

A LEVEL GEOGRAPHY FAQs

Q: Do we get to do any exciting fieldwork or trips?

YES! We have a 4 day compulsory residential field trip to beautiful Shropshire at the end of Year 12 where you complete some practical Geography, develop lots of skills and also crucially complete the data collection for your NEA coursework which is worth 20% of your mark. There is a cost to this trip to students (currently £319 in total) which you must pay if you sign up, unless you qualify for our student bursary when the costs will be paid for you in full (find out more and apply at <https://bilborough.ac.uk/students/financial-support/>). We also run lots of conferences, lectures and events throughout the year both in college and at local venues and Universities which you are encouraged to attend in order to build your understanding and love of the subject.

We don't run a compulsory overseas trip due to scale and cost, but our students are encouraged to get involved with the excellent wider college trips as part of the Extra programme. Currently the college offers an annual trip to Sri Lanka including environmental volunteering in a turtle conservation centre and clearance of plastics from beaches and you can fund-raise towards your trip costs which is great! Our geography teachers often go on these trips with our students and in the past the department has been involved in trips to Nepal, Morocco, Greenland, Slovenia and Iceland!

Q: What is the difference between GCSE and A-Level Geography?

In short, the A-level is much more engaging and exciting than the GCSE according to our student feedback! The knowledge and skills gained at GCSE is built upon but in a more synoptic (linked) way and obviously at a more advanced and in-depth level with a greater expectation of independent study on students. Our students often have very different experiences of school Geography and some of our students haven't studied the subject at GCSE so we provide full support to ensure you get the most out of the course and achieve your full potential. At A-level there is 20% coursework and a 4-day field trip which is a real highlight of the course and helps ensure everything doesn't just depend on one set of exams, this is a key difference to GCSE.

Q: What can I do with a Geography A-Level?

Geographers are hugely in demand currently and are some of the most employable university graduates. The course develops so many highly transferable skills in students which are really in demand in industry, government, and charities. Many of our former students now work all

over the world in a wide range of fields including Finance, Civil Service, Law, GIS Computer Mapping, Education, Journalism, Insurance, Environmental Consultancy, Medicine, Aid, Retail and so many more. Geography basically gives you the skills to excel in whatever field you want to pursue and opens so many doors. You can find out so much more by exploring the RGS 'Why Geography?' website here: <https://www.rgs.org/choosegeography/>

Q: Who will be my teacher be and will I have more than 1 teacher?

We are a department of 3 geographers (Simon, Chris and Kathryn) all with a great deal of experience of teaching A-level and a real infectious passion for the subject. We split the classes so you will have 2 different teachers each week covering one human and one physical topic at a time. At the start of Year 12 we cover Tectonic Hazards and Globalisation with one teacher taking the lead on each unit.

Q: How big are the class sizes in Geography?

The class sizes vary. The absolute maximum in any class at college is 25 but the average is usually more like 18 or 19 in geography, much smaller than your school classes. In geography it is great to have a good number in the class as this allows the group-work, discussion and interaction we love so much. Our rooms are spacious and well set up with plenty of space to move around during tasks etc.

Q: Is there more human or physical geography in the course?

It is a pretty even split between the two but at A-level the topics all link together *synoptically* so you will find all of the units really interesting whether you usually prefer human or physical geography. During the A-level course many of our students learn to love the whole subject and they realise that a degree of human and physical understanding is needed to successfully tackle many of the global challenges we face (such as climate change for example).

Q: How do the exams work?

There are three 2 hour 15 minute exams at the end of the two years, one on the human topics (30% of the final mark), one on the physical topics (30% of the final mark) and one synoptic exam which links the two together using a case study (20% of the final mark). The other 20% comes from the fantastic NEA Coursework Independent Investigation – see below for more on this!

Q: Is there any coursework in Geography?

Yes, there is and it is a great feature of the course which takes some of the pressure of the final exams and allows you to really excel and develop your skills for university and employment. In short, you will complete an Independent Investigation which you design yourself with our support on a topic studied during the course using data collected during our residential field course. Students usually perform really well in their Investigations (many have scored 100% in recent years!) and have a great time doing it – students often say it was a highlight of the course for them. The finished Investigation is worth 20% of your overall grade and really is a case of the more you put in, the more you get out.

Q: How many lessons a week do I have of Geography?

As with all of your subjects, you normally get 3 lessons per week which we share between the human and physical topics and two different teachers. All lessons are taught in our modern specialist, dedicated and very well-resourced teaching rooms which are also equipped with a set of laptops and iPads for student use. All students are provided with course textbooks to support their study as well as a wealth of online resources, flipped-learning videos, mapping and support.

