# Geography – GCSE Curriculum Overview (Years 10–11)

## Curriculum Intent

At GCSE, Geography builds directly on the knowledge, skills and concepts developed at Key Stage 3, enabling students to become confident, analytical and informed geographers. Across the two-year course, students deepen their understanding of physical and human processes and examine how these interact to shape places, environments and societies. The curriculum is carefully spiralled and sequenced to develop secure geographical knowledge, strong fieldwork and data skills, and the ability to evaluate evidence and reach well-judged conclusions. Students are supported to think synoptically, apply learning to unfamiliar contexts and prepare effectively for linear GCSE examinations, while developing a critical understanding of contemporary global challenges.

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## Structure of the GCSE Geography Course

GCSE Geography is taught as a **coherent two-year programme**, rather than as two discrete years. Content is revisited and strengthened over time to support retention and depth of understanding.

Across the course, students study:

- **Physical Geography** (Paper 1): natural hazards, ecosystems and physical landscapes
- **Human Geography** (Paper 2): urban issues, development and resource management
- **Geographical skills and fieldwork** (Paper 3): issue evaluation, enquiry, data analysis and evaluation

These strands are deliberately interlinked so that students understand how physical and human processes interact and can apply learning synoptically.

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## Year 10 – Building Secure Foundations

In Year 10, students establish strong foundations across both physical and human geography. Teaching prioritises secure understanding of key concepts, accurate use of geographical terminology and the development of structured written responses alongside building a bank of knowledge and case studies.

### Physical Geography

Students begin with **The Living World**, focusing on ecosystems, tropical rainforests and cold environments. They examine ecosystem processes, interdependence and biodiversity, and investigate the causes and consequences of deforestation and environmental change. Sustainability and management strategies are evaluated using contrasting global examples such as the Malaysian rainforest and Svalbard.

Students also study **The Challenge of Natural Hazards**, studying tectonic hazards, weather hazards and climate change. They explore why hazards occur, global patterns of risk, and the impacts of hazards on people and environments. Students evaluate how risk can be reduced through monitoring, prediction and planning, applying evidence from earthquakes in Haiti and Christchurch, Typhoon Haiyan, and Beast from the East to support judgement.

### Human Geography

Alongside physical geography, students study **Urban Issues and Challenges**, exploring global patterns of urbanisation and the growth of megacities. A detailed case study of Rio de Janeiro enables students to examine opportunities and challenges linked to rapid urban growth, including access to services, employment, inequality and environmental management.

Students also begin studying UK urban change, using Plymouth as a local case study. They investigate migration, urban regeneration and sustainability, strengthening their ability to apply geographical concepts to familiar contexts.

**Geographical Skills and Fieldwork**

Throughout Year 10, students develop core geographical skills, including:

- map, graph and data interpretation
- use of statistics and resources
- extended written responses

Students are re-introduced to **fieldwork enquiry**, learning about data collection methods, sampling strategies, risk assessment and hypothesis design. These skills are embedded within teaching and revisited regularly to support understanding and retention. Fieldwork is carried out in the summer term within Plymouth city centre looking at contrasting locations of regeneration..

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**Year 11 – Application, Depth and Synoptic Understanding**

In Year 11, students deepen and apply their geographical knowledge with increasing independence. Teaching focuses on refining understanding, strengthening exam technique and developing synoptic thinking, utilising resources they are given to extrapolate information.

**Physical Geography**

Students study **Physical Landscapes in the UK**, focusing on rivers and coasts. They examine processes such as erosion, weathering, mass movement and deposition, and investigate the formation of distinctive landforms. A detailed case study of the **Holderness Coast** supports evaluation of coastal management strategies, including hard and soft engineering approaches. This is then strengthened with fieldwork at a river, looking at how processes shape landscapes and applying geographical theory to a real-life context forming the basis of their physical fieldwork enquiry.

**Human Geography**

Students study **Resource Management**, examining the global distribution and management of water, food and energy resources. They evaluate strategies to increase sustainability and consider future challenges linked to population growth and climate change.

**Fieldwork and Geographical Enquiry**

Having completed both **human and physical fieldwork enquiries**, time is spent developing confidence in:

- data collection and presentation
- use of GIS and graphical techniques
- data analysis and interpretation
- drawing conclusions and evaluating methodology

These skills are explicitly linked to Paper 3 requirements and practised through exam-style questions.

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**Spring Term, Year 11 – Consolidation and Examination Preparation**

In the Spring term of Year 11, curriculum time is **deliberately structured for consolidation**.

Students:

- revisit key physical and human geography topics
- strengthen recall of case study knowledge and core concepts

- refine exam technique and command-word understanding
- practise synoptic and issue-evaluation questions

This phase ensures students enter the final examination period with secure knowledge, clear strategies and confidence in their ability to succeed.

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**Assessment and Progression**

Students are assessed through:

- regular retrieval and recall activities
- exam-style questions and mock examinations
- fieldwork and enquiry tasks

Assessment is used throughout the course to identify gaps, inform teaching and support progress.

By the end of Year 11, students can:

- Demonstrate knowledge of locations, places, processes, environments and different scales
- Demonstrate geographical understanding of: concepts and how they are used in relation to places, environments and processes; the interrelationships between places, environments and processes
- Apply knowledge and understanding to interpret, analyse and evaluate geographical information and issues to make judgements.
- Select, adapt and use a variety of skills and techniques to investigate questions and issues and communicate findings.

GCSE Geography provides a strong foundation for post-16 study and supports students in becoming informed, critical and responsible global citizens.