

Geography



Examination Board: Edexcel



■ What is the course about?

Geography is a dynamic discipline which seeks to explain how aspects of the natural world interact with human activities. This raises questions about how the physical environment affects us and how we impact on the physical phenomena. In particular it investigates how sustainable this relationship is and helps students to consider and evaluate alternative ways forward.

■ The A Level topics include:

- Tectonic Processes and Hazards
- Coastal Landscapes and Change; includes a fieldwork element
- Regenerating Places; includes a fieldwork element
- Globalisation
- Water and Carbon Cycles
- Superpowers
- Health and Human Rights

Year 12 content is based on the first four topics listed and includes two days of fieldwork during a residential trip usually to Slapton Ley, Devon. Year 13 students must complete an additional two days. These are in the form of a day trip collecting coastal data and another day trip studying regeneration in a local urban area. Further details are available at: <https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-a-levels/geography-2016.html>

■ How is the course assessed?

There are three written papers worth 80% and an independent investigation worth 20%.

■ What skills will I need and develop in this course?

Geographers need to have good literacy, numeracy and thinking skills. They will also develop their fieldwork and research skills in human and physical contexts, including qualitative and quantitative data usage. They need an open mind, an ability to understand other people's perspectives as well as their own and a readiness to debate controversial issues. They need to be comfortable with the use and application of geographical information systems (GIS), interpretation of previously unseen data such as maps, graphs and charts, and be able to describe, explain and evaluate patterns and processes.

■ Subject combination advice

Geography is a flexible subject combining a very strong academic tradition with contemporary relevance.

It complements many other subjects including sciences, mathematics, and other humanities (such as English, economics, history, psychology and sociology). Students can also combine with arts subjects.

■ What can the course lead to in terms of higher education and future careers?

Studying geography at A Level will equip you with a mix of skills university departments and employers want to see. Students achieving A Level geography have access to a wide range of possible career and higher-education opportunities. Geography is chosen by more than 16,000 undergraduates each year. Their knowledge and skills are in great demand. It has one of the highest rates of graduate employability and is greatly valued by employers for its combination of subject knowledge, linking science with humanities.

Geographers develop a wide range of transferable skills such as communication, data handling, digital mapping, graphical skills, teamwork, research and development. They learn how to work synoptically by developing links at a range of scales from local to global.

Geographers can pursue a wide range of diverse careers including: agriculture, architecture, cartography, civil engineering, climatology, conservation, education, energy industry, ecosystem management, environmental planning, financial management, geographical information systems (GIS) including digital mapping, geology, geophysics; government (local, national and international), hazard management, hydrology, insurance, journalism, land management, landscape architecture, law, leisure and recreation management, market analyst, media, meteorology, NGOs such as development agencies, political advisor, rural and urban planning, surveying, telecommunications, tourism management, transport planning.

Of course, you may not yet have a clear idea of what kind of career you might want to pursue. If you are in this position, remember that geography as an A Level gives you the chance to keep your options open as it covers both arts and science components.

■ What are the formal entry requirements?

GCSEs in a wide range of subjects including geography, English, mathematics and science at Grade 6 or above. Students who have not studied geography at GCSE may be considered.

■ What activities enrich this subject?

Membership of the Geographical Association and Royal Geographical Society. Fieldwork opportunities. Attendance at lectures and conferences. Involvement in supporting the learning of younger geographers. Visiting speakers who have applied geographical skills in a variety of careers. Reading around the subject in newspapers, magazine and internet articles. TV and radio documentaries are also a rich source of current issues.