



Higher
Course
Specification



Higher Geography Course Specification (C733 76)

Valid from August 2014

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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).

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Course outline

Course title: Higher Geography

SCQF: level 6 (24 SCQF credit points)

Course code: C733 76

Mandatory Units

This Course comprises three mandatory Units and a Course Assessment

H27G 76 Geography: Physical Environments (Higher) 6 SCQF credit points

Or

H6N9G 76 Geography: Physical Environments (Higher)* 6 SCQF credit points

and

H27H 76 Geography: Human Environments (Higher) 6 SCQF credit points

and

H27J 76 Geography: Global Issues (Higher) 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 equivalent qualifications and/or experience:

- ◆ National 5 Geography Course or relevant component Units
- ◆ National 5 Environmental Science Course or relevant component Units

Progression

This Course or its Units may provide progression to:

- ◆ Advanced Higher Geography 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 the social studies curriculum area and 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 the Geography Course, learners will develop an increased understanding of the environment, sustainability and the impact of global issues. They will be encouraged to develop a sense of responsible citizenship and 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 and human environment around them and the ways in which people interact with the environment.

The purpose of this Course 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 skills, knowledge and understanding to enable them to contribute effectively to their local communities and wider society.

The contexts for study are local, national, international and global. This Course 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 this Course are to enable learners to develop:

- ◆ a wide range of geographical skills and techniques
- ◆ an understanding of the complexity of ways in which people and the environment interact in response to physical and human processes at local, national, international and global scales
- ◆ understanding of spatial relationships and of the complexity of the changing world in a balanced, critical and sympathetic way
- ◆ a geographical perspective on environmental and social issues and their significance
- ◆ an interest in, understanding of, and concern for the environment and 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 a learner studying Geography to have the skills and knowledge required by National 5 Geography Course 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 wide range of geographical information; interpreting and explaining complex geographical phenomena; using a wide range of maps and other data to process and communicate complex geographical information; and researching skills, including fieldwork.

Learners will have the opportunity to 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 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 Higher Geography Course provides an entry qualification for study in further and higher education and for entry into 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 wide range of sources of information they will develop investigating, evaluating and analysing skills in order to understand and explain complex geographical issues.

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

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

Key topics include: atmosphere, hydrosphere, lithosphere and biosphere. Personalisation and choice is possible through case studies and areas chosen for study.

Geography: Human Environments (Higher)

In this Unit, learners will develop and apply geographical skills and techniques in the context of human environments. Learners will develop research skills in geographical contexts. Learners will develop and apply knowledge and understanding of the processes and interactions at work within urban and rural environments in developed and developing countries.

Key topics include: population, rural land degradation and management, urban change and management. Personalisation and choice is possible through contexts chosen as case studies.

Geography: Global Issues (Higher)

In this Unit, learners will develop and apply geographical skills and techniques in the context of global geographical issues. Learners will develop skills of numerical and graphical analysis in geographical contexts. Learners will develop and apply knowledge and understanding of global geographical issues which demonstrate the interaction of physical and human factors and the strategies adopted in the management of these issues.

Key topics include: river basin management; development and health; global climate change; trade, aid and geopolitics; energy. 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 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 applying skills, knowledge and understanding across complex physical, human and global issues
- ◆ researching and evaluating a wide range of information collected from a range of sources about complex geographical issues
- ◆ using a wide range of mapping skills and techniques in geographical contexts which may be familiar or unfamiliar, including the use of Ordnance Survey maps
- ◆ using a wide range of research skills and techniques, including fieldwork skills, in geographical contexts which may be familiar or unfamiliar
- ◆ using a wide range of numerical and graphical skills and techniques in geographical contexts which may be familiar or unfamiliar
- ◆ developing and applying factual and theoretical knowledge and understanding and giving detailed explanations of the complex processes and interactions at work within physical environments on a local, regional and global scale
- ◆ developing and applying factual and theoretical knowledge and understanding and giving detailed explanations of the complex processes and interactions at work within human environments in a range of urban and rural and developed and developing societies
- ◆ developing and applying factual and theoretical knowledge and understanding and giving detailed explanations of complex global geographical issues which demonstrate the interaction of physical and human factors

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:

Geography: Physical Environments (Higher)

In this Unit, the learner will be required to provide evidence of the ability to:

- ◆ use a range of mapping skills and techniques in physical environment contexts
- ◆ draw on and apply knowledge and understanding of the processes and interactions at work within physical environments on a local, regional or global scale

Geography: Human Environments (Higher)

In this Unit, the learner will be required to provide evidence of the ability to:

- ◆ use a range of research skills and techniques in human environment contexts
- ◆ draw on and apply knowledge and understanding of the processes and interactions at work within human environments

Geography: Global Issues (Higher)

In this Unit, the learner will be required to provide evidence of the ability to:

- ◆ use a range of numerical and graphical skills and techniques in the context of global geographical issues
- ◆ draw on and apply knowledge and understanding of significant global issues

If Units are taken as part of a Course, then the evidence for 'mapping skills', 'research skills' and 'skills in the use of graphical and numerical information' may be presented in the context of any of the three Units of the Course.

Course assessment

Courses from National 4 to Advanced Higher include assessment of added value¹. 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 skills, knowledge and understanding they have acquired during the Course. This will be assessed by a question paper² and an assignment.³

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.

¹ Definitions can be found here: <http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/jargonbuster>

² See link above for definition.

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

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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History of changes to National Course Specification

Course details	Version	Description of change	Authorised by	Date
C733 76	1.1	Re-wording of Outcomes to ensure consistency with Unit Specifications.	Qualifications Development Manager	April 2014
	1.2	Scottish Studies Award Unit contributing information added. No other changes made to document content.	Qualifications Manager	September 2014

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