AS Level Geography
AQA

Changing Places -
Place Study
3 days

- Deliver two days of fieldwork within a dynamic human environment.
- Fieldwork in these locations provides a contrast to the local places study.
- Prepare AS level students for Section B of Paper 2: Geography fieldwork investigation and geographical skills, worth 12.5% of their total marks.
- Cover specification content for AS fieldwork in 3.2 Human geography 3.2.1 Changing places.
- For those going on to A level, this course will contribute two of the four days of fieldwork requirements and provide contextualised learning in inspiring real world environments to develop their geographical understanding for the A level examinations.
DAY | MORNING | AFTERNOON | EVENING |
---|---|---|---|
1 | Arrive Midday | Knowing and Understanding Places | Skills Workshop: Qualitative Data/Information Analysis and Evaluation |
| Students will be greeted by FSC staff, with a welcome talk followed by a brief tour of the Centre and the local area. | In this session learners will explore and compare the role of direct experience with the way others represent place. The way we understand a place is also manipulated by a range of agents and learners will examine the way we ultimately develop our sense of place through the analysis of a range of qualitative and quantitative data that look into these different ways ‘place’ is planned and communicated. | This session is an opportunity for learners to develop and apply qualitative data analysis techniques that will be invaluable in the interpretation of the following days’ investigations. Students will be introduced to various methods of textual and image analysis using coding and concept mapping; geographical analysis skills that will be invaluable in interpreting outcomes of this contemporary, complex topic. |
| Outline of the Course | Allocation of wellies/waterproofs. | |
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| This session will develop both the learners’ practical geographical skills during a range of data collection methods and their understanding of the concept of the character of a place and how this influences the character of the communities within it. Once a sense of character is examined, learners will contextualise this within a range of scales of influence, from the regional to the global. | Learners will follow a structured scientific investigation process to interrogate their data and identify and link aspects that construct the place’s character. This will enable students to contextualise their knowledge and develop their understanding of the complexities of the concept of place character and the importance of viewing place character from a range of perspectives and scales. | |
| | | |
3 | Changing Places: Economic and Demographic Changes | Depart at Midday |
| In the light of either economic or demographic and cultural change, learners will complete a comprehensive study focused on an area in contrast to their previous studies. Having secured an understanding of place character and the dynamic agents of change, learners will apply their theoretical understanding to a case study location, interpreting the change in character and lived experience through a range of innovative qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. | A final farewell from FSC staff as the students depart at midday. | |
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"Neighbourhoods are not static entities: they are dynamic places that constantly change in terms of their composition, definition and relationships" 
Maarten van Ham, Author

We may think ourselves familiar with places and so the notion of place, but there is no substitute for direct, meaningful observation and an eye for detail if we are to understand the tremendous variation within the concept of place and how each member of society experiences, values and engages with a place. Places can be considered a process, with myriad drivers in economics, society, politics and the environment, continuously influencing a place’s character and causing evolution over time and space. Within this, each of us exists; the pressure or inspiration of each process shaping us and our lived experience of place, providing or removing opportunities. In this way, place becomes a feature of fundamental importance to us. This fascinating, contemporary concept, though complex, is explored in stages through direct observation in fieldwork. These allow learners to appreciate the character and dynamics of place, how their meanings change over time and how people’s perceptions and engagement with a place are thus in flux as their lived experience changes.
Learning Opportunities

“All that a city will ever allow you is an angle on it - an oblique, indirect sample of what it contains, or what passes through it; a point of view.”
Peter Conrad, Australian Academic and Author

Can a concept as dynamic and complex as ‘place’ ever be definitively isolated and defined? Places are shaped by interacting forces of economics, society, politics and the physical environment. The diverse range of individuals that live and work in, use and promote a place will also have influence and be influenced by a place. With such vibrancy and intricacy, a considerable range of lived experiences and representations of place arise. What is more, these interpretations of a place will be further manipulated and managed across a range of temporal and spatial scales.

An appreciation of the complex way a sense of place is acquired, cultivated and conveyed will be developed by learners help them know and understand places.

