Geography

Subject enquiries
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Features
* Human Geography at St Andrews: top for student satisfaction in the UK – 2014 National Student Survey.
* The School of Geography & Geosciences was top in Scotland in the UK’s Research Excellence Framework 2014.
* Externally acclaimed training in quantitative and qualitative research methods.
* Wide range of module choice spanning the full range of Geography.
* Particular strengths in:
  – Climate change and environmental management
  – Population, development and gender studies
  – Quaternary (ice age) and glacial studies
  – Cities and housing
* Excellent laboratory, IT and field resources.
* Fieldwork opportunities in all four years, both in Scotland and overseas.
* Highly literate and numerate graduates with excellent employment prospects.

What will I study – BSc or MA?

At St Andrews you have the choice of either a BSc or MA Geography degree, depending on your background and what other subjects you want to study in your first two years, but both programmes give you access to all our optional modules across the full breadth of Geography (for other BSc requirements see page 5). You are also able to take modules offered by the Sustainable Development programme.

We explore a fascinating range of important environmental and international phenomena. These include: glaciers and ice ages; climate and weather; environmental change and management; population change, migration and border politics; urbanisation, development and geo-political conflict; spatial inequalities (widening gaps in wealth, health and well-being); and environmental economics. We bring such concerns to life through the study of – and fieldwork in – many parts of the world, both close to home and further afield. At all stages, we emphasise the development of both discipline-specific and transferable skills: field, laboratory, computing, analytical and presentational skills. Above all, our degrees provide an exciting challenge to those who wish to think critically and creatively about the world around them, and understand the interaction of environmental systems and human activity.

Degree options in the Faculty of Science or Faculty of Arts

MA or BSc (Single Honours Degree)

Geography

Joint Honours Degrees
Geography and one of:

Arabic (MA) Mathematics (BSc)
Art History (MA) Mediaeval History (MA)
Biology (BSc) Middle East Studies (MA)
Comparative Literature (MA) Modern History (MA)
Economics (BSc or MA) Philosophy (MA)
Film Studies (MA) Psychology (MA)
FrenchW (MA) Scottish History (MA)
Hebrew (MA) Social Anthropology (MA)
International Relations (MA) SpanishW (MA)
ItalianW (MA) Statistics (BSc)
Management (BSc or MA) Theological Studies (MA)

“With” Degrees
Honours in which the majority of the course deals with the first-named subject:

Geography with Persian (MA)
Geography with Social Anthropology (MA)
Geography with SpanishW (MA)
Mathematics with Geography (BSc)
Psychology with Geography (MA)
Russian with GeographyW (MA)
Social Anthropology with Geography (MA)
Spanish with GeographyW (MA)

W Available With Integrated Year Abroad – see Modern Languages.

[If you wish to study Arts subjects in your first and second years, apply for the MA rather than the BSc degree.]

Entrance Requirements

Obtaining the following grades will not guarantee you a place as we consider all aspects of every application, including the Personal Statement.

SQA Highers: AAA**
GCE A-Levels: AAA**
International Baccalaureate Points: 38

** For BSc degrees – at least two Highers or one A-Level must include Mathematics, Biology, Chemistry, Computing Science or equivalent, Geography, Geology, Physics, Psychology.

For full Faculty Entrance Requirements, see page 53.

For degrees combining more than one subject, the subject with the higher Entrance Requirements determines the grades you need. You will also need to meet any further subject-specific Entrance Requirements as outlined on their pages.

For further country-specific qualifications and pre-degree foundation programmes see:

www.st-andrews.ac.uk/study/international

Do I need previous knowledge of this subject? – No.
“Brimming with friendly faces, cutting-edge facilities and world-class academics, the Department at St Andrews is second to none. The programme of study allows students to immerse themselves in a wide range of topics, develop a plethora of mixed research skills, and study in numerous settings, including in the computer and research labs, in classroom tutorials and, everyone’s favourite, out in the field. Though St Andrews has gifted me with countless wonderful memories, one of my most fond is surely our week-long Honours fieldtrip to the stunning glaciated landscapes of Norway.”

