

A Level Geography



The AQA course content is designed to excite your minds, challenge perceptions and stimulate your investigative and analytical skills.

Why is Geography important?

We all live our lives geographically. Planet Earth is our home. It is awesome, diverse, inspiring and ever changing. Studying geography invites us to participate more fully in the excitement, enjoyment and challenge of this dynamic world. It draws on personal experience, to help us better understand the places we live in, why they matter and how they are connected to a globalised world. Geography draws from across the physical, cultural, economic and political spheres to illuminate key issues for the present and the future, explored at all scales from the personal to the local and the global.

Through geography we learn to appreciate the diversity of landscapes, peoples and cultures. Geography is therefore a vital subject resource for 21st century global citizens, enabling us to face questions of what it means to live sustainably in an interdependent world. Geography helps us investigate and to think critically and creatively about the complexities of places, and different views and feelings relating to places.

VESPA & Geography

The VESPA programme is a mindset programme specifically designed for 6th Form students, to enable them to get the most from their courses and to further develop the skills and resilience needed as they move into adulthood. The programme has a range of activities that can be used as part of induction, tutorials and intervention to support students in 5 key areas:

V – **vision** (aspirations, goals and ambitions)

E- **effort** (changing the mindset that success comes effortlessly; helping students to understand the role that effort plays and what effort looks like)

S – **systems** (organisation, time management)

P – **practice** (the what element: how to make the effort you put in have impact)

A – **attitude** (changing; developing; enhancing attitude to life and learning)

The VESPA way of thinking is used throughout the geography course to help you get the absolute maximum out of the course. You will also notice that your physical and human geography subject handbooks will make reference to VESPA.

What will I study?

We study the AQA Advance Level GCE. The course specification is available at <http://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/geography/as-and-a-level/geography-7037>. The A Level is comprised of three sections :

<p>Component 1: Physical Geography Written Paper 2 hours 30 minutes 120 marks (40%)</p>	<p>Section A: Water and carbon cycles Section B: Coastal systems and landscapes Section C: Hazards You will have a physical geography subject handbook provided.</p>
<p>Component 2: Human Geography Written Paper 2 hours 30 minutes 120 marks (40%)</p>	<p>Section A: Global systems and global governance Section B: Changing places Section C: Contemporary urban environments You will have a human geography subject handbook provided.</p>
<p>Component 3: Geography Fieldwork Investigation 3,000–4,000 words 60 marks (20%)</p>	<p>Students complete an individual investigation which must include data collected in the field. The individual investigation must be based on a question or issue defined and developed by the student relating to any part of the specification content. You will have a NEA handbook provided.</p>

What is the course structure?

Teacher	Autumn Y12	Spring Y12	Summer Y12	Autumn Y13	Spring Y13
Mr Cotton	Coasts/Changing Places	Water & Carbon/Hazards	Fieldwork Investigation	Contemporary Urban Environments /Global Systems & Governance	Revision

Assessment Objectives

The exams and non-exam assessment will measure how students have achieved the following assessment objectives.

- **AO1:** Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of places, environments, concepts, processes, interactions and change, at a variety of scales (30–40%).
- **AO2:** Apply knowledge and understanding in different contexts to interpret, analyse and evaluate geographical information and issues (30–40%).
- **AO3:** Use a variety of relevant quantitative, qualitative and fieldwork skills to:
 - investigate geographical questions and issues
 - interpret, analyse and evaluate data and evidence
 - construct arguments and draw conclusions (20–30%).

Thinking like a Geographer

Geographers have a particular way of looking at the world. This means you are being invited to think critically evaluate and assess links between topics. You will need to weigh up differing and conflicting views to develop your own thoughts. Be prepared to share them with the group. This course will develop and extend your understanding and application of the interrelationships between physical and human geography. You will begin to understand how one shapes and influences the other.

Independent reading

There will be aspects of the course that you will want to investigate or be encouraged to explore further, as lesson may not have enough time. The set textbooks that will be used throughout the course are:

Ross, S. Bayliss, T. Collins, L. Griffiths, A. Hurst, C. Hurst, C. Digby, B. and Slater, A. 2016 AQA Geography **A Level and AS Physical Geography** Student Book, Oxford

Ross, S. Bayliss, T. Collins, L. Griffiths, A. Hurst, C. Hurst, C. Digby, B. and Slater, A. 2016 AQA Geography **A Level and AS Human Geography** Student Book, Oxford

These will be available to borrow from finance for a cost of £10 at the start of the year.

