

Proposed Changes to WJEC AS and A Level Geography

Introduction

WJEC are consulting on proposed changes to AS and A Level Geography following a targeted review. The review aims to ensure the specification remains current, relevant and manageable, aligns with reformed GCSE Geography, and continues to support learner progression to higher education and employment, while avoiding wholesale reform.

Why is this review taking place?

In June 2023, Qualifications Wales published approval criteria for new GCSEs and Level 2 qualifications. As part of this process, WJEC was asked to review existing AS and A levels to ensure alignment with reformed GCSEs and continued relevance. Geography was identified as one of the subjects requiring the highest level of review.

Overall approach

This is a targeted review rather than a full reform. The qualification structure remains unchanged and the majority of content is retained. The proposed changes focus on updating outdated content, improving manageability, and strengthening alignment with GCSE Geography.

What is staying the same?

Key aspects of the qualification will remain unchanged to ensure continuity for centres and learners:

- Overall qualification structure
- Unit titles
- The majority of existing content
- No changes to Section B of Unit 2
- No changes to Unit 5 (Independent Investigation)

What is proposed?

Some outdated or overly complex content has been removed, content has been repositioned where appropriate, and new material has been added to reflect contemporary geographical issues, equality considerations and global perspectives.

Changes are proposed for Units 1 and 2 for first teaching in 2027, and Units 3 and 4 for first teaching in 2028.

Summary of changes by unit

Unit 1:

	Areas Removed	Updated/added
Coastal	eustatic or isostatic changes	For clarity and accessibility updated to: emergent coastal landscapes associated with sea level fall (raised beaches, marine terraces, abandoned cliffs) or submergent coastal landscapes associated with sea level rise (rias, fjords, shingle beaches)
Glaciated	periglacial processes and the formation of associated features	sub-aerial processes of freeze-thaw weathering and mass movement including landslides, slumps and rockfalls (added for clarity)
Tectonic Hazards	- Mercalli and Richter scales - primary and secondary effects	- Moment Magnitude Scale (MMS) - Tsunamis (Brought over from Unit 4)

Unit 2: Section A - 76% of original unit stays the same, but the net effect is that with very close replacements.

Areas removed

- The way in which continuity and change of these local to global factors affect learner's own lives and the lives of others
- Places are given meaning as a result of people's perceptions, engagement with and attachments to the place in question and are related to different identities, perspectives and experiences, for example Snowdonia National Park

Areas updated

Updated to

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the Clark Fisher Model The complexity of the changing service economy including the continuing decline for some central urban places, out-of-town retailing and office-parks, internet shopping and central entertainment and the impacts of these changes on people's lives at a range of scales | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the Five-Sector model the complexity of the changing service economy including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> urban retail and office use out-of-town retail and business parks internet shopping and hybrid/remote work |
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• Locational factors encouraging cluster growth including proximity to universities and research institutes, government support, planning regulations and infrastructure • Impacts of quaternary industry clusters on people and places including place making and marketing, demographic change and global connectivity • Re-imaging and regenerating urban places through sport / music stadia, cultural quarters, festivals, industrial heritage and flagship developments • New challenges of managing change in some urban communities associated with the Covid-19 pandemic and economic change	• leisure and experience-based services in central places • considering the social and economic impacts of these changes on people and places at local, regional and national scales. • locational factors encouraging cluster growth including proximity to universities and research institutes, government support and initiatives, planning regulations and infrastructure, opportunities for collaboration and innovation • impacts of quaternary industry clusters on people and places including economic growth, place branding and regeneration, demographic change and inequality, rising living costs and increased national and global connectivity • re-imaging and regenerating urban places through external agencies including governments, corporate bodies, public-private partnerships and community groups • new challenges of managing change in some urban communities associated with social economic change.
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Section B – No changes.

Unit 3:

Global Systems - 98% of content remains unchanged:

Areas removed

- Theories of precipitation formation including Collision and the Bergeron-Findeisen process
- fossil fuel combustion, carbon sequestration

Areas Added

- how climate change is affecting inputs, outputs, flows and stores in the water cycle.
- how climate change and human activities are affecting the inputs, outputs, stores and flows in the carbon cycle

Learners should understand the impact of anthropogenic climate change on:

- global human systems: health risks such as heat stress, disease spread and malnutrition
- economic systems: damage to infrastructure from storms / floods and wildfires and increased costs for energy, insurance and disaster recovery
- natural systems: loss of biodiversity, habitat destruction.

