

Choosing Your Courses

Some tips for new first-year Geography students

See also the guidance on [Choosing Courses](#) on the **New Students** web pages.

Course choice help sessions

The University expects students to work things out for themselves. However, we will be running some help sessions in Welcome Week, at which we will try to answer any questions about course choices and MyCurriculum. Full details to be confirmed. [Monday 3 September to Thursday 6 September in St Mary's G9?]

General programme structure

The standard workload for undergraduate students is 120 credit points per academic year. Almost all Level 1 courses carry 15 credit points, so this is eight courses for your first year. It is usual to split these evenly: four in the first half-session, and four in the session-half session. 120 credits points with a 4:4 split is what the [MyCurriculum](#) online course choice tool expects.

The University's [Catalogue of Courses](#) contains summaries of all courses taught. Not all subjects are available at Level 1... but new students still have a wide choice.

You can find details of all the University's degree programmes, and the individual courses prescribed for each, in the University Calendar. Check the entries in here for Geography and any other subject in which you are interested, as this will give you an idea of the possibilities ahead. The 2017-18 Calendar is available at:

<https://www.abdn.ac.uk/registry/calendar/>

Each course has a two-letter, four-number code as well as a title. The two letters identify the relevant subject: e.g., GG for Geography, GL for Geology, AY for Archaeology. The first number identifies the level of study. New students choose from Level 1 courses, unless they are direct entrants to second year. The second number in the course code identifies the half-session in which the course is taught: 0 for the first half-session (September to December), and 5 (think 0.5, halfway through the year), for the second half-session (January to May).

All first year Geographers, whether MA or BSc, Joint or Single Honours, take the same two Geography courses: **GG1008: Global Worlds, Global Challenges**, and **GG1510: Global Worlds, Local Challenges**. Both courses contain a mixture of physical, environmental and human geography. [Some of the assessments offer choices that allow you to pick your favourites aspects of the subject. From second year onwards it becomes increasingly possible to specialise in certain aspects of geography, should you so wish.]

At first and second year, the difference between MA and BSc Geography comes from the other courses that students take. MA Geographers tend to choose additional courses from the social sciences and humanities (but are welcome to choose some science courses if they wish). BSc Geographers tend to choose additional courses from the sciences (but are welcome to choose some

social science or humanities courses if they wish). So, the basic first year programme for MA Geographers looks like this:

First Half-Session	Second Half-Session
GG1008: Global Worlds, Global Challenges	GG1510: Global Worlds, Local Challenges
Free choice – usually ‘arts’	Free choice – usually ‘arts’
Free choice – usually ‘arts’	Free choice – usually ‘arts’
Free choice	Free choice

And for BSc Geographers (spot the difference):

First Half-Session	Second Half-Session
GG1008: Global Worlds, Global Challenges	GG1510: Global Worlds, Local Challenges
Choice of ‘science’ course	Choice of ‘science’ course
Choice of ‘science’ course	Choice of ‘science’ course
Free choice	Free choice

What counts as what?

Science-only subjects at Level 1: Biology (BI), Chemistry (CM), Engineering (EG), Geology (GL), Medical Science (SM) and Sports Science (SR)

Both Arts and Science subjects at Level 1: Geography (GG), Archaeology (AY), Computing (CS), History and Philosophy of Science (HS), Maths (MA), Physics (PX), Psychology (PS), Statistics (ST) or any of the Sixth Century (SX) courses

Arts-only subjects at Level 1: anything else!

Your task is to fill in the six white boxes in the tables above.

Some hints and tips

- Choose courses that you think you will enjoy.
- Take advantage of the full range of courses on offer. Go for courses that complement your Geography... or choose something completely different. Most subjects require no previous knowledge. This is your chance to try something new.
- Don't worry about making a poor choice. You have two weeks from the start of teaching to change your mind. If necessary, you can drop a course at any stage, and easily pick up a replacement in the following half-session.
- Think ahead, and try to keep your options open for second year and beyond. To study a subject at Level 2, it is usually necessary to have taken it at Level 1.
- Don't worry too much about meeting the University's 'enhanced study' requirements. You will do so simply by choosing non-Geography courses.
- MyCurriculum will not show course choices for which you do not have appropriate pre-requisites. [A pre-requisite is a particular course A that you must have passed previously in order to take the follow-up course B. Similarly, co-requisites are courses that you must take together. You can find details of any pre- or co-requisites in the Catalogue entries, on the Overview tab.]

