

Advanced Higher Geography Draft Course/Unit Support Notes



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

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Introduction

These support notes are not mandatory. They provide advice and guidance on approaches to delivering and assessing the Advanced Higher Geography Course. They are intended for teachers and lecturers who are delivering the Course and its Units. They should be read in conjunction with the *Course Specification*, the *Course Assessment Specification* and the *Unit Specifications* for the Units in the Course.

These support notes cover both the Advanced Higher Course and the Units in it.

Draft

General guidance on the Course/Units

Aims

The main aims of this Course are to enable learners to:

- ◆ appreciate the ways in which people and the environment interact in response to physical and human processes and develop a concern for the environment leading to sustainable development
- ◆ study spatial relationships to develop an understanding of the changing world in a balanced, critical and sympathetic way
- ◆ acquire a geographical perspective on environmental and social issues and their significance
- ◆ develop skills of personal research, fieldwork, analysis, synthesis, evaluation and presentation
- ◆ acquire the techniques and terminology to collect, extract, analyse, interpret and explain geographical phenomena
- ◆ develop expertise in the use of maps, diagrams, statistical techniques and written accounts

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 essential parts of this Course, so that learners can interact with their environment. At Advanced Higher, learners will experience depth and challenge in the level of skills, knowledge and understanding required.

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.

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 Course will provide learners with the knowledge and skills to enable them to effectively engage with challenging issues in their local communities and wider society.

This Course will help create informed and active citizens who can use modern technology. It will do this by helping learners develop a greater understanding of the human and physical processes which have an impact on their environment and by encouraging scientific rigour in data collection and interpretation.

Learners will develop high level skills which are transferable to other areas of study and which they will use in everyday life. Learners will carry out independent research and take responsibility for their own learning but with support from the teacher/lecturer/tutor/peers as appropriate.

Progression

In order to do this Course, learners should have achieved one or more of the Higher Geography or Higher Environmental Science Courses.

Learners who have achieved this Advanced Higher Course may progress to further study, employment and/or training. Opportunities for progression include:

- ◆ Progression to further/higher education
 - For many learners a key transition point will be to further or higher education, for example to Higher National Certificates (HNCs)/Higher National Diplomas (HNDs) or degree programmes. Examples of further and higher education programmes that learners might progress to are geology, town and transport planning, chartered surveying, renewable energy, land and water management, environmental consultancy, development, tourism, conservation, demography, housing and social welfare.
 - This Course provides good preparation for learners progressing to further and higher education as learners doing Advanced Higher Courses must be able to work with more independence and less supervision. This eases their transition to further/higher education. Advanced Higher Courses may also allow 'advanced standing' or partial credit towards the first year of study of a degree programme.
 - Advanced Higher Courses are challenging and testing qualifications — learners who have achieved multiple Advanced Higher Courses are regarded as having a proven level of ability which attests to their readiness for higher education in Higher Education Institutions in other parts of the UK as well as in Scotland.

This Advanced Higher is a core Course in the Scottish Baccalaureate in Social Sciences and a broadening Course in the Scottish Baccalaureate in Science. The Scottish Baccalaureates in Expressive Arts, Languages, Science and Social Sciences consist of coherent groups of subjects at Higher and Advanced Higher level. Each award consists of two Advanced Highers, one Higher and an Interdisciplinary Project which adds breadth and value and helps learners to develop generic skills, attitudes and confidence that will help them make the transition into higher education or employment.

Skills, knowledge and understanding covered in this Course

This section provides further advice and guidance about skills, knowledge and understanding that could be included in the Course.

Teachers and lecturers should refer to the *Course Assessment Specification* for mandatory information about the skills, knowledge and understanding to be covered in this Course.

The development of subject specific and generic skills is central to the Course. Learners should be made aware of the skills they are developing and of the transferability of them. It is the transferability that will help learners with further study and enhance their personal effectiveness.

The skills, knowledge and understanding that will be developed in the Advanced Higher Geography Course are:

- ◆ developing and using a wide range of research and mapping skills and techniques in complex geographical contexts which may be unfamiliar
- ◆ developing and using a wide range of numerical and graphical skills and techniques in geographical contexts which may be familiar or unfamiliar
- ◆ developing and using a limited range of statistical techniques
- ◆ developing and using knowledge and understanding of geographical terminology, ideas and systems using complex information to explain and analyse a wide range of geographical phenomena
- ◆ developing and applying factual and theoretical knowledge and understanding and providing analysis of a range of complex geographical evidence
- ◆ using modern technology to enhance skills, knowledge and understanding
- ◆ developing knowledge and understanding of environments, sustainability and climate change in a dynamic world

Approaches to learning and teaching

Advanced Higher Courses place more demands on learners as there will be a higher proportion of independent study and less direct supervision. Some of the approaches to learning and teaching suggested for other levels (in particular, Higher) may also apply at Advanced Higher level but there will be a stronger emphasis on independent learning.

