

geography

A Level

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Exam board: Pearson Edexcel



What is this subject about?

Geography is one of the most exciting, cutting edge and relevant subjects to study in today's constantly changing world. The Pearson Edexcel syllabus offers an issues based approach to studying Geography, enabling you to explore and evaluate contemporary geographical issues such as water security and climate change. Studying Geography will develop your sense of curiosity about the world and will encourage you to ask geographical questions. Issues that are currently in the news form a central focus to learning and you will be encouraged to deepen your understanding by making connections between different topics. Geography is a subject that links humanities and science, so you will need to be both literate and numerate. Fieldwork is integral to the course and you will develop an in-depth understanding of both physical and human geography, and will develop as a critical, reflective and independent learner.

What will I study over the two years?

The first year is split between studying Physical Systems and Dynamic Places. Physical Systems includes the hydrological and carbon cycles, water and energy insecurity – key issues in today's world. Dynamic Places focuses on Globalisation and Regeneration, with a field trip to the Olympic Park in Stratford to evaluate the recent regeneration scheme. These compulsory fieldwork days are organized by a local field studies centre. There will be other compulsory local fieldwork trips to help you develop a range of fieldwork techniques that can be used in your Independent Investigation. Work on this will begin during your first year and it can relate to any aspect of Geography contained in the specification.

The second year comprises Dynamic Landscapes and Sustainability together with Human Systems and Geopolitics. Dynamic Landscapes comprises Tectonic Hazards and Coastal Landscapes. Human Systems explores the impacts and spheres of influence of global superpowers, in addition to the Global Development and Connections topic. This looks at Health, Human Rights and Intervention, including conflict and aid. There will be further work on geographical skills and you will also prepare for the Issues Evaluation paper that builds on synoptic themes (players, attitudes and futures) developed throughout the course.

How is the course assessed?

80% of the marks are for three written exam papers, each 2 hours 15 minutes long. The exams consist of questions that require a mix of short and extended answers.

20% of the marks are for coursework which is an independent investigation where you will define a geographical issue linked to the specification and carry out fieldwork. This investigation will evidence independent analysis and evaluation of data, presentation of data findings and extended writing of between 3,000 and 4,000 words.

What skills will I need and develop in this course?

You will develop a variety of investigative, cartographic, graphical, ICT and statistical skills, through both fieldwork and assignment activities. You will develop a critical awareness of the appropriateness and limitations of different skills and resources and be able to apply them in an increasingly independent way. Wider skills will include undertaking research, analysis and teamwork on projects. You will be encouraged to keep up to date with current affairs by reading journals such as Geography Review.

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

As a degree subject Geography is highly respected by employers and according to the Royal Geographical Society, Geography graduates have one of the highest rates of graduate employment. It attracts a lot of applicants for university as it combines the academic, creative and analytical skills which are valued in so many careers. Geography related jobs include cartography, surveying, environmental consultancy, Geographical Information Systems and teaching. However, the transferability of geographic knowledge and skills make it one of the most sought after qualifications for many other careers in fields such as international aid, logistics, finance, tourism and transport.

What are the formal entry requirements for this course?

In addition to the general entry criteria that the College requires, you will also need a minimum of:

- Grade 4 in GCSE English Language
- Grade 4 in GCSE Mathematics
- Grade 4 in GCSE Geography (if taken).

GCSE Geography is not a requirement provided you have a strong interest in current affairs and learning about the world, and have achieved at least grade 4 in similar humanities subjects such as History.

What extra support/enrichment activities are on offer?

There are three compulsory fieldwork days required as part of the course that explore both human and physical geography. The department also runs a residential field trip to Iceland, where students have an opportunity to experience a simulated earthquake, stand on two separate tectonic plates and visit a geothermal powerplant amongst other excursions. There is an opportunity to attend a conference on tectonics where subject leaders, such as Professor Iain Stewart, present new findings from field research. In addition, there are opportunities to attend extra subject tutorials to extend learning.

Subject combination advice:

Geography is usually recognised as both a Science and an Arts A Level for university entrance criteria and therefore complements a wide variety of subjects. The subjects most frequently combined with Geography include: Mathematics, Biology, Chemistry, Economics, Psychology, Sociology, Politics and History.