- MyCurriculum will not show course choices for which there are important timetable clashes.

Top tip #1. Think in pairs of courses, such as...

Geography	GG1008: Global Worlds, Global Challenges	GG1510: Global Worlds, Local Challenges
<i>With any of...</i>		
Anthropology	AT1003: Introduction to Anthropology: Peoples of the World	AT1502: Introduction to Anthropology 2: Questions of Diversity
Archaeology	AY1003: Archaeology in Action: An Introduction	AY1503: Caves to Kingdoms: An Introduction to Prehistoric Archaeology
Economics	EC1006: The Economics of Business and Society	EC1506: The Global Economy
Geology	GL1005: The Earth Through Geological Time	GL1505: Earth's Materials
International Relations	PI1018: Introduction to Politics & IR 1: Democracy and Governance	PI1518: Introduction to Politics & IR 2: Power and Conflict
Sociology	SO1007: Introductory Sociology 1: Self, Identity and Society	SO1509: Introductory Sociology 2: Systems of Power

The above subjects (Archaeology excepted) are all available as a Joint Honours degree with Geography. All follow the same pattern: two courses at Level 1 lay the foundations for potential degree studies. Even if you are confident that you want to graduate in Single Honours Geography, it is worth thinking about possible (joint) degree pathways simply to guide your choice of other courses at Levels 1 and 2 (and possibly 3).

Some joint degrees specify more than two courses at Level 1, notably:

Geography	GG1008: Global Worlds, Global Challenges	GG1510: Global Worlds, Local Challenges
<i>With any of...</i>		
Business Management	MS1009: Managing Organisations	MS1510/IN1501: International Context for Business
	EC 1006: The Economics of Business and Society	AC 1515: Accounting and Entrepreneurship
History	HI1027: Making History, plus two further Level 1 History courses	
Modern Languages (French, Gaelic, German or Hispanic Studies)	Language course 1A	Language course 1B
	Culture course 1A	Culture course 1B
	Check the individual Calendar entries and departmental information for language degrees. Note that the choice of language courses usually depends on your existing knowledge. If in doubt, ask for advice.	

Also useful are the 'Sustained Study' Combinations. These alone do not set up degree study, but offer students a defined package of study at Levels 1 and 2. For example:

Geography	GG1008: Global Worlds, Global Challenges	GG1510: Global Worlds, Local Challenges
<i>With any of...</i>		
Conservation and Environment	BI1009: Frontiers in Biological Sciences	BI1511: Ecology and Environmental Science
Fit for Life	SR1002: Introduction to the Science of Sport, Exercise and Health	SR1503: Fitness, Performance and Survival
Modern Languages*	Language course 1A	Language course 1B

*(Arabic, French, German, Mandarin, Spanish, Swedish)

Top tip #2. Don't think in pairs! Although it makes sense to keep your options open by choosing a combination of courses that sets you up for more than one degree programme at Level 2, you are also welcome to mix and match individual courses. The most obvious stand-alone options are the various interdisciplinary Level 1 Sixth Century courses (SX-coded). All Sixth Century courses have two key properties that most students find attractive: a) they are taught on Wednesday mornings, so cannot clash with other subjects, b) they are assessed entirely by coursework, with no final exam. Some of the SX courses contain an awful lot of 'Geography' too. Take a look at the descriptions in the Course Catalogue.

You are also welcome to take any course that has no pre-requisites as a stand-alone course. Watch out for this, as requirements differ. For example, you are welcome to take, say, the second half-session Level 1 Archaeology or Anthropology courses without having taken the first half-session courses, whereas to take, say, Level 1 Chemistry or Geology in the second half-session, you must take the matching first half-session course.

So – what goes well with Geography?

The subjects with which we have joint degrees (see above) provide some clues.

