



National 5  
Course  
Specification



---

# National 5 Geography Course Specification (C733 75)

**Valid from August 2013**

First edition: April 2012, version 1.0  
Revised: September 2014, version 1.2

This specification may be reproduced in whole or in part for educational purposes provided that no profit is derived from reproduction and that, if reproduced in part, the source is acknowledged. Additional copies of this Course Specification can be downloaded from SQA's website: [www.sqa.org.uk](http://www.sqa.org.uk).

Please refer to the note of changes at the end of this Course Specification for details of changes from previous version (where applicable).

© Scottish Qualifications Authority 2014

## Course outline

**Course title:** National 5 Geography

**SCQF:** level 5 (24 SCQF credit points)

**Course code:** C733 75

### Mandatory Units

Either:

**H27G 75 Geography: Physical Environments (National 5) 6 SCQF credit points**

Or

**H6N9 75 Geography: Physical Environments with a Scottish Context (National 5)\* 6 SCQF credit points**

and

**H27H 75 Geography: Human Environments (National 5) 6 SCQF credit points**

And

**H27J 75 Geography: Global Issues (National 5) 6 SCQF credit points**

And

**Course assessment 6 SCQF credit points**

This Course includes six SCQF credit points to allow additional time for preparation for Course assessment. The Course assessment covers the added value of the Course.

\*Scottish Studies Award contributing Unit: This Course Specification should be read in conjunction with the relevant Scottish Studies Unit Specification on the [Scottish Studies Award web page](#)

## Recommended entry

Entry to this Course is at the discretion of the centre. However, learners would normally be expected to have attained the skills, knowledge and understanding required by the following or by equivalent qualifications and/or experience:

- ◆ National 4 Geography Course or relevant component Units
- ◆ National 4 Environmental Science Course or relevant component Units

In terms of prior learning and experience, relevant experiences and outcomes may also provide an appropriate basis for doing this Course.

## Progression

This Course or its Units may provide progression to:

- ◆ Higher Geography Course or its Units
- ◆ Higher Environmental Science Course or its Units

- ◆ further study, employment and/or training

Further details are provided in the Rationale section.

## **Equality and inclusion**

This Course Specification has been designed to ensure that there are no unnecessary barriers to learning or assessment. The individual needs of learners should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment methods or considering alternative evidence. For further information, please refer to the *Course Support Notes* and the *Course Assessment Specification*.

## **Rationale**

All new and revised National Courses reflect Curriculum for Excellence values, purposes and principles. They offer flexibility, provide more time for learning, more focus on skills and applying learning, and scope for personalisation and choice.

In this Course, and its component Units, there will be an emphasis on skills development and the application of those skills. Assessment approaches will be proportionate, fit for purpose and will promote best practice, enabling learners to achieve the highest standards they can.

This Course provides learners with opportunities to continue to acquire and develop the attributes and capabilities of the four capacities as well as skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work.

All Courses provide opportunities for learners to develop breadth, challenge and application, but the focus and balance of the assessment will be appropriate for the subject area.

## **Relationship between the Course and Curriculum for Excellence values, purposes and principles**

The Geography Course builds upon the principles and practices for social studies and will be developed primarily from the 'people, place and environment' organiser within the social studies experiences and outcomes. It also builds upon the science principles and practices and on selected experiences and outcomes from the science curriculum area.

This Course will encourage learners to develop important attitudes, including: an open mind and respect for the values, beliefs and cultures of others; openness to new thinking and ideas and a sense of responsibility and global citizenship.

Through the study of Geography and the acquisition of techniques of geographical analysis, learners develop an understanding of aspects of the contemporary world of concern to all citizens. By studying this Course, learners are enabled to develop the four capacities in many respects. For example, learner's horizons are extended and they are challenged to look at the world in new ways. Their confidence grows as they begin to understand more about their sense of identity and learn about different countries and cultures. Learners will build up a framework of geographical knowledge and understanding with which to understand and respond to global issues which can help them develop a sense of responsible citizenship.

The investigative and critical thinking activities in this Course give learners important experience in contributing to group work and also working on their own. Learners will acquire attributes which will be important for their life and work. Through the skills and content of this Course, learners will develop an increased understanding of the environment, sustainability and the impact of global issues. They will develop a sense of responsible citizenship and be encouraged to reflect upon the impact of the environment on the health and wellbeing of themselves and others. The emphasis on the evaluation of sources, including maps, will develop thinking skills. Learners will progressively develop skills in literacy and numeracy.

## **Purpose and aims of the Course**

Geography opens up for learners the physical environment around them and the ways in which people interact with this environment.

The purpose of Geography is to develop the learner's understanding of our changing world and its human and physical processes. Opportunities for practical activities, including fieldwork, will be encouraged, so that learners can interact with their environment.

In the 21st century, with growing awareness of the impact of human activity upon the environment and scarce resources, the study of Geography fosters positive life-long attitudes of environmental stewardship, sustainability and global citizenship. This qualification will furnish learners with the knowledge and skills to enable them to contribute effectively to their local communities and wider society.

