



*Experience the unique and integrative undergraduate geography course at a university leading the way in geographical teaching and research*

Geography (L700)

## BA in Geography



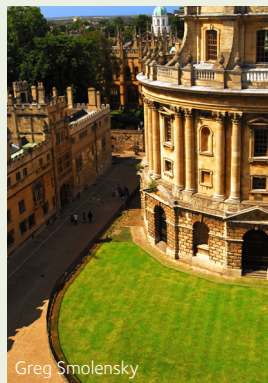
[www.geog.ox.ac.uk/undergraduate](http://www.geog.ox.ac.uk/undergraduate)



Geography has never been more relevant, as the world faces increasing challenges, and solutions to human and environmental problems are urgently being sought. Our course here at Oxford provides undergraduate students with a wide range of experience and skills across the breadth of geography, taught through tutorials and lectures by academic staff who are at the forefront of the discipline.

## Why study Geography at Oxford?

*"Oxford provides a holistic approach to geography, instead of focusing on purely human or physical geography. Each week you have a tutorial with a leading academic – it is a challenging and rewarding experience that can't be found in many universities."*



Greg Smolensky

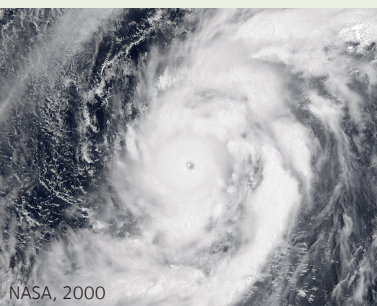


As the oldest Geography department in the UK, Oxford has an outstanding tradition in geographical teaching and research and is currently ranked top (with Bristol, Cambridge and Durham) for research. Students studying for the undergraduate course will become part of a dynamic department, which includes up to 100 postgraduate students studying for the department's four MSc courses, and a large postgraduate research community.

At the heart of the Oxford Geography course is an integrated view of the discipline, and in the first year you will study both human and physical geography. From the second year you can begin to specialise and, if you choose, concentrate on physical or human geography. However, many students maintain broad interests across the discipline and in the Geographical Research paper and in a number of the options an interdisciplinary perspective is encouraged. The course provides an intellectually stimulating environment which will introduce you to contemporary issues and debates in both

human and physical geography. You will be taught to think independently and critically about the geographical literature and each week you will have a chance to explore theories and concepts in a tutorial with a tutor and one or two other students. The tutors are experts in their field and will be using their own research to illustrate both lectures and tutorial discussions.

The department offers excellent facilities for undergraduates including the Geography Research and Teaching Laboratories and the Oxford Luminescence Dating Laboratory. Students are welcome to use the labs for their own research during the course, and also have access to the Radcliffe Science Library (RSL) and the Bodleian Library, which house over 11 million volumes. In the RSL there is a specialist librarian for Geography, who is available to help and train undergraduates in their search for, and use of, bibliographical and data sources.





# How is the course structured?

The broad first year will provide you with a strong grounding in the key principles underpinning human and physical geography, alongside training in relevant study skills and practical techniques. There are four papers in the first year, each of which is compulsory to ensure that all students have the same foundation on which to build in the second year. The course is delivered through lectures, a weekly practical class on Geographical Techniques and tutorials for which you write essays which you will discuss with a tutor. Practical techniques in social and physical sciences will also be taught through field days in the local area.

After the Preliminary Examination at the end of the first year you will start work on what is known as the 'Final Honour School'. The work for the Honour School is spread over the second and third years and, since

there are no examinations at the end of the second year, you will be able to develop your knowledge and skills over two years.

In the second year you will begin to specialise by choosing two of the three Foundational Courses to build your knowledge of key concepts in physical, human and environmental geography. You will then choose three specialist options to study in detail. During the second year you will also start planning for your dissertation, a 12,000 word independent research project which you will undertake in the vacation at the end of your second year. Underpinning the Honour School course is the compulsory course in Geographical Research which explores the relationship between conceptual and methodological issues in the practice of research.