For Advanced Higher Courses, a significant amount of learning may be self-directed and require learners to demonstrate a more mature approach to learning and the ability to work on their own initiative. This can be very challenging for some learners, who may feel isolated at times, and teachers and lecturers should have strategies for addressing this. These could include, for example, planning time for regular feedback sessions/discussions on a one-to-one basis and on a group basis led by the teacher or lecturer (where appropriate).

Teachers and lecturers should encourage learners to use an enquiring, critical and problem-solving approach to their learning. Learners should also be given the opportunity to practise and develop research and investigation skills and higher order evaluation and analytical skills. The use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) can make a significant contribution to the development of these higher order skills as research and investigation activities become more sophisticated.

Learners will engage in a variety of learning activities as appropriate to the subject, for example:

- ◆ researching information for their subject rather than receiving information from their teacher or lecturer
- ◆ undertaking fieldwork
- ◆ using active and open-ended learning activities such as research, case studies and presentation tasks
- ◆ making use of the internet to draw conclusions about specific issues
- ◆ engaging in wide-ranging independent reading
- ◆ recording in a systematic way the results of research and independent investigation from different sources
- ◆ presenting findings/conclusions of research and investigation activities in a presentation
- ◆ participating in group work with peers and using collaborative learning opportunities to develop teamwork
- ◆ participating in informed debate and discussion with peers where they can demonstrate skills in constructing and sustaining lines of argument to provide challenge and enjoyment, breadth, and depth to learning
- ◆ drawing conclusions from complex information
- ◆ using sophisticated written and/or oral communication and presentation skills to present information
- ◆ using appropriate technological resources (eg web-based resources)

- ◆ using appropriate media resources (eg video clips)
- ◆ using real-life contexts and experiences familiar and relevant to young people to meaningfully hone and exemplify skills, knowledge and understanding
- ◆ participating in field trips and visits

Teachers and lecturers should support learners by having regular discussions with them and giving regular feedback. Some learning and teaching activities may be carried out on a group basis and, where this applies, learners could also receive feedback from their peers.

Teachers and lecturers should, where possible, provide opportunities to personalise learning, and enable learners to have choices in approaches to learning and teaching. The flexibility in Advanced Higher Courses and the independence with which learners carry out the work lend themselves to this. Teachers and lecturers should also create opportunities for, and use, inclusive approaches to learning and teaching. This can be achieved by encouraging the use of a variety of learning and teaching strategies which suit the needs of all learners. Innovative and creative ways of using technology can also be valuable in creating inclusive learning and teaching approaches.

Centres are free to sequence the teaching of the Outcomes, Units and/or Course in any order they wish. For example:

- ◆ Each Unit could be delivered separately in any sequence.

or

- ◆ The Units may be delivered in a combined way as part of the Course. If this approach is used, the Outcomes within Units may either be partially or fully combined.

There may be opportunities to contextualise approaches to learning and teaching to Scottish contexts in this Course. This could be done through mini-projects or case studies.

Developing skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work

The following skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work should be developed in this Course.

Reading

Throughout the Course and while undertaking the assignment, learners will have the opportunity to develop reading skills. They may read a variety of texts, including academic journals, newspaper reports, online articles etc. This will help learners develop their skills to read critically and evaluate the ideas contained in written sources, drawing conclusions with justification, constructing arguments in a balanced and structured way; and expressing reasoned views about the texts

they study. This in turn will further develop their ability to understand and use a wide range of evidence on contemporary issues.

Writing

The Course will provide considerable opportunities to develop writing skills within the Units. Learners should be encouraged to undertake extended writing wherever appropriate in order to develop the necessary skills to support their progression towards higher education and the world of work. For example, the requirements to apply knowledge and understanding about a range of contemporary political or social issues and being able to adopt a comparative approach, provide an ideal opportunity for learners to develop the skill of extended writing.

Personal learning

The Course, and in particular the question paper and project, will provide extensive opportunities for learners to undertake individually-led work including : carrying out independent research; evaluating, analysing and synthesising evidence; making and justifying decisions, and communicating, by a variety of means, views, opinions, decisions and conclusions based on evidence.

Citizenship

At Advanced Higher level, learners will develop citizenship through deepening their understanding of issues facing contemporary society. They will be required to apply their knowledge and understanding of factual elements of social and political issues and topics. They will also be required to link these with underlying theoretical or abstract ideas which will require a greater depth and detail of understanding.

Applying, analysing and evaluating

At Advanced Higher level, learners will be required to apply their knowledge and understanding of factual elements of political and social issues and questions. They will also be required to link these with underlying theoretical or abstract ideas which will require a greater depth and detail of understanding. This enables learners to explore challenging abstract ideas by engaging with a wide range of source material, and both evaluating and synthesising information. This depth of study affords them a unique opportunity of intellectual engagement with the subject matter.

