# Geography 11–12 – Geographical Investigation



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This resource has been developed to assist teachers in NSW Department of Education schools to create learning that is contextualised to their classroom. It can be used as a basis for the teacher’s own program, assessment, or scope and sequence, or be used as an example of how the new curriculum could be implemented. The resource has suggested timeframes that may need to be adjusted by the teacher to meet the needs of their students.

## Content focus

**Students plan and conduct ONE Geographical Investigation to develop their understanding of the nature of geographical inquiry through practical research and the application of geographical concepts, skills and tools.**

**The Geographical Investigation provides opportunities for all students to apply geographical concepts, skills and tools through practical research in:**

* **their local area, or**
* **an area that is accessible for the purpose of primary data collection.**

**Duration:** this sequence of learning is designed to be completed in 20 indicative hours. The hours spent on the Geographical Investigation are in addition to the 12 hours of mandatory fieldwork required in Year 11.

## Outcomes

A student:

* **GE-11-01** examines places, environments and natural and human phenomena, for their characteristics, spatial patterns, interactions and changes over time
* **GE-11-02** explains geographical processes and influences, at a range of scales, that form and transform places and environments
* **GE-11-05** analyses and synthesises relevant geographical information from a variety of sources
* **GE-11-06** identifies geographical methods used in geographical inquiry and their relevance in the contemporary world
* **GE-11-07** applies geographical inquiry skills and tools, including spatial technologies, fieldwork, and ethical practices, to investigate places and environments
* **GE-11-08** applies mathematical ideas and techniques to analyse geographical data
* **GE-11-09** communicates and applies geographical understanding, using geographical knowledge, concepts, terms and tools, in appropriate forms

Related Life Skills outcomes: **GE-LS-01, GE-LS-02, GE-LS-08, GE-LS-09, GE-LS-10, GE-LS-11, GE-LS-12**

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## Learning sequence 1: Identifying an area for geographical inquiry

**Teacher note:** examples included in the syllabus are provided to support delivery of course content. These examples are not mandatory and teachers may choose to use the examples provided or select appropriate alternatives.

The [Geographical Investigation assessment task](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/hsie/planning-programming-and-assessing-hsie-11-12/planning-programming-assessing-geography-11-12) should be distributed to students prior to commencing the learning activities.

### Syllabus content

In undertaking the Geographical Investigation, students:

* Identify an area for geographical inquiry
* Develop geographical questions and formulate a plan, including:
* What is the focus of the research?
* What is the geographic extent of the investigation?
* How should the investigation be sequenced?
* What time should be allocated to the various steps?

#### Learning intentions and success criteria

**Note:** these learning intentions and success criteria are general and should be contextualised to suit your school and students’ needs.

**Learning intentions**

Students:

* identify a range of geographical issues of topics
* develop geographical questions as part of a geographical inquiry plan.

**Success Criteria**

Students can:

* brainstorm a range of contemporary geographical issues impacting their local area
* participate effectively in feedback processes, providing and actioning feedback
* construct a well sequenced plan for geographical inquiry, utilising appropriate geographical tools.

### Identify an area for geographical inquiry

In groups of 3–4, brainstorm a list of geographical issues or topics of interest. Compile a master list of potential topics.

Select an area of study from the master list.

Conduct preliminary research on the chosen topic to better understand the issue.

### Develop geographical questions and formulate a plan

Develop a list of geographical questions related to the selected topic. Consider the following themes:

* location and distribution
* patterns and trends
* processes and interactions
* change over time
* perspectives and values.

Share the questions with a peer or teacher and receive constructive feedback.

Complete Table 1 to plan and brainstorm the Geographical Investigation.

