



Geography (National 4)

Draft National Course Specification



Valid from August 2013

This edition: April 2011, draft version 1.0

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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	1
Mandatory Units	1
Recommended entry	1
Progression	2
Equality and inclusion	2
Rationale	3
Relationship between the Course and Curriculum for Excellence values, purposes and principles	3
Purpose and aims of the Course	4
Information about typical learners who might do the Course	5
Course structure and conditions of award	6
Course structure	6
Conditions of award	7
Skills and knowledge	8
Assessment	9
Unit assessment	9
Added Value Unit	10
Development of skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work	11
Administrative information	12

Course outline

Course title: Geography (National 4)
SCQF: level 4 (24 SCQF credit points)
Course code: to be advised

Mandatory Units

Geography: Physical Environments (National 4) 6 SCQF credit points

Geography: Human Environments (National 4) 6 SCQF credit points

Geography: Global Issues (National 4) 6 SCQF credit points

Added Value Unit

Geography: Project (National 4) 6 SCQF credit points

This Course includes six SCQF credit points for the assessment of added value in the Added Value Unit. Further information on this Unit 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 and knowledge required by one or more of the following or equivalent qualifications and/or experience:

- ◆ Geography (Access 3) Course or relevant component Units

In terms of prior learning and experience, relevant experiences and outcomes may also provide an appropriate basis for doing this Course. Further information on relevant experiences and outcomes will be given in the *Course Support Notes*.

Progression

This Course or its components may provide progression to:

- ◆ other qualifications in the Social Studies suite of Courses and selected Courses in the sciences
- ◆ 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 social studies¹ and will be developed primarily from the 'people, place and environment' organiser within the social studies experiences and outcomes. It also builds upon the science principles and practices and on selected experiences and outcomes from the science curriculum area.²

The Geography 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, 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 become responsible citizens by building up a framework of geographical knowledge and understanding with which to understand and respond to global issues.

¹ Social studies principles and practice paper

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

² Experiences and outcomes

www.ltscotland.org.uk/understandingthecurriculum/howisthecurriculumstructured/experiencesandoutcomes/index.asp

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 their health and wellbeing.

The practical and multidisciplinary nature of Geography will help to develop skills in employability and enterprise. 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 environment around them, and the ways in which people interact with this 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
- ◆ develop an interest in, 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:

- ◆ relevant experiences and outcomes from the broad, general education
- ◆ Access 3 Geography 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 straightforward information from a limited range of sources; interpreting and explaining straightforward 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 also develop an awareness of a limited 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 the Sciences.

Geography (National 4) qualifications are recognised as entry qualifications to employment, training, and further education. This Course provides qualifications as a preparation for a diverse range of occupations and careers.

Course structure and conditions of award

Course structure

The Geography National 4 Course develops a range of cognitive skills and practical skills. Geography Courses encourage 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 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.

By undertaking this Course, learners will develop a wide range of important and transferable skills, including skills in the use, interpretation and evaluation of straightforward information from a limited range of sources; techniques to interpret and explain straightforward geographical phenomena; using 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 limited 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:

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

This Course has four mandatory Units, including the Added Value Unit. Within each Unit there is a considerable degree of flexibility in contexts which can be studied to allow personalisation and choice.

Geography: Physical Environments (National 4)

In this Unit, the focus will be on the development of 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. Key topics will include: location of landscape type; formation of key landscape features; land use management and sustainability; and weather. Learners will study a selection of landscape types from contexts within Scotland and/or the UK. Landscape types will be chosen from: glaciated upland; upland limestone; coastlines of erosion and deposition; and rivers and their valleys. Personalisation and choice is possible through the landscape types and areas chosen for study.

Geography: Human Environments (National 4)

In this Unit, the focus will be on the development of 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. Learners will study and compare developed and developing countries drawn from a global context. Key topics will include: contrasts in development; world population distribution and change; and issues in changing urban and rural landscapes. Personalisation and choice is possible through contexts chosen as case studies.

Geography: Global Issues (National 4)

In this Unit, the focus will be on the use of numerical and graphical information in the context of global issues. Learners will develop knowledge and understanding of significant global geographical issues. Key topics will include climate change and sustainability; the impact of world climates; environmental hazards; trade and globalisation; and development and health. Learners will study major global issues and the strategies adopted to manage these. Personalisation and choice is possible through the issues selected for study.