There are also additional textbook available:

Bowen, A., Day, A., Parkinson, A., Ellis, V., Hunt, P., Kitchen, R., Kyndt., Nagel, G., Walshe, N. & Young, H. 2016. Geography Student book. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge

Skinner, D., Abbiss, P., Fy, H. & Whittaker, I. 2016 Geography for A –level and AS. Hodder Education, London

Books

Fisher, A. 2001. Critical Thinking an Introduction. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge

Massey, D. 1994. Space, place and gender. Blackwell Publishers Ltd, Cambridge

Redfern, D. 2016. AQA AS / A Level Core Geography. Cross Academe Limited, Oxford

These titles and more, available from our subject library at the back of Room P.

Magazines

Topic Eye Geography magazines – will be provided throughout the course, for use in your additional study periods. These are excellent.

Geography Review, National Geographic, The Economist, New Internationalist

Websites *(there are more so please add and share as and when you find them!)*

<https://theconversation.com/uk> Excellent blog on current geographical issues (and other humanities, arts, English, even its own section on Brexit!)

www.geographypages.co.uk (Geo) General geography ideas

www.geography.learnontheinternet.co.uk (Geo and Rev) Its name says it all

<http://volcano.oregonstate.edu> (Geo - the new site for Volcano World)

www.rgs.org (Geo) The website of the Royal Geographical Society

www.geography.org.uk (Geo) Website of the Geographical Association

www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk(Gen) Mapping

www.geograph.org.uk (Gen) Photo sharing linked to UK and Ireland map references

<http://www.s-cool.co.uk/a-level/geography> The s-cool site has some really useful topics on geography. This is a revision site, and not specific to Cambridge, but it is worth a visit.

<http://www.geographynewsroom.co.uk/>

This site provides links to geography related events in the news.

<http://www.gapminder.org/>

The site strives to present information for a fact-based view. I particularly like the video on '200 years that changed the world'. There is plenty here for teachers to use as resources and keep the attention of the students.

http://www.coursenotes.org/Human_Geography/Outlines/Human_Geography_Culture_S

ociety_and_Space_8th_Edition_Textbook

Another US-based site, full of detailed notes on AP Human Geography. This can be a resource for teaching planning lessons, or if you are looking for extra material around one of the topics.

<http://www.geography.org.uk/>

This site is well worth a visit, as it has plenty of information, links to other good sites and continually updated material.

<http://www.topmarks.co.uk/Search.aspx?Subject=12&AgeGroup=6>

Lots of links here for the Geography student or teacher.

<http://www.politicsresources.net/>

The site contains plenty of links to various topics.

<http://www.traidcraft.co.uk/>

A site dedicated to poverty and fair trade issues, including details of current campaigns.

Subject specific vocabulary

All terms defined below can be used in the exam. You should be familiar with, and gain some understanding of, these terms in relation to the topics that you study. Each list includes only the geographical terms stated in the specification. You are however, encouraged to use other specialist geographical vocabulary in their answers beyond the terms listed here.

Subject specific term	Geographical context/meaning
Appropriate	Whether actions or solutions are fit for purpose and realistic.
Benefits	The advantages/positive impacts of something (social, economic, environmental).
Causes	The reasons for the form/character of a phenomenon – for example, why a process occurs or why a phenomenon displays its characteristic features.
Challenges	Difficult, large-scale problems that require solutions.
Characteristics	The key features of a phenomenon.
Concerns	Aspects of an issue or problem that are worrying to people.
Conflicts	Issues over which two or more groups of people disagree.
Consequences	The results of an action, change or process; they can be positive or negative.
Costs	The disadvantages/negative impacts of an action, change or process (social, economic, environmental).
Contrasting	Where two (or more) examples are different from each other in one or more significant ways. This is often seen as referring to different levels of economic development but it could refer to other differences that are relevant to the question.
Distribution	The geographical locations of specified phenomenon/phenomena, most often shown on a map. It may or may not present as a pattern.
Economic	Connected with the economy and therefore often to do with employment, industry and welfare, and measurable in money terms.
Effects	The results/outcomes of an event, action or process.
Environmental	Connected with the environment – water, air and land, and the organisms which occupy it (including humans) and natural resources obtainable from it.
Factors	The underlying causes of a phenomenon or problem or issue and the elements which influence it.