This Course will allow learners to use different sources of information including academic literature, scientific sources, newspaper or online articles, blogs etc. Any piece of information, or source, is capable of yielding more or less relevant input to a study, depending on the skills of the learner. However, teachers/lecturers should direct learners to more complex, and potentially richer sources of information.

The project

Completing the Advanced Higher project will provide opportunities for developing and deepening the skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work. Learners will describe and summarise the research they have carried out, assess the

usefulness of different sources, and express opinions and viewpoints, as well as personally reflect upon what has been learned.

This Course provides opportunities to develop the skill of synthesising information. The project in particular will provide opportunities for candidates to develop their skills in this area.

There may also be opportunities for other, additional skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work to be developed in the Course. For example, the use of debating, discussion groups or visits from subject experts could develop skills of listening and talking. However, this could vary across centres depending on approaches being used to deliver the Course in a centre and this is for centres to manage.

Teachers and lecturers should ensure that learners have opportunities to develop these skills as an integral part of their learning experience.

It is important that learners are aware of the skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work that they are developing in the Course and the activities they are involved in that provide realistic opportunities to practise and/or improve them.

At Advanced Higher level it is expected that learners will be using a range of higher order thinking skills. They will also develop skills in independent and autonomous learning.

Approaches to assessment

Assessment in Advanced Higher Courses will generally reflect the investigative nature of Courses at this level, together with high-level problem-solving and critical thinking skills and skills of analysis and synthesis.

This emphasis on higher order skills, together with the more independent learning approaches that learners will use, distinguishes the added value at Advanced Higher level from the added value at other levels.

There are different approaches to assessment, and teachers and lecturers should use their professional judgement, subject knowledge and experience, as well as their understanding of their learners and their varying needs, to determine the most appropriate approaches and, where necessary, to consider workable alternatives.

Assessments must be fit for purpose and should allow for consistent judgements to be made by all teachers and lecturers. They should also be conducted in a supervised manner to ensure that the evidence provided is valid and reliable.

Unit assessment

Assessments must ensure that the evidence generated demonstrates, at the least, the minimum level of competence for each Unit. Teachers and lecturers preparing assessment methods should be clear about what that evidence will look like.

Sources of evidence likely to be suitable for Advanced Higher Units could include:

- ◆ meaningful contribution to group work and/or discussions (making use of log books, blogs, question and answer sessions to confirm individual learners have met the required standards)
- ◆ practical research and fieldwork skills
- ◆ presentation of information to other groups and/or recorded oral evidence
- ◆ exemplification of concepts using (for example) a diagram
- ◆ interpretation of numerical data
- ◆ practical demonstration with commentary/explanation/narrative
- ◆ investigations
- ◆ extended response essay-type questions

Evidence should include the use of appropriate subject-specific terminology as well as the use of real-life examples where appropriate.

Flexibility in the method of assessment provides opportunities for learners to demonstrate attainment in a variety of ways and so reduce barriers to attainment.

The structure of an assessment used by a centre can take a variety of forms, for example:

- ◆ individual pieces of work could be collected in a folio as evidence for Outcomes and Assessment Standards
- ◆ assessment of each complete Outcome
- ◆ assessment that combines the Outcomes of one or more Units
- ◆ assessment that requires more than the minimum competence, which would allow learners to prepare for the Course assessment

Teachers and lecturers should note that learners' day-to-day work may produce evidence which satisfies assessment requirements of a Unit, or Units, either in full or partially. Such naturally-occurring evidence may be used as a contribution towards Unit assessment. However, this naturally-occurring evidence must still be recorded and evidence such as written reports, recording forms, PowerPoint slides, drawings/graphs, video footage or observational checklists provided.

Combining assessment across Units

Units will be assessed on a pass/fail basis. All Units are internally assessed against the requirements shown in the *Unit Specification*. Each Unit can be assessed on an individual Outcome-by-Outcome basis or via the use of combined assessment for some or all Outcomes.

A combined approach to assessment will enrich the assessment process for the learner, avoid duplication of tasks and allow more emphasis on learning and teaching. Evidence could be drawn from a range of activities for a combined assessment. Care must be taken to ensure that combined assessments provide appropriate evidence for all the Outcomes that they claim to assess.

Combining assessment will also give centres more time to manage the assessment process more efficiently. When combining assessments across Units, teachers/lecturers should use e-assessment wherever possible. Learners can easily update portfolios, electronic or written diaries and recording sheets.

For some Advanced Higher Courses, it may be that a strand of work which contributes to a Course assessment method is started when a Unit is being delivered and is completed in the Course assessment. In these cases, it is important that the evidence for the Unit assessment is clearly distinguishable from that required for the Course assessment.