Added Value Unit: Geography: Project (National 4)

In this Unit, learners will choose an issue for personal study drawn from physical environments, human environments or global issues contexts. They will research their issue and communicate their findings. Through this activity they will have opportunities to experience challenge and application as they further develop and apply the knowledge, understanding and skills acquired in the other three Units of the Course.

Conditions of award

To achieve the Geography (National 4) Course, learners must pass all of the required Units, including the Added Value Unit. The required Units are shown in the Course outline section.

National 4 Courses are not graded.

Skills and knowledge

Full skills and knowledge for the Course will be given in the *Course Assessment Specification*. A broad overview of the mandatory subject skills, knowledge and understanding that will be assessed in the Course includes:

- ◆ develop and apply basic knowledge and understanding and a few geographic skills in straightforward contexts drawn from physical environments, human environments and global issues
- ◆ research and use straightforward information collected from a limited range of sources about geographical issues which are familiar
- ◆ use basic mapping skills, including the use of Ordnance Survey maps and basic research skills, including fieldwork skills, in straightforward contexts
- ◆ interpret and evaluate information from a limited number of straightforward sources, including maps, in familiar contexts
- ◆ use straightforward numerical and graphical information in straightforward and familiar contexts
- ◆ demonstrate a basic knowledge and understanding of the physical environment of Scotland and/or the United Kingdom by describing information which is mainly factual and giving straightforward explanations. This should be carried out through the study of land management issues, weather, and a limited range of landscape types
- ◆ demonstrate a basic knowledge and understanding of the human environment in a global context by describing information which is mainly factual, through the comparative study of developed and developing countries and give straightforward explanations
- ◆ demonstrate a basic knowledge and understanding of selected global issues by describing information which is mainly factual and give straightforward explanations

Assessment

Information about assessment 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 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 (National 4)

The learner will be required to provide evidence of:

- ◆ straightforward descriptions and explanations demonstrating a basic knowledge and understanding, which is mainly factual, of landscape types, land use management, and weather drawn from Scottish and/or UK wide contexts
- ◆ geographic skills and techniques, in familiar contexts, about physical environments in Scotland and/or the United Kingdom

Geography: Human Environments (National 4)

The learner will be required to provide evidence of:

- ◆ straightforward descriptions and explanations demonstrating a basic knowledge and understanding, which is mainly factual, of developed and developing countries
- ◆ geographic skills and techniques, in familiar contexts, about human environments

Geography: Global Issues (National 4)

The learner will be required to provide evidence of:

- ◆ straightforward descriptions and explanations demonstrating basic knowledge and understanding, which is mainly factual, of global issues
- ◆ use a limited range of straightforward numerical and graphical sources of evidence to demonstrate interpreting and evaluating skills, in familiar contexts relating to global issues

Added Value Unit

Courses from National 4 to Advanced Higher include assessment of [added value](#)³. At National 4, added value will be assessed in an Added Value Unit. The Added Value Unit will 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 Geography (National 4) Course, the Added Value Unit will focus on:

- ◆ challenge
- ◆ application

The learner will draw on and extend the geographical knowledge and skills they have learned during the Course. This will be assessed by a [project](#)⁴. Learners will research and communicate findings on a topic of their choice drawn from the Course. The project will be sufficiently open and flexible to allow for personalisation and choice.

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

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

⁴ See link above for definition.

Development of skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work

(Note: The information given below reflects the initial thinking on significant opportunities for development of skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work. These may be subject to change as the development process progresses.)

It is expected that learners will also develop broad, generic skills through this Course. The skills that are likely to be appropriate for this 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
- 1.3 Listening and talking

2 Numeracy

- 2.3 Information Handling

4 Employability, enterprise and citizenship

- 4.6 Citizenship

5 Thinking skills

- 5.1 Remembering
- 5.2 Understanding
- 5.3 Applying
- 5.4 Analysing and evaluating

Amplification of these 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

Published: April 2011 (version 1.0)

Superclass: to be advised

History of changes to National Course Specification

Course details	Version	Description of change	Authorised by	Date

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