

Choosing Your Courses (2025-26)

Some tips for new first-year Geography students

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

WANT SOME HELP?

Please ask! G&E's trouble-shooters are:

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If you can't get hold of Ed ask Dmitri. If you can't get hold of either of us, try the School office (Meston G05H) or geography@abdn.ac.uk. Some things are better sorted out face-to-face (whether in-person or online) – especially as we cannot see how MyCurriculum works for individual students.

We will be happy to see anyone in Welcome Week (starts 15 September). Best to check that one of us is around before you make a special journey to St Mary's.

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 course split is what the [MyCurriculum](#) online course choice tool expects. You can find more information about MyCurriculum in the University [Toolkit](#).

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 **Programme Specifications** ('Degrees in Arts & Social Sciences' and 'Degrees in Science') in here for Geography and any other subject in which you are interested, as this will give you an idea of the possibilities ahead.

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 term in which the course is taught: 0 for the first term (September to December), and 5 (think 0.5, halfway through the year) for the second term (January to May).

All first year Geographers, whether MA or BSc, joint or single honours, take the same two Geography courses: **GG1010: Creating the Anthropocene**, and **GG1512: The UN Sustainable Development Goals: Transforming Our World**. Both courses contain a mixture of physical, environmental and human geography. There is also a third (optional) Geography course you can take in the second half-session if you wish, **GG1513 Mapping & Monitoring the Environment**. The rest of your credit load is made up by taking courses from outside the discipline.

All first-year students in the School of Geosciences are also required to take a zero-credit course called **GO1001 The flow of time: introductory field trip**. This involves a compulsory one-day field trip only.

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

First Half-Session	Second Half-Session
GG1010: Creating the Anthropocene	GG1512: The UN Sustainable Dev't Goals
Choice of 'arts' course	GG1513: Mapping & Monitoring the Environment
Choice of 'arts' course	Choice of 'arts' course
Free choice	Free choice

Plus GO1001 The flow of time: introductory field trip

And for BSc Geographers:

First Half-Session	Second Half-Session
GG1010: Creating the Anthropocene	GG1512: The UN Sustainable Dev't Goals
Choice of 'science' course	GG1513: Mapping & Monitoring the Environment
Choice of 'science' course	Choice of 'science' course
Free choice	Free choice

Plus GO1001 The flow of time: introductory field trip

What counts as what?

- **Science-only subjects at Level 1:** Biology (BI), Chemistry (CM), Engineering (EG), Geology (GL), Medical Science (SM), Physics (PX), Sports Science (SR) and Statistics (ST)
- **Both Arts and Science subjects at Level 1:** Geography (GG), Archaeology (AY), Computing (CS), Maths (MA), Psychology (PS) or any of the Sixth Century (SX) courses
- **Arts-only subjects at Level 1:** anything else!

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.
- 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 Course 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	GG1010: Creating the Anthropocene	GG1512: The UN Sustainable Development Goals
<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 or Geoscience	GL1005: The Nature of the Environment Through Geological Time	GL1505: Earth's Materials
International Relations	PI1018: Politics & IR 1: Democracy and Governance	PI1518: 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).

Top tip #2. Vary your course selections if you wish. 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 many 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. Check the Course Catalogue for details of any pre-requisites.

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 maths and science you need for a (physical) Geography degree 'in-house', but, if you do want to brush up your numerical skills and have room to fit it in, consider MA1515: Mathematics for Sciences.
- Similarly, Geography students tend to find the specialist computing science courses more demanding than other CS courses designed for a wider audience (e.g., CS1534: Web Development).
- 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. Here follow some examples to demonstrate what is possible.

MA GEOGRAPHY #1

First Half-Session	Second Half-Session
GG1010: Creating the Anthropocene	GG1512: The UN Sustainable Dev't Goals
AY1003: Archaeology in Action: An Introduction	AY1503: Caves to Kingdoms...
AT1003: Introduction to Anthropology 1	AT1502: Introduction to Anthropology 2
SO1007: Introductory Sociology 1	GG1513 Mapping

Plus GO1001 The flow of time: introductory field trip

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 Sociology and the Economics courses 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
GG1010: Creating the Anthropocene	GG1512: The UN Sustainable Dev't Goals
MS1009: Managing Organisations	AC1517: Accounting and Entrepreneurship
EC1006: The Economics of Business and Society	EC1506: The Global Economy
SX1022: Arts for a More Sustainable Planet	GG1513: Mapping & Monitoring the Environment

Plus GO1001 The flow of time: introductory field trip

Business Management is one of the more tightly prescribed joint-degree combinations, with three compulsory Level 1 courses, shaded in blue here: a Management course, 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 course here adds something different to the mix, as does the Film Studies course.

BSc GEOGRAPHY #1

First Half-Session	Second Half-Session
GG1010: Creating the Anthropocene	GG1512: The UN Sustainable Dev't Goals

First Half-Session	Second Half-Session
GL1005: The Earth Through Geological Time	GL1505: Earth's Materials
BI1009: Frontiers in Biological Sciences	BI1511: Environmental Science
CM1021: Chemistry for the Physical Sciences 1	GG1513: Mapping & Monitoring the Environment

Plus GO1001 The flow of time: introductory field trip

The top two pairs of courses here set up four possible single honours degrees in Geography, Geology, Petroleum Geology or 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. This combination comfortably meets the requirements of the BSc degree as all eight choices count as 'science' courses.

BSc GEOGRAPHY #2

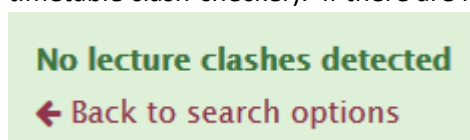
First Half-Session	Second Half-Session
GG1010: Creating the Anthropocene	GG1512: The UN Sustainable Dev't Goals
AY1003: Archaeology in Action: An Introduction	AY1503: Caves to Kingdoms...
SX1001: Humans and Other Animals	GG1513: Mapping & Monitoring the Environment
GM1054: German for Beginners 1	GM1554: German for Beginners 2

Plus GO1001 The flow of time: introductory field trip

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. The choice of two Sixth Century courses completes the required quota of six 'science' courses, although the technical scientific content of both is limited. BSc students have two completely free choices that need not be 'science' courses. Here, these slots are filled by the choice of *ab initio* (i.e., for beginners) German language courses – a fine example of taking up the chance to do something new and different (with the prospects of continuing with German as Sustained Study in second year).

MyTimetable

You can check whether potential course combinations work using the [course overlay](#) (aka the timetable clash-checker). 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. Further information from the University [Toolkit](#). 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!