



Advanced Higher Geography — draft Course rationale and summary



This edition: March 2012, draft version 1.0

Published by the Scottish Qualifications Authority
The Optima Building, 58 Robertson Street, Glasgow G2 8DQ
Lowden, 24 Wester Shawfair, Dalkeith, Midlothian EH22 1FD

www.sqa.org.uk

© Scottish Qualifications Authority 2012

Contents

Course rationale	1
Background	1
Relationship between the Course and Curriculum for Excellence values, purposes and principles	2
Purpose and aims of the Course	2
Information about typical learners who might do the Course	3
Course summary	5
Course outline	5
Course structure and conditions of award	6
Course structure	6
Conditions of award	7
Assessment	8
Unit assessment	8
Course assessment	8

Course rationale

Background

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

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. Learners are enabled to develop the four capacities. Learners' 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 environmental issues and thereby help them develop a sense of responsible citizenship.

The independent study, research, critical thinking and evaluation skills embedded in this Course give learners important experience in working on their own while also contributing to group work. Learners will acquire skills and attributes which are highly valued by Higher Education, are transferable and 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 real sense of responsible citizenship and be encouraged to reflect upon the impact of the environment on the health and wellbeing of themselves and others through fieldwork, decision making, critical evaluation and the use of geographic scientific methodologies which add rigour to their work.

The practical, multidisciplinary and scientific nature of Geography will help to develop a range of important and transferable skills. The emphasis on the critical evaluation of viewpoints and sources of information, including maps will develop thinking skills. Learners will progressively develop skills in literacy by report and essay writing and numeracy through data collection, processing and the use of statistical techniques and GIS (Geographical Information Systems).

Purpose and aims of the Course

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

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 at local, national, international and global scales
- ◆ 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 a life-long interest in, understanding of, and concern for the environment leading to sustainable development
- ◆ develop skills of personal research, fieldwork, analysis, synthesis, evaluation and presentation
- ◆ use ICT and GIS (Geographical Information Systems) to access a wide range of specialized data
- ◆ 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

Geography will help create informed and active citizens who can use modern technology 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.

Information about typical learners who might do the Course

Geography Courses are 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.

The specific geographical, research and presentation skills developed by undertaking this Course and the general approach to independent work, self-motivation and individual initiative will stand learners in good stead as they progress to higher education and the world of work.

Entry to this Course is at the discretion of the centre. However, it would be beneficial for a learner studying Geography to have the skills and knowledge required by the Higher Geography Course or the Higher Environmental Science Course or equivalent qualifications.

All Courses in this suite will take account of the needs of all learners and provide sufficient flexibility to enable learners to achieve in different ways and at a different pace.

The Advanced Higher Geography Course is recognised as an entry qualification to employment, training, further and higher education. This Course, with its wide range of transferable skills, provides preparation for a diverse range of occupations and careers.

Through the successful completion of this Course, important skills for learning, life and work are developed. These skills include the use, interpretation, evaluation and synthesis of information from a wide range of sources; interpreting, explaining and analysing geographical phenomena; the ability to use a range of mapping, statistical and fieldwork techniques to process and communicate geographical information; and ability to carry out independent research, including the use of fieldwork.

Learners will also further develop an expertise in a 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 the Sciences.

Course summary

Course title: Advanced Higher Geography

SCQF level 7 (32 SCQF credit points)

Course outline

Mandatory Units

The Course comprises the following mandatory Units:

Geographical Methods and Techniques

(Advanced Higher)

8 SCQF credit points

Geographical Study (Advanced Higher)

8 SCQF credit points

Geographical Issues (Advanced Higher)

8 SCQF credit points

Course assessment

8 SCQF credit points

This Course includes eight SCQF credit points to allow additional time for preparation for Course assessment. The Course assessment covers the added value of the Course. Further information on the Course assessment is provided in the Assessment section.

Course structure and conditions of award

Course structure

This Course develops a range of cognitive skills and geographical skills. It encourages active learning which will include fieldwork, in the process of which learners will develop a high level of knowledge and understanding of geographical issues.

Learners need to acquire and apply relevant knowledge and evaluating, investigating and analysing skills, at an appropriate level, in order to understand and explain geographical issues.

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. The theme of sustainability will permeate the Course.

By undertaking this Course, learners will develop a wide range of important and transferable skills, including: the use, interpretation, evaluation and synthesis of information from a wide range of sources; interpreting, explaining and analysing geographical phenomena; the ability to use a range of mapping, statistical and fieldwork techniques to process and communicate geographical information; and ability to carry out independent research, including the use of fieldwork.

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

The skills listed above will be developed and applied over a range of contexts in the following Units.

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

Geographical Methods and Techniques (Advanced Higher)

In this Unit, learners will develop a range of geographical methods and techniques including fieldwork skills, graphical techniques and a range of statistical techniques for analysing and interpreting geographical data.

Geographical Study (Advanced Higher)

In this Unit, learners will undertake independent research from primary and secondary sources and/or independent fieldwork; analyse their findings; and evaluate their research.

Geographical Issues (Advanced Higher)

In this Unit, learners will develop critical thinking and the ability to evaluate sources and viewpoints on a current geographical issue.

Conditions of award

To gain the award of the Course, the learner must pass all of 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.

Draft

Assessment

Information about assessment standards for the Course is included in the *Course Assessment Specification* which provides 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 Unit specifications.

They can be assessed on a Unit-by-Unit basis or by combined assessment.

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

Exemplification of possible assessment approaches for these Units will be provided in the *National Assessment Resource*.

Course assessment

Courses from National 4 to Advanced Higher include assessment of [added value](#)¹. 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 Advanced Higher Geography Course, added value will focus on:

- ◆ breadth
- ◆ challenge
- ◆ application

The learner will draw on, extend and apply the knowledge and skills they have learned during the Course. This will be assessed by a combination of a [question paper](#)² and a [project](#)³. The question paper will require demonstration of a breadth of knowledge, understanding and skills accumulated from across the Course. The project will require learners to extend and apply their knowledge and skills and will be sufficiently open and flexible to allow for personalisation and choice.

¹ Definitions can be found here: www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/45528.html

² See link above for definition.

³ See link above for definition.