

# GCE AS and A Level Subject Criteria for Geography

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## **The criteria**

### **Introduction**

AS and A level subject criteria set out the knowledge, understanding, skills and assessment objectives common to all AS and A level specifications in a given subject.

They provide the framework within which the awarding body creates the detail of the specification.

### **Aims and objectives**

1. AS and A level specifications in Geography should encourage learners to:
  - develop and apply their understanding of geographical concepts and processes to understand and interpret our changing world;
  - develop their awareness of the complexity of interactions within and between societies, economies, cultures and environments at scales from local to global;
  - develop as global citizens who recognise the challenges of sustainability and the implications for their own and others' lives;
  - improve as critical and reflective learners aware of the importance of attitudes and values, including their own;
  - become adept in the use and application of skills and new technologies through their geographical studies both in and outside the classroom;
  - be inspired by the world around them, and gain enjoyment and satisfaction from their geographical studies and understand their relevance.

### **Subject content**

2. The relationship between AS and A level specifications in Geography should be of sufficient depth and breadth to allow learners to develop the knowledge, understanding and skills specified below. They must include a rationale for the selection of content indicating how progression from GCSE and between AS and A2 has been addressed. Specifications should reflect new ideas and developments about the changing nature of geography in the 21st century and its relevance for everyday life.

3. AS and A level specifications in geography should require learners to:
  - develop knowledge and understanding of selected physical, human and environmental processes that underpin key geographical concepts;
  - develop a knowledge and understanding of the key concepts of place, space, diversity, interdependence, people–environment interaction, the processes associated with these, and change over time;
  - study at a range of scales and understand the importance of scale as a geographical idea;
  - use a range of skills and techniques, including the use of maps and images at different scales necessary for geographical study;
  - carry out research, and out-of-classroom work including fieldwork, as appropriate to the topics selected;
  - use modern information technologies, including geographical information systems, as appropriate to the content;
  - develop understanding of the application and relevance of geography.
  
4. In addition for A2, the specifications should require learners to:
  - undertake individual research/investigative work, including fieldwork;
  - extend their understanding of geographical ideas, concepts and processes;
  - identify and analyse the connections between the different aspects of geography;
  - analyse and synthesise geographical information in a variety of forms and from a range of sources;
  - consider new ideas and developments about the changing nature of geography in the 21st century;
  - critically reflect on and evaluate the potential and limitations of approaches and methods used both in and outside the classroom.

## Assessment objectives

5. The assessment objectives apply to the whole specification for AS and A level, although the range of weightings allows awarding organisations to tailor the weightings to fit their own AS and A2 specifications. Specifications should include more detailed assessment objectives as appropriate to the planned assessment regime.
6. Knowledge, understanding and skills are closely linked. Specifications should require that learners demonstrate the assessment objectives in the context of the content and skills prescribed.
7. All learners must be required to meet the following assessment objectives. The assessment objectives for AS and A levels are to be weighted in all specifications as indicated.

<b>Assessment objectives</b>		<b>Weighting</b>
<b>AO1</b>	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the content, concepts and processes	30–55%
<b>AO2</b>	Analyse, interpret and evaluate geographical information, issues and viewpoints and apply understanding in unfamiliar contexts	20–40%
<b>AO3</b>	Select and use a variety of methods, skills and techniques (including the use of new technologies) to investigate questions and issues, reach conclusions and communicate findings	25–45%

## Scheme of assessment

8. Assessment must be entirely through external assessment.
9. All AS and A level schemes of assessment must require learners to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and skills in a variety of ways, including extended prose.
10. In planning the scheme of assessment to accompany the content, awarding organisations should be guided by the criteria given below.
  - The assessment approach chosen must match the aims and content of the specification.

- The specification should provide an assessment scheme summary, making clear the relationship between content and assessment and between AS and A level.

### **Synoptic assessment**

11. All specifications should include synoptic assessment at A2. The synoptic element will be assessed through all the assessment objectives. The definition of synoptic assessment in the context of Geography is as follows:
  - Synoptic assessment involves assessment of learners' ability to draw on their understanding of the connections between different aspects of the subject represented in the specification and demonstrate their ability to 'think like a geographer'.
12. Examples of synoptic assessment tasks might include:
  - decision-making/problem-solving/issues-evaluation exercises requiring learners to draw together relevant knowledge, understanding and skills of the specification, to tackle a decision, problem or issue that is new to them;
  - an essay question covering geographical issues or problems that would require learners to draw together and apply relevant integrated knowledge, understanding and skills of the specification;
  - an essay question exploring key geographical concepts through linkages between physical, human and environmental geography;
  - an assessment on a particular region or area, which is on a scale that allows learners to draw together and apply relevant knowledge, understanding and skills of processes or concepts of the specification.