If you like physical geography, consider (for example):

- Archaeology
- Chemistry
- Geology
- Biology – especially BI1009: Frontiers in Biological Sciences and/or BI1511: Ecology and Environmental Science
- Physics – especially PX1016: Understanding the Physical World and/or PX1514: Astronomy and Meteorology. These are the 'general interest', non-mathematical science courses intended as enhanced study options.
- Statistics (ST1506)
- Various Sixth Century courses

Beware:

- Although there’s a lot to be said for continuing to study specialist Maths or Physics at university level, past experience suggests that you should be confident of your interests and abilities before taking these courses on. We will teach you all the science you need for a Geography degree ‘in-house.’
- Similarly, Geography students tend to find the specialist Computing Science courses in programming and computer architecture more demanding than the other CS courses (e.g., web technology).
- Biology (broadly defined) as a potential degree subject is complicated, as there are various pathways that require different course combinations. Geography combines very well with the BI1009: Frontiers in Biological Sciences and/or BI1511: Ecology and Environmental Science ‘sustained study’ courses, but, if you want to keep your options open to study Biology as a possible degree subject, you should also take the two Diversity of Life courses (BI1012 and BI1512) as well as SM1501: The Cell. If you are serious about prospects of Biology at Level 2 and beyond, it’s probably best to check out your options with University staff.

If you like human geography, consider (for example):

- Anthropology
- Archaeology
- Economics
- History
- Politics and International Relations
- Sociology
- Statistics
- Various Sixth Century courses

Some example combinations

These are intended to be suggestive, not prescriptive! To repeat our first tip: choose courses that you think you will enjoy.

MA GEOGRAPHY #1

First Half-Session	Second Half-Session
GG1008: Global Worlds, Global Challenges	GG1510: Global Worlds, Local Challenges
AY1003: Archaeology in Action: An Introduction	AY1503: Caves to Kingdoms...
AT1003: Introduction to Anthropology 1	AT1502: Introduction to Anthropology 2
SX1011: Sustainability	EC1506: The Global Economy

The three pairs of courses here set up three possible Single Honours degrees in Geography, Archaeology or Anthropology, plus two possible Joint Honours degrees: Geography-Anthropology and Archaeology-Anthropology. The SX1011: Sustainability course ticks the Sixth Century box. Both this and the Economics course represent stand-alone choices with strong relevance to human geography.

MA GEOGRAPHY #2 (with **BUSINESS MANAGEMENT** as an example of a Joint Honours degree)

First Half-Session	Second Half-Session
GG1008: Global Worlds, Global Challenges	GG1510: Global Worlds, Local Challenges
MS1009: Managing Organisations	IN1501: International Context for Business
EC1006: The Economics of Business and Society	EC1506: The Global Economy
SX1006: The Mind Machine	AC1515: Accounting and Entrepreneurship

Business Management is one of the more tightly prescribed joint-degree combinations, with four compulsory Level 1 courses, shaded in blue here: a pair of Management courses, plus a course in (micro) Economics and another in Accountancy. The choice of the second half-session (macro-) Economics course here opens up the possibilities of study for Single Honours degrees in Geography, Economics or Management, or Joint Honours degrees in Business Management-Geography, Economics-Geography or Economics- Business Management. The Sixth Century Mind Machine course here adds something different to the mix.

BSc GEOGRAPHY #1

First Half-Session	Second Half-Session
GG1008: Global Worlds, Global Challenges	GG1510: Global Worlds, Local Challenges
GL1005: The Earth Through Geological Time	GL1505: Earth's Materials
BI1009: Frontiers in Biological Sciences	BI1511: Environmental Science
HS1001: The Scientific Revolution...	PX1514: Astronomy and Meteorology

The top two pairs of courses here set up two possible Single Honours degrees in Geography or Geology, as well as the joint degree in Geography-Geoscience. The two Biology courses here are the Level 1 part of the Conservation and Environment Sustained Study pathway (although, in themselves, they do not set up a Biology degree.) The Meteorology component of the PX1514 course has obvious relevance to physical geography. The HS1001 History and Philosophy of Science course adds variety to the mix. This combination comfortably meets the requirements of the BSc degree as all eight choices count as 'science' courses.