Visiting an area local to the centre or within the centre grounds, learners will immerse themselves in their surroundings, gaining a sense of place through a series of data collection tasks. Initially incorporating qualitative and quantitative methods in the field, learners will explore the idea of place developed through both their own, direct experience and the perceptions of other users of the area. The relative significance of these findings will then be compared to other representations of this place in a range of media sources to examine how the sense of place is built and communicated to bring about a holistic understanding. With this foundation of understanding, learners will discuss how this representation of place can be and has been manipulated and managed to meet a range of stakeholder aims.

Fieldwork, measurements, calculation and analysis may include:

• A centre-based exploration of place across a range of scales and perspectives. Use of simple materials to build places and evaluate these for inclusivity and quality of lived experience compared with implications for engagement.
• Collection of qualitative data via observations, questionnaires, image and textual analysis to assess the concept of place in and around the field centre. Critical evaluation of lived experience and engagement within the centre grounds.
• Non-participant observations, place imagability, questionnaires and textual analysis of a range of media to assess the role of the lived experience in developing a sense of place compared with other representations of place.
• Using GIS to analyse and compare the spatial distributions of different representations of place and how the perception of place has been managed.
• Collating and analysing mental maps based on qualitative data from local people on their perceptions of an area and the way they use and experience the space and the qualities they ascribe to them.

Specification Links

3.2 Human Geography

3.2.1 Changing places

3.2.1.2 Changing places - relationships, connections, meanings and representation

The importance of the meanings and representations attached to places by people with a particular focus on people’s lived experience of place in the past and at present.

• How humans perceive, engage with and form attachments to places and how they present and represent the world to others, including the way in which everyday place meanings are bound up with different identities, perspectives and experiences.
• How external agencies, including government, corporate bodies and community or local groups make attempts to influence or create specific place-meanings and thereby shape the actions and behaviours of individuals, groups, businesses and institutions.
• How places may be represented in a variety of different forms such as advertising copy, tourist agency material, local art exhibitions in diverse media (e.g. film, photography, art, story, song etc.) that often give contrasting images to that presented formally or statistically such as cartography and census data.
• How both past and present processes of development can be seen to influence the social and economic characteristics of places and so be implicit in present meanings.

3.2.1.4 Place studies: contrasting place
Learning Opportunities

Learners will engage in a qualitative data analysis using their personal observations and data collated during the fieldwork sessions. A range of analysis techniques will be introduced and there will be an opportunity for learners to apply these skills to the data and draw their own conclusions as they work through the course. The role of values in the perception of place will be recognised, and the unavoidable biases and dilemmas this can bring forward in this sort of work.

Qualitative data analysis techniques could include:

• Coding (open, axial, selective), categorising and interpreting data by engaging directly with original, primary data or secondary data in a variety of media in order to discover significant underlying patterns and trends.

• Image and textual analysis with consideration for the source of the image/text and the meanings that can be drawn from this data source in context.

• Concept mapping to define and explore the web of relationships between different themes within the data.

• Collating and analysing mental maps based on qualitative data from local people on their perceptions of an area and the way they use the space and different services.
Learning Opportunities

“There is no mysterious essence we can call a ‘place’. Place is change. It is motion killed by the mind, and preserved in the amber of memory.”
J.A. Baker, Author

From the myriad factors that contribute to place, its character is formed and constantly reformed. Drivers of character may persist on longer time scales, such as topography and the built environment; exogenous relationships and links between a place and the wider world are in constant flux, such as flows of goods, people and ideas. Within this, the agency of different groups within a place’s sphere of influence can bring about changes to its character and its communities. All of these processes occur within a context of scale, from the regional to the international, painting a picture of a place’s character from each available perceived and measured angle.

Learners will examine the character of a local place within a range of contexts. Through a series of field-based studies into the endogenous and exogenous factors that contribute to the place’s character, learners will explore the relationships between them and how these change over time and influence the communities that live and work in this place. Incorporating secondary research, learners will then be able to contextualise this character through the lens of local, regional, national, international and global relationships as they each exact another layer of demands and power to shape a place’s character.