**Table 1 – plan and brainstorm**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| What | Why | Where | How |
| Issues are there in my community?Area of geography do I enjoy?Concepts am I interested in?Interactions are there between people and environment? | Is this change happening?Should I investigate this?Is this relevant to geography?Are people concerned about this? | Can I carry out my study?In my area is there change happening?Are there interactions between people and the environment? | Can I find out more?Can I conduct fieldwork?Can I measure this? |

Develop a geographical inquiry plan to address the geographical questions. The plan should include the following components:

* a clear statement and focus area of the geographical questions
* a list of primary and secondary sources they will use to gather information
* a description of the data collection methods they will employ (for example, surveys, interviews or fieldwork)
* a timeline and steps for completing the investigation.

Complete the geographical inquiry plan for the Geographical Investigation of one topic generated in the previous exercises. Complete and submit Table 2. The table will assist with structuring the plan.

**Table 2 – geographical inquiry plan**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Requirements of a geographical inquiry | Plan of geographical inquiry |
| Area for inquiry | Hypothesis or focus question. |
| Geographical questions | Key or minor questions, for example when, where and what causes traffic congestion in the school vicinity? |
| Ethical considerations | How will you frame questions to make them culturally appropriate?How will you include safe practices?Are there intellectual property rights considerations? |
| Data collection | What primary and secondary data is required to inform a response to the hypothesis or focus question.How long will each method of Geographical Investigation take to complete? |
| Presentation of findings | How will the investigation be presented? For example, report, oral presentation, poster. |
| Recommendations of findings | What do you think you will learn? |
| How will the inquiry be assessed? | Is this an assessment task? |

Present the plan to the class and teacher to receive constructive feedback. Refine and finalise Geographical inquiry plan based on feedback received from classmates and the teacher.

## Learning sequence 2: Ethical practices

**Teacher note:** examples included in the syllabus are provided to support delivery of course content. These examples are not mandatory and teachers may choose to use the examples provided or select appropriate alternatives.

### Syllabus content

In undertaking the Geographical Investigation, students:

* Identify and observe relevant ethical practices when conducting the investigation.

#### Learning intentions and success criteria

**Teacher note:** these learning intentions and success criteria are general and should be contextualised to suit your school and students’ needs.

**Learning intentions**

Students:

* examine ethical practices and how they should be considered as part of the Geographical Investigation
* develop critical thinking skills by discussing and evaluating ethical dilemmas

**Success criteria**

Students can:

* identify appropriate actions to ensure Geographical Investigations respect participants’ privacy, obtain informed consent and avoiding potential harm to the environment
* critically evaluate the reliability, validity, currency and bias of provided sources
* write a well-structured statement, outlining understanding of ethical practices.

### Identify and observe relevant ethical practices

**Teacher note:** identify appropriate ethical practices students will need to be aware of while undertaking a Geographical Investigation. For example, appropriate engagement with Aboriginal Peoples and communities.

Discuss the possible ethical practices that will need to be considered while undertaking a Geographical Investigation. Record a summary of the discussion.

Examine some of the ethical dilemmas in geography, such as respecting participants’ privacy, obtaining informed consent and avoiding potential harm to the environment, using the scenarios provided below.

**Scenario 1 – informed consent and vulnerable populations**

Students are conducting a Geographical Investigation on the impact of industrial pollution on a local community’s health. The community predominantly consists of low-income families and has limited access to education. The students must decide how to obtain informed consent from the community members while ensuring they fully understand the purpose, risks and benefits of participating in the research.

**Scenario 2 – confidentiality and anonymity**

During a Geographical Investigation on land use and its effects on soil quality, students interview local farmers about their farming practices. Some farmers reveal potentially harmful or illegal practices they have been using. The students must decide how to handle this sensitive information while maintaining the confidentiality and anonymity of their research participants.

**Scenario 3 – cultural sensitivity and sacred sites**

Students are investigating the impacts of tourism on the local environment and culture in a region with Indigenous communities. They want to study the effects of tourism on sacred sites and cultural practices. The students must navigate the ethical challenges of respecting local customs, gaining permission to access sacred sites, and ensuring their research does not inadvertently contribute to cultural exploitation.