Preparation for Course assessment

Each Course has additional time which may be used at the discretion of the teacher or lecturer to enable learners to prepare for Course assessment. This time may be used near the start of the Course and at various points throughout the Course for consolidation and support. It may also be used for preparation for

Unit assessment, and, towards the end of the Course, for further integration, revision and preparation and/or gathering evidence for Course assessment.

For this Course, the assessment methods for Course assessment are a question paper and a project. Learners should be given opportunities to practise these methods and prepare for them.

Examples of activities to include within this preparation time include:

- ◆ Preparing for the Components of Course assessment, for example:
 - preparing for non-question paper Components — selecting topics, gathering and researching information, evaluating and analysing findings, developing and justifying conclusions, presenting the information
 - practising and refining practical skills
 - practising question paper techniques, revising for the question paper

In relation to preparing for the project, teachers and lecturers should explain requirements to learners and the amount and nature of the support they can expect. However, at Advanced Higher level it is expected that learners will work with more independence and less supervision and support.

Authenticity

In terms of authenticity, there are a number of techniques and strategies to ensure that learners present work that is their own. Teachers and lecturers should put in place mechanisms to authenticate learner evidence.

In Advanced Higher Courses, learners will take greater responsibility for their own learning and work more independently, so teachers and lecturers need to have measures in place to ensure that work produced is the learner's own work.

For example:

- ◆ regular checkpoint/progress meetings with learners
- ◆ short spot-check personal interviews
- ◆ checklists which record activity/progress
- ◆ learner notes from their independent reading

Group work approaches are acceptable as part of the preparation for assessment and also for formal assessment. However, there must be clear evidence for each learner to show that they have met the evidence requirements.

For more information, please refer to SQA's [Guide to Assessment](#).

Added value

Advanced Higher Courses include assessment of added value which is assessed in the Course assessment.

Information given in the *Course Specification* and the *Course Assessment Specification* about the assessment of added value is mandatory.

In Advanced Higher Courses, added value involves the assessment of higher order skills such as high-level and more sophisticated investigation and research skills, critical thinking skills and skills of analysis and synthesis. Learners may be required to analyse and reflect upon their assessment activity by commenting on it and/or drawing conclusions with commentary/justification. These skills contribute to the uniqueness of Advanced Higher Courses and to the overall higher level of performance expected at this level.

In this Course, added value will be assessed by means of a question paper and a project.

The question paper is used to assess whether the learner can retain and consolidate the knowledge and skills gained in individual Units. It assesses knowledge and understanding and the various different applications of knowledge such as reasoning, analysing, evaluating and solving problems.

The project is used to assess a wide range of high-order cognitive and practical skills and to integrate assessment. For example, the project brings a number of higher order skills together, such as skills relating to planning, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation and report-writing. The learner will carry out a significant part of the work for the project independently with minimal supervision.

Equality and inclusion

It is recognised that centres have their own duties under equality and other legislation and policy initiatives. The guidance given in these *Course/Unit Support Notes* is designed to sit alongside these duties but is specific to the delivery and assessment of the Course.

It is important that centres are aware of and understand SQA's assessment arrangements for disabled learners, and those with additional support needs, when making requests for adjustments to published assessment arrangements. Centres will find more guidance on this in the series of publications on Assessment Arrangements on SQA's website: www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/14977.html.

The greater flexibility and choice in Advanced Higher Courses provide opportunities to meet a range of learners' needs and may remove the need for learners to have assessment arrangements. However, where a disabled learner needs a reasonable adjustment/ assessment arrangements to be made, you should refer to the guidance given in the above link.

Appendix 1: Further information on Units in the Course

SQA is undertaking substantial engagement on the nature of the Advanced Higher Geography Course. Once this engagement is complete additional information will be provided in the Course and Unit Support Notes.

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Appendix 2: Reference documents

The following reference documents will provide useful information and background.

- ◆ Assessment Arrangements (for disabled candidates and/or those with additional support needs) — various publications are available on SQA's website at: www.sqa.org.uk/sqa//14977.html.
- ◆ Building the Curriculum 4: Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work
- ◆ Building the Curriculum 5: A Framework for Assessment
- ◆ [Course Specifications](#)
- ◆ [Design Principles for National Courses](#)
- ◆ [Guide to Assessment](#)
- ◆ [Overview of Qualification Reports](#)
- ◆ Principles and practice papers for curriculum areas
- ◆ [SCQF Handbook: User Guide](#) and [SCQF level descriptors](#)
- ◆ [SQA Skills Framework: Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work](#)
- ◆ [Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work: Using the Curriculum Tool](#)
- ◆ [Coursework Authenticity: A Guide for Teachers and Lecturers](#)

Administrative information

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History of changes to Advanced Higher draft Course/Unit Support Notes

Course details	Version	Description of change	Authorised by	Date

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