Fieldwork, measurements, calculation and analysis may include:

- Use geo-located photographs with notes and interviews to accompany a content analysis of their images to enable comparisons and analysis about how the place is perceived by residents and visitors and how the features characterise the place.
- Using a primary “walkability” tool to examine and record urban design quality and character.
- Collect fieldwork data on a selection of flows and connections influenced by the physical spatial structure of the place, people movements, route quality analysis (e.g. carrying capacity / congestion on pavements for users in wheelchairs or cyclists at different times of day).
- Analysis of local secondary information e.g. flows of economic capital, ideas and knowledge economy or investment schemes which are relevant to a particular place but that create links and relationships across a variety of scales.
- Use 2011 geo-demographic census data to explore spatial variations in key indicators: income, housing tenure, age, health, personal mobility, ethnicity, education and access to services (super output area level).

Specification Links

3.2 Human Geography

3.2.1 Changing places

3.2.1.1 The nature and importance of places

The concept of place and the importance of place in human life and experience.

Insider and outsider perspectives on place.

Categories of place:
- near places and far places
- experienced places and media places.

Factors contributing to the character of places:
- Endogenous: location, topography, physical geography, land use, built environment and infrastructure, demographic and economic characteristics.
- Exogenous: relationships with other places.

3.2.1.2 Changing places - relationships, connections, meanings and representation

In relation to the local place within which students live or study and then at least one further contrasting place and encompassing local, regional, national, international and global scales:

- the ways in which the following factors: relationships and connections, meaning and representation, affect continuity and change in the nature of places and our understanding of place.

and

- the ways in which students’ own lives and those of others are affected by continuity and change in the nature of places and our understanding of place.

3.2.1.4 Place studies: contrasting place
Learning Opportunities

Students will begin to complete their investigation by following the latter parts of the scientific approach to the presentation, interpretation and analysis of their data. Discussion and demonstrations of appropriate techniques will ensure that learners draw well-reasoned, accurate and valid conclusions and are able to evaluate the outcomes of their investigation. There will also be an opportunity for students to supplement their understanding and reinforce conclusions by incorporating secondary information with appropriate analysis and evaluation.
Learning Opportunities

“The is nothing permanent except change” - Heraclitus, Greek philosopher

It is widely said that education today is preparing students for an unknown future, to use technology and think of solutions to problems that don’t exist today. The world is moving fast and, with the inherent multitude of global and local factors that influence place, places change and develop rapidly in time and space. In this session, learners will have the opportunity to engage fully in a dynamic location, identifying the developing character and the lived experience of a place’s community in the light of changing economic or demographic change.

With a founding understanding of the role of agents that develop our sense of place and the factors that form a place’s character, learners will apply their skills and awareness to a specific place study. We will explore the developing character of either a local place or a place that is in distinct contrast to other studies students have completed. Collation and interpretation of a range of qualitative and quantitative data, including secondary research to introduce the concept of temporal change, will allow students to realise the dynamic nature of a place’s character and how this impacts on different individuals’ lived experience of the place. The case study will focus either on an example of changing demographic structure and cultural characteristics or a changing economic character and the impacts on the overall character of a place.

Fieldwork, measurements, calculation and analysis may include:

• Examine spatial variations in housing, environmental quality and crime rates within the defined place.
• Use a range of semi-qualitative surveys including visual assessment.
• Use 2011 geo-demographic census data to explore spatial variations in key indicators: income, housing tenure, age, health, personal mobility, ethnicity, education and access to services (output and super output area level).
• Use GIS as a tool to analyse patterns and relationships in local IMD (index multiple deprivation) data over time.
• Data sources may also include maps and historical maps, photographs, interviews and artistic representations of place.
• Textual analysis of a variety of visual and audio-visual media sources.

Specification Links

3.2 Human Geography

3.2.1 Changing places

3.2.1.4 Place studies

Contrasting place study exploring the developing character of a contrasting and distant place.

Place studies must apply the knowledge acquired through engagement with prescribed specification content and thereby further enhance understanding of the way students’ own lives and those of others are affected by continuity and change in the nature of places. Sources must include qualitative and quantitative data to represent places in the past and present.

Both place studies must focus equally on:
• people’s lived experience of place in the past and present.
and either
• changing demographic and cultural characteristics.
or
• economic change and social inequalities.

Suitable data sources could include:
• statistics, such as census data
• maps
• geo-located data
• geospatial data, including geographic information systems (GIS) applications
• photographs
• text, from varied media
• audio-visual media
• artistic representations
• oral sources, such as interviews, reminiscences, songs, etc..
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