Share ideas on why ethical practices are crucial in Geographical Investigations.

In groups, review the guidelines and principles and discuss the relevance and implications for geographical research. Create a summary highlighting the main points from the assigned ethical guidelines and principles.

Write a statement outlining your understanding of ethical practices in Geographical Investigations and a personal commitment to upholding these practices in future research.

## Learning sequence 3: Primary data

**Teacher note:** examples included in the syllabus are provided to support delivery of course content. These examples are not mandatory and teachers may choose to use the examples provided or select appropriate alternatives.

### Syllabus content

In undertaking the Geographical Investigation, students:

* Collect, record and process relevant primary data

**Example(s):**

* field measurements
* observations
* surveys
* interviews
* statistics
* photographs.

#### Learning intentions and success criteria

**Teacher note:** these learning intentions and success criteria are general and should be contextualised to suit your school and students’ needs.

**Learning intentions**

Students:

* understand and define primary data and methods for collection and processing of primary data
* develop a plan for collection of primary data as part of the Geographical Investigation.

**Success Criteria**

Students can:

* select appropriate geographical tools required to collect primary data
* discuss and provide examples of quantitative and qualitative data
* identify appropriate sites for data collection to support the Geographical Investigation
* analyse and interpret different types of primary data for validity, reliability and usefulness.

### Collect, record and process relevant primary data

Using statistical language, discuss and provide examples of quantitative and qualitative data to define and distinguish between qualitative and quantitative research.

Select and justify preferred geographical research methods by:

* reviewing the different geographical fieldwork methods that they plan on using in the Geographical Investigation
* identifying and discussing strengths and weaknesses of identified geographical fieldwork research methods
* reflecting on discussion and constructing a 1–2 paragraph summary of the research methods chosen and justification for the choice.

Revisit the geographical inquiry plan and identify appropriate fieldwork methods for the Geographical Investigation. Construct a description for each using the prompts to support this task:

* Where would your fieldwork take place?
* What geographical tools will you need to conduct your fieldwork?
* How will you ensure you are safe working in the field?
* How long do you expect your fieldwork to take?
* How will you record fieldwork findings and data?
* What primary data and information will you require?
* Where can you source reliable primary data for your Geographical Investigation?

## Learning sequence 4: Check-in week

**Teacher note:** examples included in the syllabus are provided to support delivery of course content. These examples are not mandatory and teachers may choose to use the examples provided or select appropriate alternatives.

### Syllabus content

In undertaking the Geographical Investigation, students:

* Collect, record and process relevant primary data

**Example(s):**

* field measurements
* observations
* surveys
* interviews
* statistics
* photographs.
* Organise and process relevant secondary information

**Example(s):**

* published reports
* journal articles
* newspaper editorials
* graphs and statistics
* digital media (such as a documentary).

#### Learning intentions and success criteria

**Teacher note:** these learning intentions and success criteria are general and should be contextualised to suit your school and students’ needs.

**Learning intentions**

Students:

* organise and process primary data and secondary information collected as part of the investigation
* assess the relevance of the data to answering the geographical questions to be answered
* identify areas for further research or development in order to complete the Geographical Investigation
* identify and utilise appropriate secondary information to respond to geographical questions
* assess information for reliability, validity, currency and bias.

**Success Criteria**

Students can:

* assess data and information for validity, reliability and usefulness
* organise and process data to provide evidence-based responses to geographical questions
* participate in feedback and evaluation activities to develop areas for further investigation of improvement in the Geographical Investigation
* communicate geographical understanding, knowledge and concepts
* locate and review a range of secondary information sources to identify information related to the topic of the Geographical Investigation
* provide feedback to other students on the secondary information selected
* organise secondary information into appropriate formats, to present as part of the research findings.

