Advanced Higher Geography

Draft National Course Specification

Valid from August 2015

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

Contents

Course outline

Course title: Advanced Higher Geography

SCQF: level 7 (32 SCQF credit points)

Course code: to be advised

Mandatory Units

Geographical Methods and Techniques (Advanced Higher)	**8 SCQF credit points**
Researching Geography (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.

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 equivalent qualifications and/or experience:

- Higher Geography Course
- Higher Environmental Science Course

Progression

This Course or its Units may provide progression to:

- degree courses in social subjects and science or related areas
- HNCs in social subjects and science or related areas
- a diverse range of careers

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.*

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 Advanced Higher Geography 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 institutions, transferable and 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 writing and essay writing and skills in numeracy through data collection, processing and the use of statistical techniques and geographical information systems (GIS).

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 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.

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

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.

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 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.

The specific geographical, research and presentation skills developed through 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.

The Advanced Higher Geography Course is recognised as an entry qualification to employment, training, further and higher education. Relevant degree level programmes can include science, geology and social science. This Course, with its wide range of transferable skills, provides preparation for a diverse range of occupations and careers, such as town and transport planning, chartered surveying, renewable energy, land and water management, environmental consultancy, development, tourism, conservation, demography, housing and social welfare.

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

Learners will also develop their 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 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 developing a high level of knowledge and understanding of geographical issues.

Learners will 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. 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 ability to carry out independent research, including the use of fieldwork; the use, interpretation, evaluation and synthesis of information from a wide range of sources; interpreting, explaining and analysing geographical phenomena; and the ability to use a range of maps, statistical and fieldwork techniques and other data to process and communicate geographical information.

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.

Researching Geography (Advanced Higher)
In this Unit, learners will develop a range of investigating skills while undertaking independent research. Learners will develop a range of skills such as scoping or identifying appropriate research topics; how to plan and manage a complex programme of research; techniques to source, collect and record appropriate and reliable primary and secondary information; methods of independent fieldwork; techniques to present findings using appropriate academic conventions; and how to evaluate research methodology.

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.

Skills, knowledge and understanding

Further information on the assessment of the skills, knowledge and understanding for the Course is 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 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

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).

Assessment

Information about assessment 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 the *Unit Specification.*

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 judgments are consistent and meet national standards.

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

Geographical Methods and Techniques (Advanced Higher)
In this Unit, the learner will be required to give evidence of:

- knowledge and application of a wide range of fieldwork methods and techniques; knowledge of and analysis of a limited range of statistical techniques; producing and interpreting maps, graphs and diagrams
- knowledge and understanding of the contexts in which these different geographical skills can be used

Researching Geography (Advanced Higher)
In this Unit, the learner will be required to give evidence of:

- the ability to carry out independent research on complex geographical issues

Geographical Issues (Advanced Higher)
In this Unit, the learner will be required to give evidence of:

- critical evaluation of evidence from a wide range of sources relating to complex, current geographical issues
- descriptions, explanations and analysis demonstrating factual and theoretical knowledge and understanding of complex geographical issues

Exemplification of possible assessment approaches for these Units is 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

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

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:

- challenge
- application

The learner will draw on, extend and apply the knowledge and skills they have acquired during the Course. This will be assessed through a combination of a question paper[2] and a project[3]. The question paper will require demonstration 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.

[2] Definitions can be found here: www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/45528.html
[3] 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
1.2 Writing

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

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Superclass: to be advised

History of changes to National Course Specification

Course details	Version	Description of change	Authorised by	Date

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