

IGU CGE Geography Education Questionnaire

Country: UK: Scotland

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1. What is the aim of geography in primary education in your country?

Primary geography comes within the curriculum area of 'People, place and environment', which is a continuous pathway from 3 to 18. The aim of primary geography is to develop understanding of the world by learning about people, the places they live in and how the environment has been shaped.

2. What is the aim of geography in secondary education in your country?

Learning in secondary geography continues for the first three years of secondary school (S1-S3) to focus on 'People, place and environment'. From the fourth year (S4) geography's purpose is to develop pupils' understanding of our changing world and its human and physical processes. This is developed through the National and Higher qualifications. (SQA, 2013: <http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/2474.html>)

3. What is the average number of hours of geography teaching in primary education in your country?

The philosophy in the curriculum is that schools deliver learning in a way that suits their pupils. Teachers may link 'people, place and environment' to any other area of the curriculum. Similarly, when working in other areas of the curriculum aspects of geography may be addressed. This makes it difficult to provide a specific amount of time, but on average geographical issues may be taught for one hour a week.

4. What is the average number of hours of geography teaching in secondary education in your country?

In the first three years of secondary school geography may be taught as a discrete subject or in an interdisciplinary way as part of Social Studies. The majority of schools still have discrete subject teaching. The amount of time in S1 and S2 is on average one hour a week, and in some schools this will continue to S3. Many schools will increase this in S3 to 2 or 3 hours a week.

In the upper secondary school pupils will have between 3-4 hours in S4/S5 or and between 5-6 hours a week if they have chosen to study higher geography. There is a degree of flexibility in how the curriculum is delivered and schools may choose to work with 'Nationals' in S4 and/or S5 and the new higher (2014-2015) in S5 and/or S6.

5. What are the most important themes in primary geography teaching in your country?

The key geographical themes are: landscape development, environmental impact and sustainability, human/physical interactions, interdependence, weather, climate, land use and maps.

6. What are the most important themes in secondary geography teaching in your country?

In the lower secondary school the areas identified in 5 above are the focus. In the upper school the examination system in Scotland now requires the development of skills, and the application of these, with more time for learning and scope for personalisation and choice.

The contexts for study are local, national, international, and global. The main aims of Geography are to enable learners to develop:

- a range of geographical skills and techniques;

- detailed 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;
- detailed 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.

(SQA, 2012 http://www.sqa.org.uk/files_ccc/CfE_CourseSpec_N5_SocialStudies_Geography.pdf)

7. What is the position of geography in the upper levels of secondary education in your country?

Geography tends to hold its own although uptake numbers for the Higher qualification have dropped. [In 2013 some 7,780 pupils studied Higher geography, 10,337 Higher history, and 8,027 Higher modern studies. These numbers may seem low but Scotland is a small nation and as a comparator 30,401 students studied Higher English.]

8. What is the biggest problem for geography teaching in your country?

Primary: *One issue is the lack of geography that may be taught in the primary classroom. If teachers feel uncomfortable with geography content, skills and knowledge they are unlikely to offer such learning experiences to pupils. In primary it is generally more likely that history 'projects' would be predominant rather than geography, although geography may be embedded within them. The new curriculum means that geography can be taught amongst many other subject areas, but it is not always explicit. The renewed focus on Learning for Sustainability and outdoor learning, however, will encourage the inclusion of more geographical content.*

Secondary: *In the secondary sector the main problem is that pupils have to choose geography after S3 although some schools are making the choice earlier. Curriculum for Excellence may, however, mean that pupils might engage with the subject through interdisciplinary learning or through the broad themes of the curriculum.*

9. Mention one or more good practices or very successful projects of geography teaching in your country.

Secondary geography departments engage with a number of projects and awards, for example the John Muir Award (<http://www.jmt.org/jmaward-schoolsandcolleges.asp>), while primary and secondary schools may become involved with and gain awards through Eco schools (<http://www.keepsotlandbeautiful.org/sustainable-development-education/eco-schools>).

10. Mention research projects in the field of geography teaching in your country.

There are currently not many of these although secondary geography departments fed into research in the Outdoor Journey's project - <http://outdoorjourneys.org.uk/>. Information on a project funded by Comenius into 'genre pedagogy' is available at: <http://www.strath.ac.uk/humanities/schoolofeducation/tel4ele/>.

11. Mention publications or websites with information in English about geography teaching in your country.

*The Scottish Association of Geography Teachers: <http://www.sagt.org.uk/>
See also: <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/>
http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/CCC_FirstPage.jsp
<http://www.rsgs.org/about/history.html>*

12. Mention contact addresses for information about geography teaching in your country.

The universities that provide teacher education in geography are: Aberdeen <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/>, Edinburgh <http://www.ed.ac.uk/home>, Glasgow <http://www.gla.ac.uk/>, Strathclyde <http://www.strath.ac.uk/>, and Stirling <http://www.stir.ac.uk/>.