## YEAR 1 (Prelims)

### COURSES

**Four papers (all compulsory):**

#### Earth System Processes

Climatology  
Geomorphology  
Ecology of the biosphere

#### Human Geography

Economy and transformation  
Culture and society  
Territories and identities

#### Geographical Controversies

#### Geographical Techniques

Earth observation  
Quantitative techniques  
Qualitative techniques  
Fieldwork

## YEARS 2 & 3 (Final Honour School)

### COURSES

**Geographical Research** (core course)

#### Foundational Courses (choose *two*)

Earth System Dynamics  
Environmental Geography  
Space, Place and Society

#### Optional Subjects (choose *three*)

African Societies	Forensic Geography
Biogeography, Biodiversity and Conservation	Geographies of Finance
Climate Change and Variability	Geographies of Nature
Contemporary India	Heritage Science and Conservation
Desert Landscapes and Dynamics	Northlands: Peoples and Politics
Environment and Sustainable Development in China	Spaces of Politics
European Integration	Transport and Mobilities

*This is an indicative list of options. The University reserves the right to determine which options are available in any year and to place a cap on the number of students who may take any particular one.*

#### Fieldwork (Spring, Year 2)

Current destinations: Copenhagen or Tenerife

*Note: Destinations may be subject to change*

#### Dissertation

### ASSESSMENT

**Written exams: 4**

#### Submitted work:

Geographical Controversies essay (1,500 words)  
Fieldwork report (4,000 words)

### ASSESSMENT

**Written exams: 6**

#### Submitted work:

3 extended essays (each 4,500 words)  
Fieldwork report (4,500 words)  
Dissertation (12,000 words)





*"For my dissertation I investigated the impacts of a motorway on the surrounding vegetation. My fieldwork consisted of taking cores from trees, collecting moss samples, surveying lichen, and passively sampling nitrogen levels with diffusion tubes. I learned to use the specialised instruments in the department's Rock Breakdown Laboratory and as a result have developed a new set of transferable skills."*

## Training in research skills

Training in a broad range of research skills is an important part of a geography degree course and these transferable skills make geographers particularly employable. In the first year you will attend lectures and practical classes on qualitative and quantitative techniques and carry out small research projects in the local area. In the second year you will attend a range of advanced skills workshops on topics such as ethnographic research, the use of video and photography in research, multivariate statistics, climate modelling and laboratory methods. In the spring of the second year you will participate in a week-long fieldtrip

(currently Copenhagen or Tenerife) during which you will put these skills into practice.

The dissertation involves independent research using primary data sources. You will have a free choice about the kind of project you choose. Some students travel overseas and collect data in the field, other students choose projects based in archives or undertake laboratory based modelling. Most students say that completing this independent research is the most rewarding part of their whole degree course.



## What do the colleges do?

College life is one of the University of Oxford's greatest assets, since a close college community provides a friendly and welcoming home for students. Tutors get to know students individually, enabling them to respond to their particular academic needs. You therefore receive all the benefits of being educated at a large university while living and studying in a small, friendly community. The geography course is organised and co-ordinated centrally by the department and is the same for all students, so in terms of the quality of teaching you will receive, all colleges are identical.

The Oxford system combines the best of one-to-one teaching in college with the wealth and resources in the University and its departments. The tutorial system means that you are likely to receive much more personal tuition and greater pastoral support than other universities can offer.

Tutorials are weekly meetings with a tutor and typically two or three students, to discuss an essay or other written work. These complement lectures and practical classes delivered in the department which all students attend, irrespective of their college.

You can choose a college at the application stage, or alternatively submit an Open Application and a college will be selected for you. There are 14 colleges at Oxford which admit Geography students and you must apply to one of these, as follows:

**Brasenose, Christ Church, Hertford, Jesus, Keble, Mansfield, St. Anne's, St. Catherine's, St. Edmund Hall, St. Hilda's, St. John's, St. Peter's, Regent's Park, and Worcester.**

For further information on these colleges please visit their individual websites.