James (Lytham St Annes, Lancashire, England)
BSc (Hons) Geography (2015)

Indicative programme information

First Year MA and BSc (1 x 20-credit module required)
Our first-year modules stress the value of developing an integrated, coherent vision of the world. They adopt a global perspective in exploring the complex interrelationships between people and planet, and the implications of humans becoming a force of nature. The topics studied include climate change, the idea of the Anthropocene, biodiversity loss, food and famine, environmental migration, geo-political strife and technological change. Such topics are used to emphasise that the study of society and the environment belong together.

Second Year MA and BSc (2 x 30-credit modules required)
Our second-year modules build on first year by exploring the rich and diverse nature of the discipline of geography, and prepare you for Honours study. These modules provide both a conceptual and an applied (methods-oriented) grounding in physical geography, environmental geography and human geography. The modules cover: earth surface processes; environmental hazards and environmental management; diverse topics in human geography; and Geographic Information Science (GIS) and spatial data analysis.

Honours – Third and Fourth Years (1 x 60-credit core taught module and 1 x 50-credit dissertation module required and additional optional modules)
Honours modules blend skills training with subject-based themes across the broad sweep of geography. You can choose to specialise in one aspect of geography or to engage with the full, fascinating breadth of the discipline. We offer around 25 specialist optional modules. The ‘menu’ evolves to reflect exciting new research trends and the expertise of staff, but current modules in 2015-2016 include:

- Glaciers and Glaciation
- Long Term Perspectives on Sustainability
- Climate and Weather Systems
- Migration and Transnationalism
- Housing, Community and Social-Spatial Justice
- HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa
- Science, Society and Natural Resource Management
- Political and Cultural Geographies of the Border

Our Honours programme gives you advanced and in-depth training in the essential field, laboratory, observational and IT skills expected of geography graduates. Core skills are developed in ‘hands-on’ modules giving you direct experience of state-of-the-art data collection and analysis: statistical analysis; survey and questionnaire design; scientific sampling and dating; qualitative research methods (such as interviewing and participatory approaches); GIS and remote sensing; and field-based skills. Fieldwork is conducted both locally and overseas. Recent locations have included Norway, the Pyrenees, Iceland and Galway. Your final semester is devoted to your research dissertation, applying your newfound intellectual and practical skills to your chosen topic.

Study abroad
You may apply to study abroad under the University’s St Andrews Abroad programme. See page 46.

Typical class sizes and teaching information

First Year:
- lectures 150 - 200, seminars and practical classes 20 - 30, fieldtrip 2 days (5 - 20), tutorials 8 - 10

Second Year:
- lectures 80 - 120, seminars and practical classes 15 - 20, fieldtrip 3 days (10 - 15), tutorials 8 - 10

Honours:
- lectures 10 - 50, fieldtrip 8 days (4 - 10), laboratories and seminars 10 - 50, tutorials 1 - 5, dissertation – individual supervision

Typical methods of assessment
All 1000- and 2000-level modules are assessed by at least 40% coursework (individual and some group work; essays, written reports on field and laboratory activities, class tests, multiple choice assignments), and with the balance of assessment in examinations. At Honours level about half of all credits are assessed by 100% coursework. Most optional modules include at least 40% assessed coursework, and there is a wide range of innovative assessment formats.

Scholarships and fieldwork support
The Department subsidises all required fieldwork, reducing the charged cost to <£50 in each of the first two years. The cost of the third year overseas fieldtrip is around £300-500; students experiencing financial difficulties can apply to the Department’s Hardship Fund which may cover some or all of this cost. Students also have the opportunity to apply for Departmental scholarships. The MacIver Award is offered each year to support students carrying out Geography fieldwork (other than for their dissertation) during the summer vacation. The Dorothy McKinney Awards support dissertation fieldwork in human geography.

Careers

Because of the broad nature of geography, graduates leave St Andrews with a diverse and unique skill set, putting them in a very strong position in the jobs market. While geography is closely associated with certain particular careers (e.g. in the environmental sphere), and some graduates pursue these very successfully, many others find that their geographical training equips them with a valuable array of transferable skills which open up a rich diversity of career opportunities. Many of our students are also successful in competing for postgraduate opportunities, both nationally and internationally, at both Masters and PhD level.


See also page 36 for details of the University’s Careers Centre.