The contexts for study are local, national, international, and global. Geography draws upon the social and natural sciences: interdisciplinary learning is therefore fundamental to geographical study and encourages links with other disciplines.

The main aims of Geography are to enable learners to develop:

- ◆ a range of geographical skills and techniques
- ◆ detailed understanding of the ways in which people and the environment interact in response to physical and human processes at local, national, international, and global scales
- ◆ detailed understanding of spatial relationships and of the changing world in a balanced, critical and sympathetic way
- ◆ a geographical perspective on environmental and social issues
- ◆ an interest in, and concern for, the environment leading to sustainable development

## **Information about typical learners who might do the Course**

This Course is appropriate for a wide range of learners including those who wish to achieve a greater understanding of the environment and their place in it as well as learners who wish to progress to more specialised training or further education or employment.

Entry to this Course is at the discretion of the centre. However, it may be beneficial for the learner to have the skills and knowledge developed by relevant experiences and outcomes from the broad, general education or equivalent qualifications.

Through the successful completion of this Course learners will develop a range of important and transferrable skills including: using, interpreting, evaluating and analysing a range of geographical information; interpreting and explaining geographical phenomena; using a range of maps and other data to process and communicate geographical information; and researching skills, including fieldwork.

Learners will also develop an awareness of a limited range of geographical information systems through ICT or alternative means.

Geography Units and Courses are offered from SCQF level 3 to SCQF level 7. Vertical progression is possible through the levels of Geography qualifications and lateral progression is possible to other qualifications in the social studies suite of Courses and selected Courses in science.

The National 5 Geography Course provides an entry qualification for further study, employment and training. This Course is a preparation for a diverse range of occupations and careers.

# Course structure and conditions of award

## Course structure

This Course develops a range of cognitive and practical skills. It encourages active learning, including fieldwork, in the process of developing an understanding of geographical issues. The theme of sustainability will permeate the Course as appropriate. Learners will acquire and apply relevant knowledge. Through using a range of sources of information they will develop investigating, evaluating and analysing skills in order to understand and explain geographical issues.

By undertaking this Course, learners will develop a wide range of important and transferable skills, including using, interpreting, evaluating and analysing a range of geographical information; interpreting and explaining geographical phenomena; using a range of maps and other data to process and communicate geographical information; and researching skills, including fieldwork.

Learners will develop an awareness of a limited range of geographical information systems through ICT or alternative means.

The skills listed above will be developed and applied over a range of physical environment, human environment and global issue contexts in the following Units. Each Unit also offers opportunities for learners to focus on particular skills.

This Course has three mandatory Units. Within each Unit there is a considerable degree of flexibility in contexts which can be studied to allow personalisation and choice.

Units are statements of standards for assessment and not programmes of learning and teaching. They can be delivered in a number of ways.

The principles above will be applied in the Units below:

### **Geography: Physical Environments (National 5)**

In this Unit, learners will develop geographical skills and techniques in the context of physical environments. Learners will develop a detailed knowledge and understanding of the processes and interactions at work within physical environments. Key topics include: location of landscape type; formation of key landscape features; land use management and sustainability; and weather. Learners will study a selection of landscape types from contexts within Scotland and/or the UK. Landscape types will be chosen from: glaciated upland; upland limestone; coastal landscapes; and rivers and valleys. Personalisation and choice is possible through the landscape types and areas chosen for study.

### **Geography: Human Environments (National 5)**

In this Unit, learners will develop geographical skills and techniques in the context of human environments. Learners will develop a detailed knowledge and understanding of the processes and interactions at work within human environments. Learners will study and compare developed and developing countries drawn from a global context. Key topics include: contrasts in development; world population distribution and change; and issues in changing urban and rural landscapes. Personalisation and choice is possible through contexts chosen as case studies.

**Geography: Global Issues (National 5)**

In this Unit, learners will develop skills in the use of numerical and graphical information in the context of global issues. Learners will develop a detailed knowledge and understanding of significant global geographical issues. Key topics include climate change; the impact of human activity on the natural environment; environmental hazards; trade and globalisation; tourism and health. Learners will study major global issues and the strategies adopted to manage these. Personalisation and choice is possible through the issues selected for study.

**Conditions of award**

To gain the award of the Course, the learner must pass all the Units as well as the Course assessment. The required Units are shown in the Course outline section. Course assessment will provide the basis for grading attainment in the Course award.

## Skills, knowledge and understanding

Further information about skills, knowledge and understanding for the Course will be given in the *Course Assessment Specification*. A broad overview of the mandatory subject skills, knowledge and understanding that will be assessed in the Course is given in this section.

