

AQA GCSE Geography is an exciting and relevant course that explores the world through a balanced mix of physical and human geography, investigating the connections between them. Students will “travel the world from the classroom,” studying case studies from the UK, higher income countries (HICs), newly emerging economies (NEEs), and lower income countries (LICs).

The course covers critical global issues such as:

- Natural Hazards – tectonic hazards, weather hazards, and climate change
- Living World – ecosystems, tropical rainforests, and cold environments
- Physical Landscapes in the UK – rivers and coastal landscapes
- Urban Issues and Challenges – growth of cities, urban sustainability
- Changing Economic World – global shifts in economic power, development
- Resource Management – food, water, and energy security

Students will also develop an understanding of different viewpoints, values, and attitudes, encouraging them to think critically about their role in society and the challenges facing our planet. Geography matters because it equips you with the knowledge and skills to tackle the world’s most pressing issues—climate change, resource security, urbanisation, and global inequality. It helps you understand how decisions made today shape the future of people and places, and empowers you to contribute to creating a sustainable, fair, and resilient world.

Course structure:

The AQA GCSE Geography course is divided into three main components, each designed to give you a deep understanding of the world and the skills to interpret it:

Paper 1 – Living with the Physical Environment

This unit explores the dynamic nature of physical processes and systems, and how humans interact with them. You’ll study tectonic, geomorphological, biological, and meteorological processes, and consider the need for sustainable management strategies. Topics include The Challenge of Natural Hazards, The Living World, and Physical Landscapes in the UK.

Paper 2 – Challenges in the Human Environment

This paper focuses on human processes, systems, and outcomes, and how they change over time and across different places. You’ll examine factors that create diverse human environments, the challenges they face, and the need for sustainable management. Topics include Urban Issues and Challenges, The Changing Economic World, and The Challenge of Resource Management.

Paper 3 – Geographical Applications

This synoptic paper brings together knowledge and skills from the whole course. It includes an **Issue Evaluation**, based on a pre-release resource booklet provided 12 weeks before the exam, where you analyse and evaluate a contemporary geographical issue using maps, data, and viewpoints. It also assesses your **Fieldwork**, requiring you to apply understanding from two contrasting enquiries—one physical and one human—carried out beyond the classroom.

How Will I Be Assessed?

Assessment is through **three written exams**, all taken at the end of the course:

- **Paper 1: Living with the Physical Environment**
Duration: 1 hour 30 minutes | Weighting: 35% of GCSE

Paper 2: Challenges in the Human Environment

- *Duration:* 1 hour 30 minutes | *Weighting:* 35% of GCSE

Paper 3: Geographical Applications

- *Duration:* 1 hour 30 minutes | *Weighting:* 30% of GCSE

Each paper includes a mix of short-answer, data interpretation, and extended writing questions. Spelling, punctuation, and grammar (SPaG) are assessed across all papers.

Skills Gained:

Studying AQA GCSE Geography will help you develop a powerful set of academic and practical skills that are valued in further education and the workplace:

- **Deep Knowledge of Places and Processes:** Extend your understanding of locations, environments, and the physical and human processes that shape them—at local, national, and global scales.
- **Think Like a Geographer:** Explore how people interact with environments, how places change over time, and how interconnected global systems influence everyday life.
- **Practical and Analytical Skills:** Gain competence in fieldwork techniques, map interpretation, and the use of GIS and digital sources. Learn to research, analyse data, and apply enquiry-based approaches to real-world questions.
- **Apply Geography to Real Issues:** Use your knowledge and skills creatively to tackle contemporary challenges such as climate change, urbanisation, and resource security. Develop well-evidenced arguments and make informed decisions about complex issues.

These skills prepare you not only for exams but for life—helping you become a critical thinker, problem solver, and informed global citizen.

Post-16 Opportunities:

GCSE Geography is a highly respected qualification that opens doors to a wide range of academic and career pathways. After Year 11, students often progress to A Levels in Geography, Geology, Environmental Science, Economics, Politics, Sociology, or Business Studies. It also works extremely well alongside Mathematics and STEM subjects, because Geography combines scientific analysis with data interpretation and problem-solving.

Geography is considered a ‘facilitating subject’ by top universities because it develops critical thinking, data analysis, and decision-making skills—abilities essential for success in higher education and highly valued by employers. These skills are transferable across many disciplines, making Geography an excellent choice for students who want to keep their options open.

This qualification supports progression into careers such as:

- Environmental Management and Sustainability
- Urban Planning and Architecture
- International Development and Humanitarian Work
- Transport and Logistics
- Risk Analysis and Disaster Management
- Media, Journalism, and Public Policy
- Geospatial Data and AI Careers – using GIS (Geographic Information Systems), remote sensing, and AI-powered spatial analysis for climate modelling, smart cities, and disaster prediction.

In a world facing climate change, resource scarcity, and rapid urbanisation, geographers—and those with data and AI skills—are in demand for roles that shape a sustainable future.