BSc GEOGRAPHY #2

First Half-Session	Second Half-Session
GG1008: Global Worlds, Global Challenges	GG1510: Global Worlds, Local Challenges
AY1003: Archaeology in Action: An Introduction	AY1503: Caves to Kingdoms...
SX1015: Oceans and Society	SX1501: Humans and Other Animals
FR1023: Level 1 French Language 1A	FR1523: Level 1 French Language 1B

A second example of a BSc pathway for those less comfortable with the traditional natural sciences. The two pairs of Geography and Archaeology courses here count for four of the six required 'science' courses, and set up the possibilities of Single Honours study in either subject, or the Joint Honours degree in AY-GG. The choice of two Sixth Century courses completes the required quota of six 'science' courses, although the scientific content of both is limited. BSc students have two free completely choices that need not be 'science' courses. Here, these slots are filled by the choice of

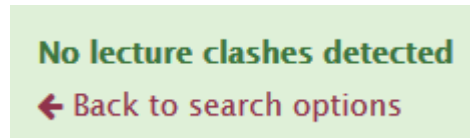
ab initio (i.e., for beginners) French language courses – a fine example of taking up the chance to do something new and different (with the prospects of continuing French as Sustained Study into second year).

MyTimetable

You can check whether potential course combinations work at:

<https://www.abdn.ac.uk/mist/apps/courseoverlay/timetable/overlays> -

If there are no clashes, you will see the following message:



We cannot ensure that all course combinations timetable. If there are serious clashes, you may have to choose something else.

The MyTimetable widget also allows you to choose practical and tutorial classes once you have registered for the course:

<https://www.abdn.ac.uk/infocenter/study/timetables-550.php>

The same practicals and tutorials run several times per week, to accommodate smaller class sizes and make the timetable work. Don't panic if you see what looks like a week jam-packed with classes, as you are not expected to go to all of them! The picture below shows the timetable for the GG1008-EC1006-MS1009-SX1006 combination (see example above) for the first teaching week, in which there are only lectures (LECs):

MyTimetable: Course Overlays					
	Mon 10/Sep	Tue 11/Sep	Wed 12/Sep	Thu 13/Sep	Fri 14/Sep
9:00					EC1006 LEC William Guild Building Arts Lecture Theatre
10:00		GG1008 LEC William Guild Building Arts Lecture Theatre			
11:00			SX1006 LEC Meston Building MT1		GG1008 LEC William Guild Building Arts Lecture Theatre
12:00	EC1006 LEC William Guild Building Arts Lecture Theatre	EC1006 LEC William Guild Building Arts Lecture Theatre			
13:00					
14:00		MS1009 LEC William Guild Building Arts Lecture Theatre			
15:00					
16:00	MS1009 LEC William Guild Building Arts Lecture Theatre				
17:00					

The next picture shows the timetable for the third teaching week, by which time tutorials have started. All tutorials (TUTs) are shown here – but you pick just one for each course, at times that work for you:

MyTimetable: Course Overlays

	Mon 24/Sep	Tue 25/Sep	Wed 26/Sep	Thu 27/Sep	Fri 28/Sep
9:00		MS1009 TUT King's College KCG16		EC1006 TUT King's College KCG16	GG1008 TUT Meston Building MT010
10:00	GG1008 TUT Taylor Building A30	GG1008 LEC William Guild Building Arts	MS1009 TUT MacRobert Building MR314	SX1... Edward Wright Building Comp S81	EC1006 TUT MacRobert Building MR315
11:00		GG100... MacRobert	MS100... MacRobert	SX1... Edward Wright Building Comp F81	EC1006 TUT King's College KCG16
12:00	EC100... William Guild	GG100... 50-52 College	MS100... Edward Wright	EC1006 LEC William Guild Building Arts Lecture Theatre	MS1009 TUT King's College KCG11
13:00	EC1006 TUT Taylor Building C24	GG1008 TUT St Mary's Building B27	EC1006 TUT MacRobert Building MR250		MS1009 TUT Taylor Building C17
14:00		EC1006 TUT MacRobert Building MR252	MS1009 LEC William Guild Building Arts		GG1008 TUT Taylor Building C1
15:00	EC1006 TUT King's College KCT4	EC100... New King's	GG100... St Mary's Building	MS100... New King's	MS1009 TUT New King's NK7
16:00	MS1009 LEC William Guild Building Arts Lecture Theatre			EC1006 TUT King's College KCG16	GG1008 TUT St Mary's Building B08
17:00					

Need help?

You are welcome to contact us if you have questions. These notes have been prepared by Geography's troubleshooters:

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and

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If you cannot get Nick, try Dmitri, or vice-versa.

We will also be available to help you in-person in Welcome Week. Keep an eye out for details of help sessions (see the box at the top of this document) or ask the School of Geosciences office staff in the Meston building) where to find us.