This covers:

- ◆ developing and applying skills, and detailed knowledge and understanding in geographical contexts
- ◆ with guidance, researching and using information collected from a range of sources about geographical issues which are mostly familiar
- ◆ using a range of mapping skills, including the use of Ordnance Survey maps in mostly familiar contexts
- ◆ using a range of research skills, including fieldwork skills, in mostly familiar contexts
- ◆ using and interpreting a range of numerical and graphical information in mostly familiar contexts
- ◆ demonstrating knowledge and understanding of the physical environment of Scotland and/or the United Kingdom by giving descriptions which are mainly factual with some theoretical content and giving detailed explanations
- ◆ demonstrating knowledge and understanding of the human environment in a global context by giving descriptions which are mainly factual with some theoretical content and giving detailed explanations
- ◆ demonstrating knowledge and understanding of selected global issues by giving descriptions which are mainly factual with some theoretical content and giving detailed explanations

Skills, knowledge and understanding to be included in the Course will be appropriate to the SCQF level of the Course. The SCQF level descriptors give further information on characteristics and expected performance at each SCQF level ([www.sqa.org.uk/scqf](http://www.sqa.org.uk/scqf)).

# Assessment

Information about assessment for the Course will be included in the *Course Assessment Specification* which will provide full details including advice on how a learner's overall attainment for the Course will be determined.

## Unit assessment

All Units are internally assessed against the requirements shown in the Unit Specifications.

They can be assessed on an individual Unit basis or by using other approaches which combine the assessment for more than one Unit.

They will be assessed pass/fail within centres. SQA will provide rigorous external quality assurance, including external verification, to ensure assessment judgements are consistent and meet national standards.

The assessment of the Units in this Course will be as follows:

### **Geography: Physical Environments (National 5)**

The learner will be required to provide evidence of:

- ◆ ability to use a range of mapping skills in geographical contexts in the United Kingdom
- ◆ descriptions and detailed explanations demonstrating knowledge and understanding, of physical environments and weather in the United Kingdom

### **Geography: Human Environments (National 5)**

The learner will be required to provide evidence of:

- ◆ ability to use a range of research skills applied to developed and developing countries
- ◆ descriptions and detailed explanations demonstrating knowledge and understanding of human environments in developed and developing countries

### **Geography: Global Issues (National 5)**

The learner will be required to provide evidence of:

- ◆ ability to use a range of numerical and graphical information in the context of global geographical issues
- ◆ descriptions and detailed explanations demonstrating knowledge and understanding of significant global geographical issues

If Units are taken as part of a Course, then the evidence for 'mapping skills' or 'research skills' may be presented in the context of either the *Physical Environments* Unit or the *Human Environments* Unit.

## Course assessment

Courses from National 4 to Advanced Higher include assessment of [added value](#)<sup>1</sup>. At National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher, the added value will be assessed in the Course assessment. The added value for the Course must address the key purposes and aims of the Course as defined in the Course Rationale. It will do this by addressing one or more of breadth, challenge or application.

In the National 5 Geography Course, added value will focus on:

- ◆ breadth
- ◆ challenge
- ◆ application

The learner will draw on, extend and apply the skills, knowledge and understanding they have acquired during the Course. This will be assessed by a [question paper](#)<sup>2</sup> and an [assignment](#)<sup>3</sup>.

The question paper will require demonstration of a breadth of skills, knowledge and understanding from across the Course. The assignment will require learners to extend and apply their skills, knowledge and understanding and will be sufficiently open and flexible to allow for personalisation and choice.

---

<sup>1</sup> Definitions can be found here: [www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/58409.html](http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/58409.html)

<sup>2</sup> See link above for definition

<sup>3</sup> See link above for definition

# Development of skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work

It is expected that learners will develop broad, generic skills through this Course. The skills that learners will be expected to improve on and develop through the Course are based on SQA's *Skills Framework: Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work* and drawn from the main skills areas listed below. These must be built into the Course where there are appropriate opportunities.

## **1 Literacy**

1.1 Reading

## **2 Numeracy**

2.3 Information handling

## **4 Employability, enterprise and citizenship**

4.6 Citizenship

## **5 Thinking skills**

5.3 Applying

5.4 Analysing and evaluating

Amplification of these skills is given in SQA's *Skills Framework: Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work*. The level of these skills will be appropriate to the level of the Course. Further information on building in skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work for the Course is given in the *Course Support Notes*.

# Administrative information

---

**Published:** September 2014 (version 1.2)

---

## History of changes to National Course Specification

| Course details | Version | Description of change  | Authorised by                      | Date           |
|----------------|---------|--|------------------------------------|----------------|
|                | 1.1     | Slight amends to clarify statements and make wording consistent with Course Assessment Specification and Unit Specifications in Course structure and Unit assessment sections. | Qualifications Development Manager | June 2013      |
|                | 1.2     | Scottish Studies Award Unit contributing information added.<br><br>No other changes made to document content.  | Qualifications Manager             | September 2014 |
|                |         |  |                                    |                |
|                |         |  |                                    |                |

This specification may be reproduced in whole or in part for educational purposes provided that no profit is derived from reproduction and that, if reproduced in part, the source is acknowledged. Additional copies of this specification can be downloaded from SQA's website at [www.sqa.org.uk](http://www.sqa.org.uk).

Note: You are advised to check SQA's website ([www.sqa.org.uk](http://www.sqa.org.uk)) to ensure you are using the most up-to-date version of the Course Specification.

© Scottish Qualifications Authority 2014