Learners should know the meaning of climate justice.

Learners should understand national and global strategies to mitigate and adapt to anthropogenic climate change:

National strategies:

- renewable energy expansion, for example, China
- emission reduction policies for example, Wales with a net zero target by 2050
- climate smart agriculture for example, adaption in Ecuador – livestock management

Global strategies aiming to ensure the shift to a low carbon world is fair, inclusive, and just. To include:

- Paris Agreement and its mechanisms under the UNFCCC
- Intergovernmental climate initiatives. (This section has moved from Weather and Climate in Unit 4. The named strategies have been added for clarity)

Areas updated	Updated to
• Causes of air uplift, condensation and cloud formation including orographic, frontal and convection • Carbon pathways between the ocean and atmosphere through the processes of absorption by biota, diffusion into and out of oceans • Section 3.1.7 and 3.1.8 have been combined with the choice of two environments	• causes of cloud formation and precipitation including orographic, frontal and convection • Carbon pathways between the ocean and atmosphere through the solution and biological pumps • regeneration and sustainable management strategies for carbon stores in two environments from tropical rainforests, temperate grassland, and peatlands

Global Governance: 98% of content remains unchanged. Please note that any reference to the developing world will be changed to the Global South.

Areas removed
• economic migration • Post-1945 supranational institutions for global governance including UN and UNESCO, EU, G7/G8, G20, G77 and NATO • Connections created by the UK's past role as a maritime power, including the Commonwealth • Growth of smuggling and people trafficking and international efforts to manage these flows

Areas Added
Learners should know: • how global governance challenges national sovereignty • the unequal power dynamics of a contemporary world • threats to shipping from geopolitical conflict, overcapacity, climate pressures and the regulation of shipping including containers and oil tankers (3.2.7)

Areas updated	Updated to
• factors creating a shrinking world for potential migrants including transport, communication and media representation • Recent drivers of migration including the development of diaspora communities, colonial and Commonwealth links and legislation permitting freedom of movement, including the EU • How superpower states exert influence and disproportionately attract international migrants to their own advantage, including political strategies to develop cities as global hubs for investment and migration • Flows of money, ideas and technology linked with economic migration that reduce or exacerbate global economic inequalities, including remittances and the 'brain drain' of skilled workers. These factors can cause conflict but promote growth and stability • Migration policies of host and source countries, including the management of conflicting views about cultural change and migration held by individual UK citizens including those within Wales (and learner's own lives) • Laws and agreements regulating the use of the Earth's oceans in ways that	• Globalisation and factors creating a shrinking world for potential migrants including transport, communication and media representation • Recent drivers of migration including the growth of diaspora networks, historical links such as colonial or Commonwealth ties, and legislation or agreements enabling freedom of movement, including EU rules (including the impact of Brexit on migration patterns), the displacement of populations due to conflict, natural disasters, and geopolitical interventions (added for clarity) • how superpowers influence global rules • flows of money, ideas and technology linked with economic migration that reduce or exacerbate global economic inequalities, including remittances and the 'brain drain' of skilled workers. How these factors can both exacerbate and reduce global inequalities, sometimes causing conflict but also promoting growth and stability • Migration policies of host and source countries, including how governments manage migration flows, visa and asylum rules; and how these policies intersect with conflicting public views about cultural change and migration, including perspectives within the UK (and Wales) and learners' own experiences. (Updated to combine Sections 3.2.4 and 3.2.5) • Laws and agreements regulating the use of the Earth's oceans in ways that promote sustainable economic growth and

promote sustainable economic growth and geopolitical stability Risks to seafloor cable data networks including those from tsunamis and undersea landslides, and international conventions to protect seafloor data cables	geopolitical stability (including the role of the United Nations and international frameworks such as United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea) threats to submarine cables due to natural hazards including tsunamis and undersea landslides, geopolitical tensions and international conventions to protect submarine cables
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Unit 4:

- Section A Tectonic Hazards – This section has been removed due to repetition of content from AS. Areas that were not repetition have been moved to the AS content.
- Section B to become Section A in the new specification – Learners choose two themes from:
 - Ecosystems
 - Economic Growth and Challenge in either China or selected African countries¹
 - Energy Challenges and Dilemmas
 - Weather and climate

For Section B, 21st Century Challenges will move from Unit 3. The assessment in this section will focus on learners' ability to draw together elements from across the course. The application of knowledge and understanding of at least two of the four themes in Units 1, 2 and 3 will be in the assessment.