### Reviewing the work so far

**Teacher note:** this week is to provide a mid-point check-in for students to evaluate their progress so far and identify areas for further improvement. Teachers should ensure that each student has made satisfactory progress and provide feedback to guide students’ next steps.

Review the Geographical Investigation project requirements, chosen area for geographical inquiry and the geographical questions that have been developed.

Conduct group discussions to share each student’s research focus, the extent of the investigation and any challenges encountered to date.

Discuss as a class and provide feedback to clarify doubts and suggest alternative approaches if needed.

Review the importance of planning and sequencing the investigation, including allocating time for each step.

Conduct a [peer feedback](https://app.education.nsw.gov.au/digital-learning-selector/LearningActivity/Card/549?clearCache=7149dfba-2d2-52c7-3388-cdc985e1471a) activity to provide constructive feedback on each other's plans.

In groups, identify potential ethical issues related to the research and use a [Question quadrant](https://app.education.nsw.gov.au/digital-learning-selector/LearningActivity/Card/552?clearCache=f73db13e-febc-4437-d576-ad6dd0161f64) to talk about the strategies for addressing them.

Review the methods chosen for primary data collection and discuss any challenges encountered.

Focus on data processing techniques and tools relevant to the research. Work on organising and processing the primary data.

### Organising and processing secondary information

Discuss the importance of secondary information in Geographical Investigations and the various sources available.

Answer the following question: ‘How will you use and recognise sources of secondary information in your Geographical Investigation?’

Locate and review a range of secondary sources, such as online articles, academic journals, government reports and social media posts related to your Geographical Investigation topic.

Analyse the sources based on their reliability, validity, currency and bias.

Use different tools and techniques such as Google Scholar, academic databases and advanced search techniques to find the most relevant and credible sources for the investigation.

Collect and record research findings using the following suggested tools to support the process:

* [Simple graphic organiser](https://app.education.nsw.gov.au/digital-learning-selector/LearningActivity/Card/576#.YuiqAqub_VI.link) – simple graphic organisers help to organise thoughts and ideas in a way that is easy to comprehend. Predict, observe and explain simple graphic organiser to identify and clarify appropriate examples from research findings that support an hypothesis or best answer focus questions.
* [Affinity diagram](https://app.education.nsw.gov.au/digital-learning-selector/LearningActivity/Card/576#.YuiqAqub_VI.link) – categorise key themes in research findings. Organise large numbers of ideas into themes. A useful tool for clarifying chapter headings in a geographical report.
* [Concept mapping](https://app.education.nsw.gov.au/digital-learning-selector/LearningActivity/Card/577#.Yumsn1JJsso.link) – develop a visual representation of relationships between ideas. A useful tool for planning chapters in a geographical report.

Conduct a group discussion on the importance of secondary sources in Geographical Investigations. Share experiences and insights on using secondary sources and identify the challenges faced when undertaking research.

In pairs or small groups, provide constructive feedback on each other's secondary sources.

Plan and organise the investigation findings using Table 3.

**Table 3 – plan and organise student investigation findings**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Headings | What is required |
| Introduction | Outline the background of the investigation.Why is the topic important?Hypothesis or focus question outlined. |
| Methods | Methods of data collection used and justification for choice. |
| Findings | Presentation of data. This should include any relevant maps, graphs, tables or photographs. |
| Analysis | What your results show. This could include relationships, trends and comparisons. |
| Conclusions and recommendations | Do you accept or reject your hypothesis? Identify realistic recommendations you would make based on this. If using a focus question, conclude with answering the question bringing examples from key or minor questions that were investigated. |

Reflect on progress made when identifying and organising secondary sources for the investigation, including identifying the strategies that worked well and the areas that require further improvement.

### Showcase day

Prepare a visual representation of work completed so far on the Geographical Investigation. This can be in the form of a poster, handout or digital slide. The presentation should include:

* geographical inquiry area
* research questions
* investigation plan
* ethical considerations
* primary data collected
* secondary information gathered.