*"I was always a bit scared of applying to Oxford; I worried that everyone would be far cleverer than me and that I would be way out of my comfort zone. Instead I've found that both the course and the tutors have pushed me academically whilst never expecting the impossible. Applying here may appear daunting, but the rewards you get are second to none."*

## What are the tutors looking for?

We are looking for able and well-motivated students. In our selection criteria we are looking for your potential for independent thinking, ability to follow an argument, comprehension, problem-solving and a spirit of enquiry.

Competition for a place for Geography at Oxford is expected to be very strong. You should have achieved, or be predicted to achieve, A\*AA at A-level or 40 points in the IB. There are no required subjects you must have studied, although nearly all applicants have studied Geography.

Applicants will need to display evidence of a strong academic record and an ability to deploy their knowledge in ways that show initiative and enthusiasm. Interviews are not a test of knowledge but give candidates the opportunity to respond in a thoughtful way to unpredictable questions and ideas.

In addition to the interview, all candidates applying for geography must take the Thinking Skills Assessment (TSA) in November. Details of this can be found at [www.geog.ox.ac.uk/undergraduate/apply/tsa.html](http://www.geog.ox.ac.uk/undergraduate/apply/tsa.html)

## What can I do after a Geography degree?

Geography students are highly employable, whether in careers directly related to their geographical knowledge (such as planning, development work and environmental management), or those which use the range of transferable skills, including IT, data interpretation and communications skills, which a geography course provides. Many geography students go on to postgraduate study, for example, in development studies, environmental management or politics.



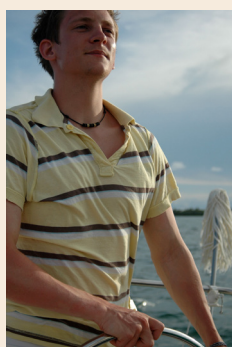
### Rachel Hughes

While studying geography at Oxford I particularly enjoyed the climatology option and became interested in climate change mitigation and how it applies to business. I then studied for an MSc in Carbon Management at Edinburgh University which provided me with high-level interdisciplinary skills and training in the business, economics and science of carbon management. After graduating from Edinburgh I joined a specialist company in ecological foot printing and carbon accounting and am now a sustainability consultant working for ADAS, who provide environmental consultancy, rural development services and policy advice.



### Chris Kyriacou

After finishing my degree in Geography I decided I wanted to pursue a career in international affairs and went to the London School of Economics to study for the MSc in International Relations. I now work for AMAR International Charitable Foundation which is a not-for-profit organisation that helps people in areas of conflict, civil disorder and disruption, rebuilding lives within communities under stress by creating services in medicine, public health, education and basic need provision. Initially I worked as a Projects Officer managing programmes in Iraq and I now manage the AMAR office in Washington.



### Tom Cebula

After completing the BA in Geography and an MSc in the School of Geography and Environment, I became a freelance researcher, working mostly at the BBC, but also for American channels and Channel 4, on 'specialist factual' documentaries – essentially history and science. I have learnt a huge amount about a lot of different things, from astrophysics to anthropology, I have spoken to world experts in disciplines from cancer treatment to forensic investigation and I have even managed to revisit my Geography lectures with a series on the history of maps. It's a great job for the curious.





## Find out more

If you are interested in finding out more, we recommend that you visit the department's website which provides more details about the course, as well as podcasts of taster lectures and some suggested reading linked to the course. The website also provides details about the current research being undertaken by members of the department.

For more information on applying to Oxford, please visit [www.admissions.ox.ac.uk](http://www.admissions.ox.ac.uk). The University's Admissions Information Centre (*admissions i*) at 55 Little Clarendon Street can help answer questions about applying to

undergraduate or graduate degrees offered by Oxford. Please contact by telephone +44 (0)1865 288000 or email [undergraduate.admissions@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:undergraduate.admissions@admin.ox.ac.uk)

### Open Days

The best way to find out what Oxford is really like is to visit the School and the University on one of our Open Days. We have a Departmental Open Day in May each year (booking required) and there are three University Open Days in June and September. At these events you will get a chance to talk directly to tutors and students and also sit in on taster lectures to give you an idea what studying Geography at Oxford would be like.

## Get in touch

If you have any further questions regarding studying Geography at Oxford, please contact us at:

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