Impact	The results/outcomes of events, actions or processes on people and the environment. They can be positive or negative.
Implications	What happens or might happen as a results/consequence of events, actions or processes.
Interrelationships	Links between two or more phenomena, such that changing one leads to changes in the other(s).
Issues	Matters which cause concern to people and about which there may be differing views and may therefore be a source of conflict.
Lifestyle	The way in which people live their lives on a regular basis.
Management	The design and implementation of policies and strategies to minimise or reduce impacts or problems and enhance outcomes. Management implies a degree of deliberation and planning.
Opportunities	A situation where change might occur and where it could be for the better.
Patterns	Regularities in the occurrence or distribution of phenomena. Geographically, most often shown on a map.
Political	Connected with the distribution and exercise of power, the promotion of different viewpoints and policies, the resolution of any such differences and the consequent decisions.
Problems	Difficulties, risks or issues that worry people and indicate a response is required.
Process	A sequence of at least two related events that causes a change to take place.
Responses	The ways in which people react to an event or possible event – some may be as an individual, some may be as groups; some are planned, some are unplanned.
Scale	The area or scope of a phenomenon or focus of study – local, regional, national, international, global.
Social	Connected with people, their quality of life, health, education, prosperity and welfare.
Strategies	An overarching view and approach which indicates methods used to manage a problem or issue.
Sustainable	That which is capable of being maintained into the foreseeable future without prejudice to its own continuation or damage to the environment.
Threats	A situation where change might occur and where it could be for the worse.

Trends	The general direction of a change – increasing, decreasing, fluctuating.
Variation	How far a phenomenon differs from the norm or the average.

Core Concepts Definitions

These concepts are at the core of what this course seeks to develop in young geographers. These definitions can be used as starting point and/ or an introduction to help you to think more knowledgably and deeper about the geographical content you are studying.

Concept	Definition/interpretation	Which topic?/Spec links
Resilience	The capacity of a system to experience shocks, while retaining essentially the same function, structure, feedbacks and identity.	Hazards
Equilibrium	Systems can be considered to be in equilibrium when the input of mass and/or energy is balanced by self0 adjustment of the elements and variables of a system.	Landscape systems
System	Systems thinking is the process of understanding how those things (parts) which may be regarded as systems influence one another within a complete entity or a larger system.	Landscape systems
Identity	Is about the ways in which people connect to various places, and the effects of such bonds in identity development, place-making, perception, and practice. It's to do with belonging, meaning and attachment at a very personalised level.	Changing places
Mitigation	The procedures, options and polices to reduce loss of life, infrastructure and property damage by lessening the spatial / temporal impacts of disasters.	Hazards
Adaptation	Seeks to lower the risk posed by the consequences by using different technologies, processes, policies etc. to "live with it". Adaptive capacity is highly variable and often linked to economic resources and nature of existing physical restraints.	Climate Change Hazards
Risk	The probability that exposure to a hazard will led to a negative consequence, or more simply, Risk = Hazard x Vulnerability / Context.	Hazards
Globalisation	The process by which national and regional economies, societies, and cultures have become integrated through the global network of trade, communication, immigration and transportation.	Global systems Changing places
Threshold	When a relatively stimulus within a system suddenly induces a rapid change or alternation of that system. Thresholds in systems are generally (critical0 tipping points, after which the system shifts radically and potentially irreversibly into a different equilibrium state.	Landscape systems Atmospheric processes
Sustainability	Something that can be sustained over a period of time. The influence 1987 Bruntland report defines sustainable development as meeting the needs of	Water and carbon cycles

	the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.	
Interdependence	The recognition that our world is not reality composed of nation-states operating in an international system, with a clear-cut distinction between the domestic political life of states and the international arena. Recognising that global governance is struggling to keep up to with the pace and extent of economic globalisation, capital and trade flows, illegal and legal immigration of people and technological change.	Global systems
Inequality	When people, nations, and non-state actors (ranging from TNCs to international agencies) have different levels of authority, competence and outcomes. Some actors are more dominant than others.	Global systems Global governance Changing places
Causality	The relationship between cause and effect. Recognising that a variety of processes result in change; they must impacts, which in turn have consequences.	Landscape systems Hazards Global systems
Feedback	This occurs when one element of a system changes because of an outside influence. This will upset the dynamic equilibrium, or state of balance, and affect other components in the system. Negative feedback is when the system acts by lessening the effect of the original change and ultimately reversing it (back to the status quo). Positive feedback occurs within a system where a change causes a snowball effect, continuing or even accelerating the original change.	Landscapes systems (Coasts, Water and Carbon Cycles)
Representation	The cultural practices by which human societies interpret and portray the world around them and present themselves to others.	Changing places
Vulnerability	The risk of exposure to hazards combined with an inability to cope with them.	Hazards

Command words

Command words are the words and phrases used in exams and other assessment tasks that tell you how you should answer the question. The command words and their meanings relevant to geography are defined in the table below.