Use a designated area in the classroom or a digital platform to display the work.

In small groups, discuss the work displayed. Share key features that are identified as interesting or insightful and ask questions or raise concerns.

Provide constructive feedback on each other's work.

After the discussions, complete individual reflections on the feedback received and make any necessary adjustments to the Geographical Investigations.

## Learning sequence 5: Present and communicate findings

**Teacher note:** examples included in the syllabus are provided to support delivery of course content. These examples are not mandatory and teachers may choose to use the examples provided or select appropriate alternatives.

### Syllabus content

In undertaking the Geographical Investigation, students:

* Present and communicate findings, including:
* using evidence derived from the geographical inquiry process
* selecting appropriate forms

**Example(s):**

* written
* oral
* graphical
* multimodal
* using geographical terms and concepts
* applying a recognised form of referencing.

#### Learning intentions and success criteria

**Teacher note:** these learning intentions and success criteria are general and should be contextualised to suit your school and students’ needs.

**Learning intentions**

Students:

* present the findings of their Geographical investigation in appropriate forms
* utilise appropriate terminology and concepts to clearly communicate data and information
* apply appropriate referencing techniques to cite sources and resources used as part of the Geographical Investigation.

**Success criteria**

Students can:

* use a range of modes to communicate their research findings
* apply feedback from peers and teachers to improve the Geographical Investigation
* utilise graphs, photographs, maps and other visual representations to present primary data and secondary information
* cite sources and resources using an appropriate referencing method.

### Present and communicate findings

Discuss the current state of the Geographical Investigations.

Conduct a [peer assessment](https://app.education.nsw.gov.au/digital-learning-selector/LearningActivity/Card/549?clearCache=7149dfba-2d2-52c7-3388-cdc985e1471a) using the following questions as the basis for the review:

* Identify how the Geographical Investigation has represented data.
* How effective is the data in illustrating the findings of the geographical fieldwork?
* What are the current strengths of the Geographical Investigation?
* Identify areas for improvement.

Use the peer feedback to critically assess the individual progress and Geographical Investigation, including:

* identifying the strengths
* identifying the weaknesses
* recording recommendations for improvement and associated actions
* incorporating recommendations for improvement into the Geographical Investigation and submit to the teacher for review.

Review the current state of the Geographical Investigations and identify the key findings and trends that have emerged during the research and investigation.

Create a concise summary of the findings, highlighting the most important points and implications.

Use visual aids, such as graphs, tables and maps, to illustrate the findings effectively.

Arrange the classroom for a ‘speed presenting’ session, with 2 rows of chairs facing each other. Work in pairs and sit across from each other.

Spend 3 minutes sharing findings and recommendations with a partner. After 3 minutes, one row should rotate to the next partner. Repeat 3–4 times.

Following the ‘speed presenting’ session, discuss the different approaches to presenting and communicating findings, and the benefits of sharing information with diverse audiences.

## Learning sequence 6: Propose recommendations

**Teacher note:** examples included in the syllabus are provided to support delivery of course content. These examples are not mandatory and teachers may choose to use the examples provided or select appropriate alternatives.

### Syllabus content

#### In undertaking the Geographical Investigation, students:

* Propose recommendations for individual and/or collective action as appropriate
* Critically review the plan, process and findings of the investigation.

#### Learning intentions and success criteria

**Teacher note:** these learning intentions and success criteria are general and should be contextualised to suit your school and students’ needs.

**Learning intentions**

Students:

* identify recommendations arising from the results of the Geographical Investigation
* review the plan and process of the investigation to identify areas for future improvement.

**Success criteria:**

Students can:

* brainstorm a range of actions that may result from the research findings
* refine the Geographical Investigation based on peer feedback and self-reflections
* identify challenges faced, and lessons learnt during the Geographical Investigation process
* identify and reflect on the implications for future investigations.

