



An Introduction to Geography Stage 6 in the New HSC

The new *Geography Stage 6 Syllabus* replaces the current 2 unit and 3 unit syllabus in Geography (1994). The new *Geography Stage 6 Syllabus* is for implementation with Year 11 in 2000 and will be first examined in 2001.

The syllabus provides information that was formerly available in the KLA handbook. This includes descriptions of course requirements, assessment weightings for internal and external assessment and examination specifications.

What is similar?

The new *Geography Stage 6 Syllabus* is similar to the current syllabus but has been revised with changes to content and organisation. The Preliminary course maintains the focus on both biophysical and human phenomena, as well as the senior geography project. The HSC course topics – Ecosystems at Risk, Urban Places, People and Economic Activity – draw from areas of content from the current syllabus.

What are the overall improvements?

- The study of environment, sustainability and development issues has been strengthened.
- The holistic approach to the study of Geography has been reinforced.
- Breadth and depth of new sample studies have been clarified.
- The application of knowledge through fieldwork is clearly stated and mandated in both the Preliminary and HSC courses.
- Terminology and instructions across the syllabus have been clarified, and a glossary has been included.
- The skills of investigation and analysis are developed so that contemporary issues can be addressed in the course.
- There is a clear link between objectives, outcomes and content.
- Assessment is related directly to outcomes through internal assessment, components and weightings, examination questions and marking criteria and performance scales.

The following changes have been made to particular sections of the syllabus

Rationale, Aim and Objectives (pp 6, 8)

The rationale has been strengthened to emphasise the role that Geography has in developing recognition and understanding of environmental change and the interactions taking place in our world. The rationale highlights:

- the ecological dimension, which considers how humans interact with environments
- the spatial dimension, which focuses on where things are, why they are there and how people interact differently with environments in different places.

Course Structure (p 9)

Both Preliminary and HSC courses have been reorganised. There are now three topics in each course.

In the Preliminary course:

- the physical geography topic, *Biophysical Interactions*, now includes the specific study of an environmental issue
- the human geography topic, *Global Challenges*, builds on Population Studies, and then allows a choice of two other studies from Cultural Integration, Political Geography, Development Geography, and Natural Resources
- the *Senior Geography Project* now includes the teaching of subject matter relevant to geographic enquiry.

In the HSC course:

- the three topics in the new syllabus: *Ecosystems at Risk*, *Urban Places*, *People and Economic Activity*, contain much of the subject matter of the current syllabus
- The holistic emphasis requires students to analyse and synthesise information within and across topics where relevant.

Outcomes (p 10–11)

- Outcomes are aligned to course content.
- Outcomes are designed to provide a framework to describe what students should know and be able to do as a result of teaching and learning in the course.
- The HSC course outcomes build upon those of the Preliminary course in terms of increased rigour, complexity and skill level. All outcomes are explicitly linked to the syllabus content.
- Outcomes have been developed to cater for the full range of students.

Content (p 15–34)

- There is clear differentiation of content between Preliminary and HSC courses.
- The scope and depth of course content has been made clear by the description of what students will learn.

Course Requirements (p 35)

Preliminary course:

- 120 indicative hours required to complete the course
- completion of the senior geography project
- includes 12 hours of field work.

HSC course:

- 120 indicative hours are required to complete the course
- includes 12 hours of fieldwork.

Assessment (p 37–43)

- School-based assessment is more prescriptive than in the past with the requirement that geographical research, interpretation and synthesis of geographical data, geographical writing and fieldwork are identified in the components. The assessment components, weightings and tasks have been designed to develop a range of activities that do not replicate the external examination.

What will be needed to teach this subject?

- *Geography Stage 6 Syllabus.*
- Geography Higher School Certificate Examination, Assessment and Reporting Supplement (the sample examination, marking guidelines and draft performance scale).

Current resources are appropriate for use with the new syllabuses although there may need to be some adjustment in the way teachers use them.

Current programs will still be useful, but they may require some modifications to allow for changes to specific areas of content and to ensure course outcomes are a principal focus of teaching and learning strategies.

A further subject-specific document is being developed by the Board of Studies for distribution later in the year. This will assist teachers with the implementation of the revised syllabuses.

A list of a number of resources will be placed on the Board's website, <http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au>.

The Board of Studies will also provide assessment support materials, which will be generic across subjects.

Cross-sectoral professional development workshops (Department of Education and Training, Catholic Education Commission and members of the Association of Independent Schools) for Geography Stage 6 will be held. Venues and dates for these workshops have been published on the *New HSC* website — <http://www.newhsc.schools.nsw.edu.au> — and distributed to schools. The materials from the workshops will be available on this website.

CURRICULUM SUPPORT for Teaching in Human Society and It's Environment 7–12 — a publication distributed each term by the Department of Education and Training — will carry an HSC supplement.

Assessment and Reporting Bulletin — published each term as a joint venture of the Department of Education and Training, the Catholic Education Commission and the Association of Independent Schools — will build on principles outlined in Board of Studies' newsletters and assessment support materials.

Professional Teachers Associations and other organisations are providing the following support:

The Geography Teachers' Association of NSW Inc. will be providing the following professional development activities:

13–14 August 1999 Annual Conference.
Theme: *Preparing to teach the Stage 6 Geography Preliminary Course*

10–14 January 2000 AGTA Conference.
Lectures, workshops and fieldwork providing content and teaching background for Stage 6 Geography at Sydney University.

MESSTA Inc is holding a Head Teacher Conference for Geography on 29 October, 1999.

Details: Miriam Wride
Moorefield Girls' High School
Tel: 9587 6095.

Sou'Wester is holding Stage 6 HSIE Curriculum (Geography) Inservice on 27 October, 1999.

Details: Virginia Elliot
Hurlstone Agricultural High School
Tel: 9829 9222.