

- We take part in the Environment Fair, Youth Days, GIS Day, One World Week, University Open Days and Science and Technology Week.
- Distribute our own newsletter every semester

**Taking care of the Environment**

- Green Student Campaign which was a word of mouth campaign to make students aware of how they can be more 'green' on campus by doing little things and saving money at the same time.
- REACT – Three organisations teamed up to sign a declaration where the organisations promote the continuous use of the 3 R's; Reduce, Reuse, Recycle; to minimise our environmental footprint.

**UMGS Gets Up and Goes!**

This initiative has been going on for the third year. Through this initiative UMGS aims to get students out of the classroom and take them to the Geography instead of the other way around.

- UMGS Gets Up and Goes Volcanic! A group of students climbed down Etna and went to a Volcanic Museum
- UMGS Gets Up and Goes Shamrock! 50 students were taken to Wicklow National Park and Dublin in Ireland for three days packed with various team building and environmental activities and sightseeing.
- UMGS Gets Up and Goes: The Orange Edition! A group of students went to Amsterdam to explore the city and understand its physical and human geography.

The UMGS has recently become a full member of EGEA (European Geography Association for Students and Young Geographers). This is a European network of geography students and young geographers, with the intention of exchanging geographical knowledge. To achieve this entities within EGEA organize congresses, exchanges, national weekends, excursions and publications in scientific magazines. Through EGEA, UMGS had their first exchange in 2010 with Ibn Battuta from Groningen, The Netherlands.

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**Website: www.umgs.org**

**Twitter:** http://twitter.com/#!/umgs_malta
**Facebook Profile:** http://www.facebook.com/umgsmalta
**Facebook Group:** http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=37855171794
**Linkedin:** http://www.linkedin.com/company/2038820?trk=tyah
**YouTube Channel:** http://www.youtube.com/user/UMGSmalta

Learn more about UMGS at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z-lon8881K8

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