### Propose recommendations for individual and/or collective action

Brainstorm a list of possible individual and collective actions that can be taken in response to the research findings. Select the top 3–5 recommendations and elaborate on how these actions can address the identified issues.

Create a table to organise the feasibility, impact and potential consequences of each proposed action.

Review the feedback received from peers and identify areas for improvement.

Create a 1–2 minute ‘elevator pitch' to summarise the findings and recommendations.

Practice the pitch with a partner, focusing on clarity, conciseness and persuasiveness.

Refine the pitch based on the suggestions received.

Share the elevator pitches with the class and engage in a brief discussion after each pitch.

### Critically review the plan, process and findings of the investigation

Share the Geographical Investigation with peers for a critical review.

After each review, evaluate the feedback, highlighting areas for improvement and answering any questions.

Review guidelines on proper citation and referencing for the Geographical Investigation. Ensure citations and references are accurate and complete. Double-check work for plagiarism.

Examine data, graphs and evidence tables included in the final documents. Assess the accuracy, clarity and effectiveness of the data presented, identify any areas for improvement.

Review the Geographical Investigation for grammar, punctuation and spelling errors.

Ensure that all components of the Geographical Investigation have been addressed.

Make any last-minute revisions and finalise all parts of the Geographical Investigation ready for submission.

Reflect on the Geographical Investigation process. Use the prompts below to guide the reflection:

* What challenges did you face during your investigation?
* How did you overcome these challenges?
* What have you learned from this experience?
* How could you apply these lessons to future projects or investigations?

Write a short reflective journal entry addressing these prompts.

## Additional information

The information below can be used to support teachers when using this teaching resource for Geography 11-12 (2022).

### Support and alignment

**Resource evaluation and support:** all curriculum resources are prepared through a rigorous process. Resources are periodically reviewed as part of our ongoing evaluation plan to ensure currency, relevance and effectiveness. For additional support or advice contact the HSIE Curriculum team by emailing hsie@det.nsw.edu.au.

**Alignment to system priorities and/or needs:** [School Excellence Policy](https://education.nsw.gov.au/policy-library/policies/pd-2016-0468), [School Success Model.](https://education.nsw.gov.au/public-schools/school-success-model/school-success-model-explained)

**Alignment to the School Excellence Framework:** this resource supports the [School Excellence Framework](https://education.nsw.gov.au/policy-library/policies/pd-2016-0468) elements of curriculum (curriculum provision) and effective classroom practice (lesson planning, explicit teaching).

**Alignment to Australian Professional Teaching Standards:** this resource supports teachers to address [Australian Professional Teaching Standards](https://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/portal/nesa/teacher-accreditation/meeting-requirements/the-standards/proficient-teacher) 3.2.2, 3.3.2.

**Consulted with:** Curriculum and Reform, Inclusive Education, Multicultural Education, Aboriginal Outcomes and Partnerships and subject matter experts

**NSW syllabus:** Geography 11–12 Syllabus (2022)

**Syllabus outcomes:** GE-11-01, GE-11-02, GE-11-05, GE-11-06, GE-11-07, GE-11-08, GE-11-09

**Author:** Curriculum Secondary Learners

**Publisher:** State of NSW, Department of Education

**Resource:** Learning sequence

**Related resources:** further resources to support Geography 11–12 can be found on the [HSIE curriculum page](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/key-learning-areas/hsie) and the [HSC hub](https://www.hschub.nsw.edu.au/).

**Professional learning:** relevant professional learning is available through the [HSIE statewide staffroom](https://teams.microsoft.com/l/team/19%3Ace47173b5fe14e16918eac8ca5e40913%40thread.skype/conversations?groupId=cc91cc45-b966-4333-b01f-31e78225fac4&tenantId=05a0e69a-418a-47c1-9c25-9387261bf991).

**Universal Design for Learning:** Curriculum planning for every student. Support the diverse learning needs of students using inclusive teaching and learning strategies.

**Creation date:** July 2023

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