**Why geography?**

Geography is a relevant, dynamic and academically rigorous subject that helps you to make sense of the world around you. Geography spans both the social and physical sciences providing an outlook that can help to tackle some of the most critical challenges facing the world today.

As a multidisciplinary subject geographers engage with a wide range of topics including both natural sciences and social sciences. Geographers are also able to demonstrate a variety of skills including investigative skills, cartographic skills, graphical skills, ICT skills (including GIS), and statistical skills. This combination of subject knowledge and skills means that geographers are highly employable and uniquely equipped to help address some of the most pressing issues of our time such as the unsustainability of our global eco-footprint or the new realities of living in a globally interconnected world.

Geography at University is vastly different to A level studies, in the sense that there is no set curriculum, so what you study will depend on the university you attend. A lot of factors will affect where you ultimately decide to attend university, but always consider the modules/courses offered by the geography department as well as seeing what the university experience can offer you.

**Degree options:**

When applying for geography at university there are two main considerations to think about:

1) **Geography (single) or joint-honours?**

The first decision is to decide whether you would like to purely study geography or if you would like to combine your degree with another subject, known as a joint-honours degree. There are a vast number of possibilities to combine with geography however these degrees are only available at a limited number of universities.

2) **BA or BSc?**

Geography is one of the few subjects often offered as both a BA (Bachelor of Arts), focusing on human geography and a BSc (Bachelor of Science), rooted more within physical geography.

Whilst many universities offer the choice between which degree you apply for, this often is a formality as most geography degrees contain elements of both human and physical geography, and allow you to change your focus as your interests develop during your course. You are likely to be able to change from a BA to a BSc or vice versa during your course if it better suits what you are studying.

**Assessment:**

Unlike a coordinated national approach to assessment at GCSE and A Level methods of examining students at Universities vary considerably between modules, departments and universities as a whole. Many geography departments have assessed pieces of coursework, essays and computer based skills that contribute to final results in addition to written exams.

The best advice is to research before choosing a university in order to find what suits you best!
Degree outline:

First Year: Topics can be very broad, often Universities have only compulsory modules in the first year, meaning all students will learn the same thing. This is great for discovering what interests you and what areas you want to specialise in later years.

Second Year: Often a transition year, with Universities offering compulsory modules alongside a choice of optional ones allowing you to specialise where your interests lie. During the summer you will begin to carry out research on your dissertation idea.

Third Year: In your final year, you will most likely be given a free choice of modules to choose from, allowing you to specialise. Universities may offer fieldtrips abroad, as well as having to complete your dissertation.

Example subject content: New, exciting topics are available to study at university some are listed below:

Geopolitics – This topic helps to understand the background to pressing world affairs and how they are presented in everyday life, surrounding resource wars, Identity conflicts, Geostrategic rivalries and global power shifts.

Geographies of inequalities – Wealth inequalities in the UK and the USA are the widest they have been for nearly a century, whilst narrowing between countries: what has changed; does it matter and are there any alternatives?

Climate Change Impacts and Adaptation – Students study the climate system in depth: how it has changed in the recent past, how climate change is studied, and how climates can be predicted and altered in the future.

Biogeography and conservation – Global biodiversity is shifting and changing over time as it is placed under increasing threat from human intervention. Students focus on conservation practises and the resilience of ecosystems.

Dissertation: Dissertations are an individual research project, typically completed in the third year of studies which give the chance to investigate a topic of interest in great depth. These vary considerably as shown in the examples below:

- The intensity and frequency of cloud-to-ground lightening strikes, using GIS, based on land-use In Orlando, Florida
- Sulphur Dioxide and Hydrogen Sulphide Emissions from Mutnovsky Volcano, Kamchatka, Russia
- Food Access in Malawi: An Island Perspective

Careers & Employability:

Geography is an academically robust subject, due to it spanning both the physical and social sciences and the focus placed upon geographical skills such as the increasingly popular GIS technology and statistics.

Geography is part of the academic group of English Baccalaureate GCSE subjects and the Russell Group of universities has recognised A Level geography as one of their preferred ‘facilitating subjects’ - supporting an application into a wide range of undergraduate courses.

The knowledge and transferable skills that geographers gain from their degree studies are highly relevant to the workplace; levels of geography graduate unemployment are extremely low at 7.4% (2010). You will find geographers working in every sector of the economy including the finance, local businesses, not-for-profit organisations, significant research or as key decision makers in local and national government, highlighting the range of possibilities for geographers.

If you would like more information regarding what Geography can do for you, please visit:

www.rgs.org/studygeography

If you have any further questions, please contact the Geography Ambassador Project Coordinator.