

Geography at GCSE

Why geography?

Geography is a relevant, hands on subject that helps you to make sense of the world around you. At GCSE level a vast variety of topics are studied across both human and physical geography that help to tackle some of the most pressing challenges facing the world today.

Geography GCSE will deepen your understanding of geographical processes, the impact of complex people-environment interactions, the dynamic links between places and environments, and develop your ability to use a wide range of geographical investigative skills and approaches. Geographers are also able to demonstrate a range of skills including statistical skills, ICT skills (including GIS), and graphical skills. Geography enables you to become globally and environmentally informed and thoughtful, enquiring citizens.

There are many different course specifications and examining boards at this stage, each open to interpretation by the teacher. One compulsory element on all courses is the inclusion of both human and physical fieldwork.



Transferable skills

Studying GCSE Geography provides students with a variety of valuable skills that can be transferred and used across other subject areas and in everyday life. Key skills gained are listed below:

- **Highly relevant knowledge**

Geography students study issues that are extremely relevant to the challenges the world is facing today both environmentally and in society. This equips students with valuable knowledge for future studies.

- **Place knowledge**

Geography of the UK – in-depth knowledge and understanding of the UK's economic, social and environmental geography.

- **Looking at issues differently**

Geographers uniquely tackle and investigate big issues across a variety of scales and from different perspectives.

- **Fieldwork**

Fieldwork is an enjoyable opportunity to explore new environments, improving the understanding of topics as they come to life. Fieldwork provides you with useful skills in collecting, understanding and later communicating data to different audiences.

- **Teamwork**

Working in teams during fieldwork and in a classroom environment is useful for developing communication skills allowing greater efficiency through collaboration.

- **Map work**

Using atlases, Ordnance Survey maps, satellite images and other electronic materials such as GIS, students gain useful skills in obtaining, illustrating, analysing and evaluating geographical information.

- **Geographical argument**

Geography students gain strong research and analytical skills helping to produce convincing arguments and to communicate ideas effectively, particularly useful in all other essay-based subjects.

- **Use of data**

Geography students will use data from a range of sources: fieldwork data; GIS material; written and digital sources; visual and graphical sources; and numerical and statistical information.

- **Location knowledge**

Building students knowledge of the world's continents, countries, regions and their physical, environmental and human location.



GCSE subject content examples

GCSE Geography is designed to allow a large number of topics to be studied and to provide an insight into a variety of the most important and relevant geographical issues. This diversity also allows all students to find topics they are interested and engaged in. A selection of these are described below:



Human Geography:

1) Urban issues & challenges

Cities and urban areas are some of the most dynamic regions of the world. For the first time, a majority of the global population now lives in towns and cities with the UN predicting this will increase to 75% by 2050 highlighting the importance of studying these settlements. This topic looks at reasons why urban areas emerge and develop unevenly within and between countries and the challenges and opportunities that this creates.

2) Economic development

Globally, there are large variations in economic development and standards of living between countries. This topic looks at the reasons for, and consequences of having a 'global development gap' in addition to why such divides occur nationally such as the UK's north-south divide.

3) Resource management

The demand for food, water and energy is rising across the globe, yet the supply of all of these resources is limited which can create conflicts. Technological advances allow new strategies to be used which can increase the supply of these goods, however these can be controversial such as genetically modified crops.



Physical Geography:



1) Global ecosystems

Global ecosystems—ranging from hot arid to cold tundra environments—all have distinctive characteristics, which have led to distinctive adaptations within their plant and animal communities. Whilst these environments all provide economic opportunities such as using rainforests for logging, farming or energy, they are extremely fragile environments which require sustainable management.

2) Global hazards

Whilst the Earth is 4.5 billion years old, it is still a highly dynamic body continually undergoing changes. These continued changes result in the creation of a variety of hazards that pose a threat to both humans and the environment. Some of these hazards you will have already felt the effects of in the UK, such as climate change and weather hazards, whilst others occur in geographically distinct regions such as tectonic hazards and tropical storms.

3) Landscapes

The distinctive landscape of the UK has been gradually formed over millions of years by coastal, glacial and fluvial (river based) processes, which continue to act today. A number of factors affect the processes of erosion, weathering, deposition and transportation taking place, both physically such as rock type to human interference.

