

Geography

Advanced Level

General Information

Geography is a true social science. You study the scientific elements of our earth but also the effects that people are having on it, as well as the way in which the planet actually affects humans. As you'd expect, there is an even study of Human and Physical topics. Some of these will sound familiar as you'll have studied the basics at GCSE, ready to take your knowledge further at A Level. Other topics will be new to you and broaden your horizons.

Current students have enjoyed new aspects of urban environments, such as microclimates. They liked learning more about the local area in our Changing Places topic. Studying coastal locations they enjoyed understanding the wide range of processes leading to the formation of a myriad of landforms.

There are so many transferable skills in Geography that are relevant to everyday life and that employers will value. A lot of our assessment does come from essays and we will help you to write effective ones where you weigh up both sides of an argument. As well as broadening your literacy, we will develop your data presentation and analysis skills. Your independent study skills will be enhanced by the completion of your own independent geographical investigation, based on a topic of your choice.

To help build skills for your investigation and to develop knowledge, we carry out fieldwork locally in Darlington, Teesside and on the Durham Coast. Our current students tell us that they enjoyed their first year residential trip to the western Lake District.

You can't help but notice something geographical every time you see the news, often a potential consequence relating to climate change. We hope you will appreciate the dynamic and diverse nature of our subject and take an interest in the world around you to help boost your success in your study with us.

Useful / common subject combinations

As an earth science, Geography combines excellently with Geology but also complements other social sciences, such as Psychology or Sociology, or the pure sciences. Humanities subjects such as History are popular amongst students but the study of IT, Business and Economics also links well to aspects of Geography. But as Geography is so broad, any other subject will go well alongside it!



Geography visit to the Lake District

Entry requirements

You should meet the general college entry requirements for advanced level study. Please refer to the current prospectus - advanced programmes, entry requirements. You need to have at least a Grade 4 in Geography though occasionally students study Geography without having studied it at GCSE. You must have a grade 4 in GCSE Maths and English.

In this subject, particular skills and aptitudes will be required, many of which will be demonstrated by students' GCSE profiles.

Entry requirements might be changed in light of curriculum reform.

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Course content

The course is taught over two years and comprises an equal amount of Human and Physical Geography. Geographical skills are embedded throughout.

Human Geography Topics

- Contemporary Urban Environments, examining growth and change in today's cities, and the challenges presented
- Global Systems and Global Governance, looking at key features of the global economy and society, from big corporations to climate change
- Changing Places, considering the nature and character of locations and people's interaction with them, focused on Wasdale in the Western Lake District and Darlington.

Physical Geography Topics

- Coastal Systems, looking at the processes that shape these dynamic environments
- Water and Carbon Cycles, examining the magnitude and significance of these vital processes
- Natural hazards, focusing on the nature and impacts of events such as volcanic eruptions and hurricanes

Geographical Investigation (Coursework)

- This piece of work leads to a report of around 4,000 words. It is based on data collected during your own independent fieldwork. You conduct your own independent investigation based on a question or issue that you have defined. Data presentation, analysis and extended writing are integral.

Examination details

There are two exams, both of which are taken at the end of the course, plus the written investigation.

- Component 1: **Physical Geography** 2 ½ hours 40% of A Level
- Component 2: **Human Geography** 2 ½ hours 40% of A Level
- Component 3: **Geographical Investigation** Int. assessed 20% of A Level

How it is taught

In class, you generally carry out individual or small group activities, following teacher explanation, questions and class discussion. Geographical skills are taught within the course at appropriate places. Assessment is through structured questions and extended writing and includes aspects of literacy and numeracy. You are expected to back up classroom work with reading from textbooks and other sources of information.

Fieldwork is undertaken during the course and it is a requirement for completion of the A Level that all students participate in this. It is an opportunity to underpin course content, with an emphasis on data collection skills. It also allows you to develop the skills of statistical analysis and data presentation and supports your coursework. It is something that we find our students actively enjoy!

Careers / HE information

The skills which geographers acquire are greatly valued in the workplace and in education. Many universities are happy to accept Geography as a supporting subject, whatever the course applied for. Geography degree courses are available at all types of university and students can specialise in aspects of the subject that interest them. For example GIS (Geographical Information Systems) is an area where students use ICT skills to present information and images in a digitised form. There are obvious links with Town Planning, Transport management, Social Policy, but geographers are just as likely to become accountants!

Other relevant information

We expect you to be interested in the world around you! Some students are interested in travel and global issues such as the difference in wealth between the rich and poor countries of the world. On a more local scale, issues such as urban deprivation and social differences in cities may be of relevance to students of geography. Whatever the interest, you should read the newspaper and watch the news on a regular basis to keep up to date on current issues.