Q: What happens if I am struggling or need extra help in Geography?

We pride ourselves on being an exceptionally supportive department and student tell us they feel very well supported throughout the course. We offer support in lessons, online with all notes and resources accessible before and after lessons, by email and through regular dedicated subject support sessions at lunchtime. Every week you will get an email update with details of the homework, support, reading links and lots of interesting opportunities you can get involved with. You can get answers to all of your questions and help with anything you are stuck on easily on a drop-in basis. We also run targeted support sessions for students we have identified as needing extra support with specific aspects or content. These sessions have a proven track record of ensuring great progress for all students and students find these really helpful.

Q: What subjects go well with Geography?

Geography is a well-respected academic, enabling subject that is both an art and a science so it combines very well with most subjects on offer at college. There are more direct links to Biology, Government and Politics, History and Economics but so many of our top Geographers also do less obvious combinations like Drama, IT, Maths, Chemistry, English, Law, Music, Business or Languages. There is a degree of mathematical and statistical skills in geography and so Maths Studies is also a great course to consider alongside your 3 A-levels (assuming you are not taking Maths A-level!) and will help make you stand out in future too.

Q: Is there a lot of Maths in Geography?

Yes, there are a range of transferable mathematical, geographical and statistical skills which we develop throughout the course. A degree of mathematical ability is therefore needed, hence our higher entry requirement for Maths GCSE. We strongly recommend considering studying Maths Studies alongside your A-levels if you are worried about your Maths (and are not taking A-level maths) as this has been proven to help, is interesting and also helps make you stand out to employers in future.

Q: Are you on social media?

Yes, we are on both Instagram www.instagram.com/BilboGeog and Twitter www.Twitter.com/BilboGeog (Twitter is GREAT for Geography!) and use social media to keep on top of our dynamic, exciting and ever-changing subject! Follow us for regular updates, relevant news, videos and inspiration (no account needed just click on/favourite the above weblinks and you are straight in!).

Q: What resources does the department have to help us learn?

We are a very well-equipped department and have built up an excellent bank of resources with lots of books, sets of texts to use in lessons, videos and support materials available in our specialist geography classrooms. We have a full set of laptops in one classroom and iPads in the other room for student use when researching, doing GIS Mapping, or completing coursework. We also have a huge library of books and maps that are available for student use and a collection of practical and field equipment. On the fieldtrip we use a specialist centre which offers the latest technology to support your coursework data collection including GIS mapping, carbon and soil laboratory equipment and furnaces, and so much more. You won't find a better resourced A-level department!

Q: What can I do to prepare for the course?

See our springboard document for loads of ideas, films, links and books you can read, follow us on Twitter above and continue to take an interest in our dynamic and amazing world!

Q: What do students say about the Geography course and department?

Below is a range of feedback comments from both our current and recent students:

"Geography lessons are always very interesting and interactive which makes the learning much easier."

"The course itself is also genuinely interesting and very relevant. It helps you understand the world around you and think critically."

"It ties in nicely with my other subjects such as politics, the teaching is great and really supportive, and it answers many interesting questions about how the world works!"

"No two lessons are the same, the teachers are extremely helpful, and each lesson is very informative."

"I have lots of amazing memories from geography at Bilborough. The teaching staff and support here is incredible and you will have the chance to learn in such an exciting and academic environment. I really valued being in classes filled with people who were focused and engaged with geography."

"There are loads of opportunities outside of the classroom, like geography lectures at universities."

"I like the syllabus-all of the topics feel very modern and up to date. The lessons are fun, and the teachers are great!"

"The geography teachers are some of the most inspiring people I have ever met, their enthusiasm is truly infectious and comes in handy at exam time. They know the course, and geography in general, inside out and I cannot recommend Bilborough Geography highly enough."

"Studying geography at A-level will prepare you for studying both sciences and humanities subjects given it's such an interdisciplinary subject. Bilborough Geography specifically gave me the knowledge and tools to make connections and see the bigger picture. It really teaches you to think critically, ask difficult questions and gain new insights and perspectives."

"Choosing Geography at Bilborough was a great decision, and it quickly became my favourite subject. The Geography teachers are the most enthusiastic and involved teachers I have ever had. They make sure that every concept from the course is understood and go above and beyond to engage students in Geography unlike in any other department. I have found my experience doing Geography at Bilborough invaluable as I have progressed to university, as I often find myself using knowledge I learnt in the course. Most importantly, Bilborough Geography ends up being more than a subject, it feels like a community. I would seriously recommend choosing it!"