



National 4  
Course  
Specification



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# National 4 Geography Course Specification (C733 74)

**Valid from August 2013**

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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:** National 4 Geography

**SCQF:** level 4 (24 SCQF credit points)

**Course code:** C733 74

## Mandatory Units

**H27G 74 Geography: Physical Environments (National 4) 6 SCQF credit points**

Or

**H6N9 74 Geography: Physical Environments with a Scottish Context (National 4)\* 6 SCQF credit points**

and

**H27H 74 Geography: Human Environments (National 4) 6 SCQF credit points**

and

**H27J 74 Geography: Global Issues (National 4) 6 SCQF credit points**

Or

**J6MV 74 Geography: Global Issues in the Context of Climate Change (National 4) 6 SCQF credit points**

and

## Added Value Unit

**H27K 74 Geography Assignment (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.

\*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 3 Geography Course or relevant component Units
- ◆ National 3 Environmental Science 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 is given in the *Course Support Notes*.

## Progression

This Course or its Units may provide progression to:

- ◆ National 5 Geography Course or its Units

- ◆ National 5 Environmental Science 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*.

## **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 studies 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.

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 this 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 emphasis on the interpretation of sources, including maps, will develop thinking skills. Learners will progressively develop skills in literacy and numeracy.

## **Purpose and aims of the Course**

This Course opens up for learners the physical environment around them and the ways in which people interact with this environment.

The purpose of this Course is to develop the learner's knowledge and 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 knowledge and skills to enable them to contribute effectively to their local communities and wider society.

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.

The main aims of Geography are to enable learners to develop:

- ◆ a range of geographical skills and techniques
- ◆ straightforward understanding of the ways in which people and the environment interact in response to physical and human processes at local, national, international and global scales
- ◆ straightforward understanding of spatial relationships and of the changing world in a balanced, critical and sympathetic way
- ◆ a geographical perspective on environmental and social issues
- ◆ an interest in, and concern for, the environment leading to 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 the learner to have the skills and knowledge developed by relevant experiences and outcomes from the broad, general education or equivalent qualifications.

Through the successful completion of this Course, learners will develop a range of important and transferrable skills including: using and interpreting a range of geographical information; interpreting and explaining geographical phenomena; using a range of maps and other data to process and communicate geographical information; and researching skills, including fieldwork.

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 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 science.

The National 4 Geography Course provides an entry qualification for further study, employment and training. This Course is a preparation for 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 limited range of sources of information they will develop investigating and evaluating skills in order to understand and explain geographical issues.

By undertaking this Course, learners will develop a wide range of important and transferable skills, including using and interpreting a range of geographical information; interpreting and explaining geographical phenomena; using a range of maps and other data to process and communicate geographical information; and researching skills, including fieldwork.

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.

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.

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 (National 4)**

In this Unit, learners will develop geographical skills and techniques in the context of physical environments. Learners will develop a straightforward knowledge and understanding of the processes and interactions at work within physical environments. Key topics 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; coastal landscapes; and rivers and valleys. Personalisation and choice is possible through the landscape types and areas chosen for study.

### **Geography: Human Environments (National 4)**

In this Unit, learners will develop geographical skills and techniques in the context of human environments. Learners will develop a straightforward 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 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, learners will develop skills in the use of numerical and graphical information in the context of global issues. Learners will develop a straightforward knowledge and understanding of significant global geographical issues. Key topics include climate change; the impact of human activity on the natural environment; environmental hazards; trade and globalisation; tourism 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 Assignment (National 4)**

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

### **Conditions of award**

To achieve the National 4 Geography 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, knowledge and understanding

Further information about skills, knowledge and understanding for the Course will be given in the *Course Support Notes*. A broad overview of the subject skills, knowledge and understanding that will be assessed in the Course is given in this section.

This covers:

- ◆ developing and applying straightforward skills, knowledge and understanding in geographical contexts
- ◆ with support, researching and using information collected from a limited range of sources about geographical issues which are familiar
- ◆ using straightforward mapping skills, including the use of Ordnance Survey maps in familiar contexts
- ◆ using straightforward research skills, including fieldwork skills, in familiar contexts
- ◆ using and interpreting a limited range of numerical and graphical information in familiar contexts
- ◆ demonstrating knowledge and understanding of the physical environment of Scotland and/or the United Kingdom by giving factual descriptions and straightforward explanations
- ◆ demonstrating knowledge and understanding of the human environment in a global context by giving factual descriptions and straightforward explanations
- ◆ demonstrating knowledge and understanding of selected global issues by giving factual descriptions and straightforward explanations

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](http://www.sqa.org.uk/scqf))

# Assessment

Further information about assessment for the Course is included in the *Course Support Notes*.

## Unit assessment

All Units are internally assessed against the requirements shown in the Unit Specification.

They can be assessed on an individual Unit basis or by using other approaches which combine the assessment for more than one Unit.

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 give evidence of:

- ◆ ability to use a limited range of mapping skills in geographical contexts
- ◆ straightforward descriptions and brief explanations demonstrating knowledge and understanding, which is mainly factual, of physical environments and weather drawn from Scottish and/or UK-wide contexts

### **Geography: Human Environments (National 4)**

The learner will be required to provide evidence of:

- ◆ ability to use a limited range of research skills, applied to developed and developing countries
- ◆ straightforward descriptions and brief explanations demonstrating knowledge and understanding, which is mainly factual, of human environments in developed and developing countries

### **Geography: Global Issues (National 4)**

The learner will be required to provide evidence of:

- ◆ ability to use a limited range of numerical and graphical information in the context of global issues
- ◆ straightforward descriptions and brief explanations demonstrating knowledge and understanding, which is mainly factual, of global issues

If Units are taken as part of a Course, then the evidence for 'mapping skills' or 'research skills' may be presented in the context of either the *Physical Environments* Unit or the *Human Environments* Unit.

## Added Value Unit

Courses from National 4 to Advanced Higher include assessment of [added value](#)<sup>1</sup>. 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 National 4 Geography Course, the Added Value Unit will focus on:

- ◆ challenge
- ◆ application

The learner will extend and apply the skills, knowledge and understanding they have acquired during the Course. This will be assessed by an [assignment](#)<sup>2</sup> in which learners will research and present findings on a geographical topic or issue. The assignment will be sufficiently open and flexible to allow for personalisation and choice.

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<sup>1</sup> Definitions can be found here: [www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/58409.html](http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/58409.html)

<sup>2</sup> As footnote above

# 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**

5.2 Understanding

5.3 Applying

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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**Published:** September 2022 (version 2.0)

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## History of changes to National Course Specification

Course details	Version	Description of change	Authorised by	Date
	1.1	Slight amends to clarify statements and make wording consistent with Course Assessment Specification and Unit Specifications in Course structure and Unit assessment sections.	Qualifications Development Manager	June 2013
	1.2	Scottish Studies Award Unit contributing information added. No other changes made to document content.	Qualifications Manager	September 2014
	2.0	Course outline updated to include J6MV 74 Geography: Global Issues in the Context of Climate Change as an alternative to H27J 74. Either H27J 74 or J6MV 74 can be completed as part of the National 4 course.	Qualifications Manager	November 2022

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

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