Ecosystems - The scale of change is negligible. The content and learning objectives are entirely unchanged, with only a small clarification or elaboration added.

¹ India has been removed as an option due to low levels of candidate uptake. In 2024, candidates opting for India represented 7.2% of the total cohort, compared with 36% for China and 25% for Selected African Countries. In 2025, uptake increased slightly but remained comparatively low, with 10.1% of candidates selecting India, compared with 32% for China and 24% for Selected African Countries.

Economic Growth and Challenge in China - 96% of content remains unchanged:

Areas removed	
• drainage patterns • distribution of economic activity • modified communism in China on economic change • outsourcing and offshoring • soft power • environmental pressures associated with rapid urbanisation • strategies to improve the sustainability of urban communities	
Areas Added to align with Selected African Countries	
Learners should be aware that definitions of development are dynamic. Learners should understand: • how to measure development including simple and composite quantitative measures and qualitative measures • the strengths and limitations of different methods used to classify countries • the resource base including energy sources and minerals • influence of trade • influence of tourism • influence of political factors including governance, corruption, colonialism and neo-colonialism, and global organisations	
Areas updated	Updated to
• Role of government in the location and development of economic activity • The global shift, outsourcing and offshoring including the role of China as the workshop of the world	• role of government and external political factors in the location and development of economic activity • the global importance of China as a leading high tech manufacturing powerhouse.

Economic Growth and Challenge in Selected African Countries - 86% of content remains unchanged:

Areas removed

- Influence of free trade and trade blocs in promoting and hindering development
- The resource curse and conflict, including the issue of conflict minerals
- Influence of MNCs, including foreign direct investment, out-sourcing and offshoring
- social and cultural constraints

Areas Added to align with China

Learners should be aware that definitions of development are dynamic.

Learners should understand:

- how to measure development including simple and composite quantitative measures and qualitative measures
- the strengths and limitations of different methods used to classify countries
- the resource base including energy sources and minerals
- recent changes in the size and structure of the economies of selected countries in Africa
- the global integration of selected countries in Africa
- participation in global organisations, governance, conventions and treaties
- environmental pressures associated with economic growth including fossil fuel use, industrial pollution
- environmental issues of water security, food security and energy security
- strategies to improve the security of either water or food or energy

	Areas Updated	Updated to
Energy Challenges and Dilemmas	• Alternatives to conventional fossil fuel sources • At a national scale, factors influencing the energy mix of countries at different stages of development	• alternatives to conventional fossil fuel sources including recyclables and renewables • at a national scale, factors influencing the energy mix of countries at different stages of development, including the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 and Welsh Government's Net Zero Wales Plan

Weather and climate - 97% of content remains unchanged:

Areas removed

- Structure of the atmosphere including the characteristics of different layers and their role in climate regulation and the atmospheric heat budget

Areas Added

- projected changes to global climatic zones and monsoons due to anthropogenic climate change

Learners should understand:

- strategies to improve urban environments and make urban populations more resilient to extreme weather events
- the economic, political and social factors that influence the implementation of extreme weather mitigation in urban areas for example flood mitigation and water management; urban heat island reduction; emergency planning / infrastructure resilience and early warning systems.

Areas updated

- Changing vulnerability of populations to weather and climatic hazards including exposure to climatic variability, degree of resilience and adaptive capacity

Updated to

- the changing vulnerability of populations to extreme weather, sea level rise and climate change including exposure to climatic variability, degree of resilience, adaptive capacity and availability of climate finance

Unit 5 – No changes

Intended benefits

The revised specification aims to enhance relevance, manageability, assessment validity, and learner engagement, while supporting progression to higher education and employment.

How to respond

Stakeholders are invited to comment on the overall approach, the proposed unit-level changes, and any potential benefits or concerns. Feedback will inform final decisions before approval.

After reading this proposal, please respond to the survey here by 22.05.26