Proposed GCE AS and A Level Subject Content for Geography

The criteria

Introduction

A level subject criteria set out the knowledge, understanding, skills and assessment objectives common to all AS and A level specifications in a given subject.

They provide the framework within which the awarding organisation creates the detail of the specification.

Aims and objectives

1. AS and A level specifications in geography must encourage learners to:

   - develop and apply their understanding of physical and human geographical concepts and processes to understand and interpret our changing world;

   - develop their awareness of the complexity of interactions within and between physical and human environments at scales from local to global;

   - develop as global citizens who recognize the challenges of sustainability and the implications for their own and others' lives;

   - improve as critical and reflective learners aware of the importance of attitudes and values, including their own;

   - become adept in the use and application of skills and new technologies through their geographical studies both in and outside the classroom; and

   - be inspired by the world around them, and gain enjoyment and satisfaction from their geographical studies and understand their relevance.

Subject content

2. AS and A level specifications in geography must be of sufficient depth and breadth to allow learners to develop the knowledge, understanding and skills specified below. They must include a rationale for the selection of content indicating how progression from GCSE to A level has been addressed. The specifications must build on skills and knowledge established at GCSE but should not exclude learners who have not studied GCSE geography. Specifications must reflect new ideas and developments about the changing nature of geography in the 21st century and its relevance for everyday life.

3. AS and A level specifications in geography must require learners to:

- develop a detailed and balanced knowledge and understanding of selected physical and human processes that are central to geography;
- develop a knowledge and understanding of the key concepts relating to place, space, diversity, interdependence, people–environment interaction, the physical and human processes associated with these, and change over time;
- identify and analyse the connections between both physical and human geography;
- study at a range of scales and understand the importance of scale as a geographical idea;
- use a range of qualitative and quantitative geographical skills and techniques to analyse and synthesise geographical information in a variety of forms and from a range of sources (see annex 1);
- carry out research and out-of-classroom work including fieldwork;
- use modern information technologies, including geographical information systems; and
- develop understanding of the application and relevance of geography and consider new ideas and developments about the changing nature of geography in the 21st century.

4. In addition, A level specifications in geography must require learners to:

- undertake individual research and investigative work, including fieldwork; and

- critically reflect on and evaluate geographical approaches, methods, information and ideas.

5. A level specifications in Geography must require learners to study the core content specified below, which will form 50% of the course content for the A level. The remaining A level specification content will be derived from the subject content criteria.

6. AS level specifications in Geography must require learners to study, from the core content below, spatial knowledge, place knowledge and one bullet point from each of the content areas of physical geography, people and environment and human geography, which will form 50% of the course content for the AS level. The remaining AS level specification content will be derived from the subject content criteria.

7. The concepts 'space' and 'place' and spatial and place knowledge are overarching and must be integrated into and delivered through the three areas of physical geography, people and environment, and human geography.

<table>
<tr><td colspan="3">Spatial knowledge</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">• Key concept of space
• Complex spatial, cultural and political contexts
• Environmental, economic, social and political consequences of spatial distributions</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Place knowledge</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">• Key concept of place
• Complex interactions between places
• Uniqueness and different perspectives of places</td></tr>
<tr><td>Physical geography: processes, interactions and change</td><td>People and environment: processes, interactions and change</td><td>Human geography: processes, interactions and change</td></tr>
<tr><td>• Global climate system: atmospheric processes, evidence and causes of change, and alternative</td><td>• Environmental hazards: causes, vulnerability, impacts and mitigation.

• Natural resources: energy and water</td><td>• Population dynamics: demographic, cultural and social processes leading to change in places over time and</td></tr>
</table>

futures. • Landscape and change: landscapes in contrasting environments that evolve over time, resulting from interconnected processes and human activity.	supply, demand and security.	alternative futures. • Economic change: economic, geo-political and developmental processes, leading to change in places over time and globalisation.

Annex: Quantitative skills in geographical contexts

In order to be able to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding in Geography, learners need to have acquired competence in the following Level 2 quantitative skills that are relevant to the subject content, including:

Number

- calculating and interpreting percentages.
- calculating and interpreting fractions, proportions and ratios.

Measure (cartography)

- using map coordinates including 6-figure grid references on OS maps as well as latitude and longitude.
- calculating and estimating distance measurements and area on maps.

Data

- recognising the different types of variable and scales of measurement.
- using and interpreting a variety of data sets, large and small, primary and secondary.

Fieldwork and research methods

- understanding the strengths and limitations of sampling methods and applying this understanding when designing sampling strategies.
- collecting quantitative and qualitative primary and secondary data.
- understanding the strengths and limitations of research methods, including quantitative and qualitative primary data collection and secondary research.

Presentation, analysis and interpretation

- choosing appropriate graphical and cartographical methods of presenting and interpreting primary and secondary data.
- using GIS to map and to present geographical data and learning about applications of GIS.
- interpreting and drawing conclusions from data presented in graphical, tabular and cartographic form.

Statistics

- calculating and interpreting mean, mode and median.
- using and interpreting measures of dispersion (range, percentiles and standard deviation) and concentration (Gini co-efficient).
- recognising positive and negative correlation and interpreting the strength of correlations and the presence of anomalies, using scatter plots and line of best fit.
- analysing geographical relationships by generating appropriate hypotheses and selecting and using appropriate statistical tests.
- Interpreting the results of statistical tests including their statistical significance.

The assessment of quantitative skills in Geography AS and A level must comprise 10% of the whole assessment.