

# Geography at A level

**Royal  
Geographical  
Society**  
with IBG

Advancing geography  
and geographical learning

## Why geography?

Geography is a relevant, dynamic and academically rigorous subject that helps you to make sense of the world around you. At A level a variety of topics are studied across both human and physical geography that help you to engage critically with some of the most pressing challenges facing the world today. As well as the exciting topic content, you will also develop your qualitative and quantitative geographical skills at A level; working with images, factual text and discursive/creative material, digital data, numerical and spatial data and innovative forms of data, including crowd-sourced and 'big data'.

At A level fieldwork provides an exciting opportunity to study processes, systems and interconnections in both human and physical geography. You will develop skills to select research questions, apply relevant techniques and skills, and find appropriate ways to analyse and communicate your findings. As well as developing these desirable skills for employment, fieldwork experiences at A level can also open up opportunities to travel further afield to fascinating destinations.



## Subject Content

A level geography offers a selection of new, interesting topics not covered at GCSE level, as well as allowing students to go into greater depth in some key elements previously studied.

Whichever course specification studied, all feature fieldwork and geographical skills elements.

The four key geographical themes outlined below are compulsory which, when combined with fieldwork, accounts for 60% of the course. The additional 40% is flexible and varies depending on the exam board chosen by teaching staff.

The core themes:

- **Water and carbon cycles**

Students study the physical processes which control the water and carbon cycle between land, oceans and the atmosphere, all of which are critical mechanisms in supporting life on Earth.

- **Landscape systems**

Focusing on either dry arid, coastal or glacial environments, students study how these the earth surface processes that have produced their characteristic landforms.

- **Global systems and global governance**

In a globalising world, people, places and environments are increasingly connected leading to the rapid global movement of goods, people, technology and ideas. A level studies focus on the consequences of a highly interconnected world and the efforts to regulate it—labelled 'global governance'.



- **Changing places**

The connections and relationships between people, the economy, society and the environment help to explain why places are constantly changing. Through the study of local locations it will become apparent how flows of people, resources, money, ideas and government policies can change the nature of places.

## Geographical Fieldwork

A level study requires students to complete an independent non-examined assessment. This provides an excellent opportunity to conduct a fieldwork study in relation to physical and human processes. A minimum of 4 days of fieldwork are required however students have the flexibility to identify their own topic.

The write up of this study will provide an excellent insight into a mini introduction of a university dissertation.

## Geographical Skills

Building arguments requires a high level of English skills at this level. In addition maths skills are also obtained to an advanced standard with a clear focus on statistical testing. Use of Geographic Information Systems develops confidence in ICT. Researching, presenting, referencing, critical thinking, map-reading and scientific reasoning skills will all be honed along with the ability to work both independently and collaboratively.

## Geography at University



More than 80 universities offer over 1,400 geography related degrees.

Geography at university is very different to A level in the sense that there is no set curriculum, so what you study will depend on the university you attend. This allows you as a student to study elements of the subject that interest you, specialising in what you enjoy most.

If you opt for a BA degree you are more likely to focus on elements of human geography and with a BSc degree you can study more physical geography. However this is not a rigid system and you have choices and flexibility to select what you learn, tailoring your university education to your own interests.

Unlike the national approach to assessment at GCSE and A Level, methods of examining students at university varies considerably between modules, departments and universities as a whole. Many geography departments have assessed pieces of coursework, essays and computer based skills that contribute to final results in addition to written exams. On completion of your degree, you will have a wide range of skills that are highly desirable to employers and will have prepared you for working in a range of employment sectors.

## Careers & Employability:

Geography is an academically robust subject, due to it spanning both the physical and social sciences and the focus placed upon geographical skills such as the increasingly popular GIS technology and statistics.

Geography is part of the academic group of English Baccalaureate GCSE subjects and the Russell Group of universities has recognised A Level geography as one of their preferred 'facilitating subjects' - supporting an application into a wide range of undergraduate courses.

The knowledge and transferable skills that geographers gain from their degree studies are highly relevant to the workplace; **levels of geography graduate unemployment are extremely low at 7.4% (2010)**. You will find geographers working in every sector of the economy including finance, local businesses, not-for-profit organisations, significant research or as key decision makers in local and national government, highlighting the range of possibilities for geographers.

If you would like more information regarding what Geography can do for you, please visit:

[www.rgs.org/studygeography](http://www.rgs.org/studygeography)