



Higher Geography — draft Course rationale and summary

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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

The Geography Course builds upon the principles and practices for the social studies curriculum area¹ and the science curriculum area.²

This Course will encourage learners to develop important attitudes, including: an open mind and respect for the values, beliefs and cultures of others; an 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.

Geography encourages learners to develop the attributes and capabilities of the four capacities in many respects. For example, 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 become responsible citizens by building up a framework of geographical knowledge and understanding with which to understand and respond to global issues.

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 the Geography 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 practical and multidisciplinary nature of Geography will help to develop skills in employability and enterprise. The emphasis on the evaluation of sources of information, including maps, will develop thinking skills. Learners will progressively develop skills in literacy and numeracy.

¹ Social studies principles and practice paper

www.ltscotland.org.uk/learningteachingandassessment/curriculumareas/socialstudies/principlesandpractice/index.asp

² Sciences principles and practice paper

www.ltscotland.org.uk/learningteachingandassessment/curriculumareas/sciences/principlesandpractice/index.asp

Purpose and aims of the Course

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

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 furnish learners with the knowledge and skills to enable them to contribute effectively to their local communities and wider society.

The main aims of Geography 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
- ◆ be aware of spatial relationships and 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 an interest in, understanding of, and concern for the environment leading to sustainable development

Geography will help create informed and active citizens by helping learners develop a greater understanding of the human and physical processes which have an impact on their environment. Learners will develop skills which are transferable to other areas of study and which they will use in everyday life.

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.

Entry to this Course is at the discretion of the centre. However, it may be beneficial for a learner studying Geography to have the skills and knowledge required by one or more of the following:

- ◆ Geography (National 5) or relevant component Units or another social subject or relevant science
- ◆ 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.

Through the successful completion of the Geography Course, important skills for learning, life and work are developed. These skills include the use, interpretation and evaluation of information from a wide range of sources; interpreting and explaining geographical phenomena; and the ability to use a range of maps and other data to process and communicate geographical information, and research, including fieldwork skills.

Learners will also develop an awareness of 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.

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

Course summary

Course title: Higher Geography

SCQF level 6 (24 SCQF credit points)

Course outline

Mandatory Units

Geography: Physical Environments (Higher)	(6 SCQF credit points)
Geography: Human Environments (Higher)	(6 SCQF credit points)
Geography: Global Issues (Higher)	(6 SCQF credit points)

Course assessment

(6 SCQF credit points)

This Course includes six SCQF credit points for 40 additional programmed hours to allow 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

The Geography Course develops a range of cognitive skills 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. 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.

The Geography 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.

By undertaking this Course, learners will develop a wide range of important and transferable skills, including: the use, interpretation and evaluation of information from a wide range of sources; the ability to interpret and explain geographical phenomena; the ability to use a range of maps and other data to process and communicate geographical information; and research, including fieldwork skills.

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 variety of ways.

Geography: Physical Environments (Higher)

In this Unit, learners will develop geographic skills and techniques in the context of physical environments. Learners will develop knowledge and understanding of the processes and interactions at work within physical environments on a local, regional and global scale.

Geography: Human Environments (Higher)

In this Unit, learners will develop geographic skills and techniques in the context of human environments. Learners will develop knowledge and understanding of the processes and interactions at work within human environments in a range of urban and rural, and developed and developing, societies.

Geography: Global Issues (Higher)

In this Unit, learners will develop skills and techniques of numerical and graphical analysis in the context of global geographic issues. Learners will develop knowledge and understanding of the interaction of physical and human environments in the context of a range of global issues.

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.

Assessment

Information about assessment standards 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 Unit specifications.

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.

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](#)³. 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 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 through a combination of a [question paper](#)⁴ and an [assignment](#)⁵. The question paper will require demonstration of a breadth of knowledge, understanding and skills accumulated from across the Course. The assignment will require learners to extend and apply their knowledge and skills and will be sufficiently open and flexible to allow for personalisation and choice.

³ Definitions can be found here: www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/45528.html

⁴ See link above for definition.

⁵ See link above for definition.