**AS performance descriptions for Geography**

	<b>Assessment objective 1</b>	<b>Assessment objective 2</b>	<b>Assessment objective 3</b>
<b>Assessment objectives</b>	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the content, concepts and processes.	Analyse, interpret and evaluate geographical information, issues and viewpoints and apply understanding in unfamiliar contexts.	Select and use a variety of methods, skills and techniques (including the use of new technologies) to investigate questions and issues, reach conclusions and communicate findings
<b>A/B boundary performance descriptions</b>	<p>Learners characteristically:</p> <p>a) demonstrate detailed knowledge and understanding of a range of concepts and processes;</p> <p>b) demonstrate detailed knowledge and understanding of subject-specific material.</p>	<p>Learners characteristically:</p> <p>a) analyse and interpret geographical information, issues and viewpoints;</p> <p>b) offer a valid evaluation of geographical information, issues and viewpoints;</p> <p>c) demonstrate the ability to apply geographical understanding to unfamiliar contexts at different scales.</p>	<p>Learners characteristically:</p> <p>a) select and use appropriately a range of methods, skills and techniques (including new technologies) when investigating questions and issues;</p> <p>b) reach valid conclusions and communicate findings clearly in a structured manner appropriate to the task.</p>

<p><b>E/U boundary performance descriptions</b></p>	<p>Learners characteristically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) demonstrate some knowledge and understanding of some concepts and processes;</li> <li>b) show basic knowledge and understanding of subject-specific material.</li> </ul>	<p>Learners characteristically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) offer limited and inconsistent analysis and interpretation of geographical information, issues and viewpoints;</li> <li>b) attempt some limited evaluation of geographical information, issues and viewpoints;</li> <li>c) show some limited ability to apply aspects of geographical understanding to unfamiliar contexts.</li> </ul>	<p>Learners characteristically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) use a limited range of methods, skills and techniques (which may include new technologies) to attempt to investigate questions and issues;</li> <li>b) draw some limited conclusions;</li> <li>c) communicate findings.</li> </ul>
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**A2 performance descriptions for Geography**

	<b>Assessment objective 1</b>	<b>Assessment objective 2</b>	<b>Assessment objective 3</b>
<b>Assessment objectives</b>	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the content, concepts and processes.	Analyse, interpret and evaluate geographical information, issues and viewpoints and apply understanding in unfamiliar contexts.	Select and use a variety of methods, skills and techniques (including the use of new technologies) to investigate questions and issues, reach conclusions and communicate findings.
<b>A/B boundary performance descriptions</b>	<p>Learners characteristically:</p> <p>a) demonstrate knowledge and understanding of a wide range of concepts and processes;</p> <p>b) show thorough knowledge and understanding of subject-specific material.</p>	<p>Learners characteristically:</p> <p>a) accurately and competently analyse and interpret geographical information, issues and viewpoints;</p> <p>b) offer a thorough evaluation of geographical information, issues and viewpoints in relation to specific geographical concepts;</p> <p>c) demonstrate the ability to apply accurate and appropriate geographical understanding to unfamiliar contexts with precision at a range of scales.</p>	<p>Learners characteristically:</p> <p>a) select and use appropriately and accurately a wide range of methods, skills and techniques (including new technologies) when thoroughly investigating questions and issues;</p> <p>b) reach substantiated and valid conclusions;</p> <p>c) communicate findings accurately and appropriately to the task.</p>

<p><b>E/U boundary performance descriptions</b></p>	<p>Learners characteristically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) demonstrate some knowledge and understanding of the main concepts and processes;</li> <li>b) show some understanding of subject-specific material.</li> </ul>	<p>Learners characteristically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) show some attempts to analyse and interpret geographical information, issues and viewpoints with varying degrees of success;</li> <li>b) offer some evaluation of geographical information, issues and viewpoints with variable success;</li> <li>c) show some ability to apply geographical understanding to unfamiliar contexts with some degree of accuracy.</li> </ul>	<p>Learners characteristically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) use a range of methods, skills and techniques (which include new technologies) to investigate questions and issues with varying degrees of success;</li> <li>b) draw some straightforward conclusions;</li> <li>c) communicate findings broadly appropriate to the task.</li> </ul>
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