Command word	Meaning
Analyse	Break down concepts, information and/or issues to convey an understanding of them by finding connections and causes and/or effects.
Annotate	Add to a diagram, image or graphic a number of words that describe and/or explain features, rather than just identify them (which is labelling).
Assess	Consider several options or arguments and weigh them up so as to come to a conclusion about their effectiveness or validity.
Compare	Describe the similarities and differences of at least two phenomena.
Comment on	Make a statement that arises from a factual point made – add a view, or an opinion, or an interpretation. In data/stimulus response questions, examine the stimulus material provided and then make statements about the material and its content that are relevant, appropriate and geographical, but not directly evident.
Contrast	Point out the differences between at least two phenomena.
Critically	Often occurs before 'Assess' or 'Evaluate' inviting an examination of an issue from the point of view of a critic with a particular focus on the strengths and weaknesses of the points of view being expressed.
Define..., What is meant by...	State the precise meaning of an idea or concept.
Describe	Give an account in words of a phenomenon which may be an entity, an event, a feature, a pattern, a distribution or a process. For example, if describing a landform say what it looks like, give some indication of size or scale, what it is made of, and where it is in relation to something else (field relationship).
Discuss	Set out both sides of an argument (for and against), and come to a conclusion related to the content and emphasis of the discussion. There should be some evidence of balance, though not necessarily of equal weighting.
Distinguish between	Give the meaning of two (or more) phenomena and make it clear how they are different from each other.

Evaluate	Consider several options, ideas or arguments and form a view based on evidence about their importance/validity/merit/utility.
Examine	Consider carefully and provide a detailed account of the indicated topic.
Explain..., Why..., Suggest reasons for...	Set out the causes of a phenomenon and/or the factors which influence its form/nature. This usually requires an understanding of processes.
Interpret	Ascribe meaning to geographical information and issues.
Justify	Give reasons for the validity of a view or idea or why some action should be undertaken. This might reasonably involve discussing and discounting alternative views or actions.
Outline..., Summarise...	Provide a brief account of relevant information.
To what extent...	Form and express a view as to the merit or validity of a view or statement after examining the evidence available and/or different sides of an argument.

Geographical fieldwork and geographical Skills

All students are required to undertake fieldwork in relation to processes in both physical and human geography. Students must undertake four days of fieldwork during their A-level course.

Investigation requirements

You are required to undertake an independent investigation. This must incorporate a significant element of fieldwork. The fieldwork undertaken as part of the individual investigation may be based on either human or physical aspects of geography, or a combination of both. You may incorporate field data and/or evidence from field investigations collected individually or in groups. **What is important is that you work on your own** on contextualising, analysing and reporting your work to produce an **independent investigation** with an **individual title** that demonstrates required fieldwork knowledge, skills and understanding.

This investigative report will be levelled marked from one to four:

Level	Description
One	Detailed, effective, thorough, complete, well-developed.
Two	Clear, secure, explicit, focused, precise, consistent.
Three	Intermittent, partial, some, implicit, imprecise, inconsistent.
Four	Basic, limited, tentative, generalised, isolated.

Geographical Skills

During your A-level course you should:

- understand the nature and use of different types of geographical information, including qualitative and quantitative data, primary and secondary data, images, factual text and discursive/creative material, digital data, numerical and spatial data and other forms of data, including crowd-sourced and 'big data'
- collect, analyse and interpret such information, and demonstrate the ability to understand and apply suitable analytical approaches for the different information types
- undertake informed and critical questioning of data sources, analytical methodologies, data reporting and presentation, including the ability to identify sources of error in data and to identify the misuse of data
- communicate and evaluate findings, draw well-evidenced conclusions informed by wider theory, and construct extended written argument about geographical matters. Inherent in this are **qualitative and quantitative skills** with regards to field work investigations and methodological approaches.

The above is taught through specific skills:

- Core skills
- Cartographical skills
- Graphical skills
- Statistical skills
- ICT skills

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions
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