

GEOGRAPHY

SPECIFICATION

A Level AQA Geography

OBJECTIVES OF THE COURSE

The primary objective of the course is to develop students' awareness of contemporary geographical issues and to equip them with a variety of skills which will benefit them beyond the confines of the A Level Geography curriculum. The AQA syllabus ensures that students will develop statistical, graphical and cartographical skills as well as independent research and problem-solving skills which will provide them with the understanding and aptitudes for further study in higher education or future employment. A range of Physical and Human topics are studied which can always be linked to modern case studies making the course both relevant and interesting.

CONTENT AND ASSESSMENT

The A Level specification has three units:

Component 1: Physical Geography

Topic list:

Water and Carbon

This section focuses on the major stores of water and carbon at or near the Earth's surface and the dynamic relationships associated with them. These are major elements in the natural environment and understanding them is fundamental to many aspects of physical geography.

This section specifies a systems approach to the study of water and carbon cycles – with a focus on the magnitude and significance of the cycles at a variety of scales, their relevance to wider geography and their central importance for human populations.

There are connections to other units, notably the impact of changing carbon budgets on global sea levels influencing coastal landscapes, and the role of global governance in mitigating against increased carbon emissions.

Coastal Systems and Landscapes

This section of the specification focuses on coastal zones, which are dynamic environments in which landscapes develop by the interaction of winds, waves, currents and terrestrial and marine sediments. The operation and outcomes of fundamental geomorphological processes and their association with distinctive landscapes are readily observable. In common with water and carbon cycles, a systems approach to study is specified.

You will develop an informed appreciation of the beauty and diversity of coasts and their importance as human habitats.

Hazards

This section of the specification focuses on the lithosphere and the atmosphere, which intermittently but regularly present natural hazards to human populations, often in dramatic and sometimes catastrophic fashion. By exploring the origin and nature of these hazards and the various ways in which people respond to them, you will be able to engage with many dimensions of the relationships between people and the environments they occupy.

Component 2: Human Geography

Global Systems and Global Governance

This section of the specification focuses on globalisation – the economic, political and social and environmental changes that have occurred as the world has become more connected due to flows of people, goods, money and services. There is a focus on critically evaluating the outcomes of globalisation, and considering whether the process has benefited students lives, as well as the impact on others across the globe.

Students will look in depth at the role of major inter-governmental organisations like the World Trade Organisation, and the United Nations.

They will also appreciate the threat that global commons like Antarctica face in an increasingly globalised world, and will evaluate how well these threats can be managed.

This is the most synoptic unit in the Human Geography topic as many of the concepts are relevant to every other unit studied in the course.

Changing Places

This section of the specification focuses on people's engagement with places, their experience of them and the qualities they ascribe to them, all of which are of fundamental importance in their lives. You will engage with how places are known and experienced, how their character is appreciated, the factors and processes which impact upon places and how they change and develop over time.

Study of the content is embedded in two contrasting places, one will be local – this will be the Northern Quarter in Manchester – one of the most architecturally diverse areas of the city which has a rich history visible in the landscape, and which has undergone huge transformation due to the intervention of external agencies and gentrification. Our contrasting place is Detroit – as it shows significant contrast in terms of economic development and cultural background.

Contemporary Urban Environments

Students study urban environments and the impact of various processes such as urbanisation, suburbanisation, counter-urbanisation and urban regeneration on people and communities. They will look at how and why each city develops a distinctive urban form, and the changes that have taken place in modern cities to create new urban landscapes. There is also an appreciation of how and why features of climate can vary between urban and rural areas, and even within different parts of the same urban area. There is also a focus on the ecological footprint of cities and with a critically examination of whether they can ever move towards being sustainable. These topics are all explored through in depth studies of London and Mumbai.

Skills

Geographical skills are integrated into delivery and over the course of the study students will encounter all of the graphical, cartographical and statistical techniques on the exam board checklist. This includes Standard Deviation, Spearman's Rank and Chi squared. They will also learn techniques such as Mann Whitney, a commonly used test in the geographical investigation.

Component 3: Geographical Investigation

Non-examined assessment
Worth 20% of the A Level

Students complete an individual investigation of 3000-4000 words, which must include data collected in the field, based on a question or issue defined and developed by the students relating to any part of the specification content.

METHODS OF STUDY

A variety of learning styles are involved including group work assignments, fieldwork and independent research projects. It will mostly be through guided practice with regular opportunities for retrieval practice.

SPECIAL FEATURES OF THE COURSE

Students will take part in four days of fieldwork for the A Level course. This will involve a coastal trip to Formby as well as more local studies to take place in Manchester. There is also the opportunity for a visit to Iceland to explore an environment rich in tectonic activity. Students will be able to take advantage of regular enrichment opportunities aimed at boosting their geographical knowledge in preparation for the final exams. This includes guest speakers, visits to external lectures and courses runs by examiners to prepare students for their terminal exams. The department is a member of the Geographical Association which means we have access to contemporary resources and a range of enrichment opportunities.