

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 The proposed changes focus on updating outdated content, improving manageability, and strengthening alignment with GCSE Geography.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Some outdated or overly complex content has been removed, content has been repositioned where appropriate, and new material has been added to reflect contemporary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	Areas Added/Updated
Coastal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> eustatic or isostatic changes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> periglacial processes and the formation of associated features 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> sub-aerial processes of freeze-thaw weathering and mass movement including landslides,, slumps and rockfalls
Tectonic Hazards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mercalli and Richter scales primary and secondary effects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moment Magnitude Scale (MMS) tsunamis

Unit 2: Section A - 76% of original unit stays the same but the net effect is that with very close replacements. Section B –No changes.

Areas Removed	Areas Updated
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 Cardiff St David's 2 the Clark Fisher Model new challenges of managing change in some urban communities associated with the Covid-19 pandemic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the Five-Sector model hybrid/remote work 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 the 21st Century knowledge economy: initiatives, opportunities for collaboration and innovation, economic growth, branding and regeneration, inequality, rising living costs and increased national connectivity the rebranding process and players in rural places: tourism, cultural and media projects ... are often led by local communities, businesses the rebranding process and players in urban places: public-private partnerships new challenges of managing change in some urban communities associated with social economic change.

Unit 3:
Global Systems:

Areas Removed	Areas Added/Updated
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • theories of precipitation formation including Collision and the Bergeron-Findeisen process • fossil fuel combustion, carbon sequestration • ocean and atmosphere through the processes of absorption by biota, diffusion into and out of oceans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how climate change is affecting inputs, outputs, flows and stores in the water cycle • causes of cloud formation and precipitation including orographic, frontal and convection • ocean and atmosphere through the solution and biological pumps • how climate change and human activities are affecting the inputs, outputs, stores and flows in the carbon cycle • regeneration and sustainable management strategies for carbon stores in two environments from tropical rainforests, temperate grassland, and peatlands • 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 • climate justice • national strategies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paris Agreement and its mechanisms under the UNFCC • Intergovernmental climate initiatives.

Global Governance:

Areas Removed	Areas Added/Updated
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • economic migration • developed economies • post-1945 supranational institutions for global governance including UN and UNESCO, EU, G7/G8, G20, G77 and NATO • growth of smuggling and people trafficking and international efforts to manage these flows • seafloor data cables 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how global governance challenges national sovereignty • how superpowers influence global rules • the unequal power dynamics of a contemporary world • climate change • globalisation and factors creating a shrinking world for potential migrants including transport, communication and media representation • how these factors can both exacerbate and reduce global inequalities, sometimes causing conflict but also promoting growth and stability • how governments manage migration flows, visa and asylum rules; and how these policies intersect with conflicting public views about cultural change and migration • global South • the role of the United Nations and international frameworks such as United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea) • submarine cables

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. 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

Economic Growth and Challenge in China:

Areas Removed	Areas Added/Updated
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learners should be aware that definitions of development are dynamic. • how to measure development including simple and composite quantitative measures and qualitative measures • the strengths and limitations of different methods used to classify countries • opportunities and constraints for economic development • the resource base including energy sources and minerals • influence of trade and tourism • governance, corruption, colonialism and neo-colonialism, and global organisations • external political factors • the global importance of China as a leading high tech manufacturing powerhouse.

Economic Growth and Challenge in Selected African Countries:

Areas Removed	Areas Added/Updated
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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, outsourcing and offshoring • social and cultural constraints 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learners should be aware that definitions of development are dynamic • how to measure development including simple and composite quantitative measures and qualitative measures • the strengths and limitations of different methods used to classify countries • opportunities and constraints for economic development • 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 food security and energy security • strategies to improve the security of either food or energy

	Areas Removed	Areas Added/Updated
Energy Challenges and Dilemmas		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> structure of the atmosphere including the characteristics of different layers and their role in climate regulation and the atmospheric heat budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> projected changes to global climatic zones and monsoons due to anthropogenic climate change climate finance 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

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 20.05.26