Geography at Oxford

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Why is Oxford special?

The School of Geography and the Environment has been ranked 1st in the 2018 QS World University Rankings for Geography.

- Integrates human and physical geography
- Opportunity to specialise / interdisciplinary focus
- Lectures, practical classes, weekly tutorials and fieldwork
- First class facilities, resources and libraries
- Contact with international experts in the department’s research clusters
- Cutting edge research feeds into undergraduate teaching
Will Oxford suit you?

• Need to have an interest in both physical and human geography (will be asked about both at interview)

• Need to be happy to work independently

• Need to be willing to work hard
Course Structure

Year 1 Preliminary Examination

Four written examinations
Fieldwork report
1,500 word essay

Years 2 & 3 Final Honour School

Six written examinations
Fieldwork report (4,500 words)
3 submitted essays (4,500 words each)
Dissertation (12,000 words)
Teaching and Learning Components

Lectures
- 7 – 8 hours per week for 1st years
- 4 – 5 hours per week for 2nd and 3rd years

Practicals
- 1.5 hours per week for 1st years on geographical techniques
- Bibliographic skills training / geographical techniques practicals for 2nd years

Tutorials
- Generally 1 tutorial per week

Fieldwork
- 1 one-day fieldtrip and 1 four day residential fieldtrip for 1st years
- 1 one-week residential fieldtrip in late Spring for 2nd years
- Independent dissertation fieldwork during the summer of your 2nd year

Independent Learning
- Geographical controversies folder, fieldwork reports, 3 x 4,500 word extended essays, 1 x 12,000 word dissertation.
Course Structure (first year)

Year 1 – First Public Examination (Prelims)

- Earth Systems Processes
- Human Geography
- Geographical Techniques
- Geographical Controversies
Earth System Processes

• Introduction to Earth Systems Processes

• Geomorphology
  • Tectonics, geology and geomorphology, fluvial and dryland environments

• Climatology
  • Atmospheric composition
  • Mechanisms and variability of the climate

• Ecology
  • Energetic and biogeochemical controls
  • The changing geography of life
  • Understanding biodiversity across continents and islands
Human Geography

• Introduction to Human Geography

• Geographies of Space and Place
  • Urban: world cities to ordinary cities
  • Landscape, territory and place

• Geographies of Networks and Mobilities
  • Historical geographies of globalisation
  • Commodity networks migration: theoretical perspectives
  • Everyday mobilities in the city

• Geographies of Power, Identity and Inequality
  • Power, identity and inequality in Oxford
  • Gender, bodies and feminist geographies
Geographical Techniques

• Methods in Physical Geography
  • Geomorphology – rock breakdown, weathering simulation, moisture mapping
  • Climate systems – remote sensing in climate science
  • Ecology – relationship between species, biodiversity in ecological communities

• Methods for Human Geographers
  • Research design
  • Interviews, participant observation and focus groups

• Statistics for Geographers
  • Descriptive and spatial statistics, hypothesis testing, correlations, regression

Accompanied by practical classes and fieldwork in Oxford and a residential fieldtrip. Students submit a fieldwork folder as part of their assessment.
The course focuses on the importance of a critical understanding of the use of evidence and data in geographical argument.

The kinds of questions the course asks:

• What is most important in scientific enquiry: data or theories?
• How are different kinds of evidence used in the resolution of controversies?

Examples of controversies: GM crops; climate change; Gaia ‘theory’; Plate Tectonics, Drone warfare

Students submit a practical folder as part of their assessment and a 1,500 word essay on a geographical controversy.
Course Structure (years 2 and 3)

Geographical Thought – including skills workshops and residential fieldtrip

Earth System Dynamics

Environmental Geography

Space, Place & Society

Option 1
2nd year

Option 2
3rd year

Option 3
3rd year

Dissertation
Human Geography Options

- African Societies
- Geographies of Finance
- Cultural Spaces
- Transport and Mobilities
- Geographies of Nature
- New Approaches in Urban Geography
- Geopolitics in the Margins
- Geography at War

Note: These optional subjects are either currently offered or are being planned for next year. Not all subjects may be offered in any one year.
Physical and Environmental Geography Options

- Biogeography, Biodiversity and Conservation
- Climate Change and Variability
- Complexity
- Desert Landscapes and Dynamics
- Island Life
- The Quaternary Period: Natural and Human Systems

Note: These optional subjects are either currently offered or are being planned for next year. Not all subjects may be offered in any one year.
Dissertation Topics

Dissertations are up to 12,000 words in length

- **A Geography of High Achievement in England: The Role of Selective State Schooling**
  - University of Oxford Candidate Number: 63966
  - Submitted for Graduation in June 2009
  - Word Count: 11,651

- **The effect of the Manchester Metrolink Extension on Improving Social Inclusion in Oldham**
  - Candidate Number: 46862
  - Word Count: 11,651

- **The oral biograpgy of the Blackdown Hills, England: a comparative co-variation of incidence functions**
  - University of Oxford Candidate Number: 63962
  - Submitted for Foundation in June 2007
  - Word Count: 11,651

- **Dividing Climate Change: How do postcolonial political geographies permeate the Indian national press’ portrayal of climate change?**
  - Candidate Number: 63962
  - Word Count: 11,715

- **Invisible Cities**
  - The Production of Space in New York’s Modern and Postmodern Urban Fiction
  - Candidate number: 53829
  - Year of Finals: 2009
  - Word count: 11,406

- **Chemical weathering and carbon dioxide drawn down by an Alpine glacier**
  - University of Oxford Candidate number: 41559
  - Word Count: 11,348

- **The Happy Poet**
  - A study of food price shocks and survival strategies in urban Malawi
  - Candidate Number 204

- **ANUVALDE as Pagan: An Investigation Into Household Coping Strategies in Rural Populations**

- **Basic ignore shore platforms: a comparison of bioerosion and bioprotection in Northern Chile and the Isle of Mull**
  - Candidate Number: 11575
  - Word Count: 11,969

- **Documenting conservation strategies in Australia: The Aboriginal peoples’ and Torres Strait Islands Indigenous Protected Areas**
  - School of Geography and the Environment
  - University of Oxford
  - Candidate Number 32784
What kind of student are we looking for?

- Good academic record – but no fixed criteria about number of GCSE A* or AS grades
- Those with a genuine interest in the subject which goes beyond simply learning what teachers tell you
- Willingness to apply knowledge and skills to new situations and issues
14 Oxford colleges admit Geography students: Brasenose, Christ Church, Hertford, Jesus, Keble, Mansfield, Regent’s Park, St. Anne’s, St. Catherine’s, St. Edmund Hall, St. Peter’s, St. John’s, St. Hilda’s, Worcester.

- A*AA at A – Level
- Geography not an absolute requirement.
- The A* does not need to be in geography

- IB 39 points, usually 7 in Geography

80 – 85 undergraduates admitted each year
Choice of college is not important –

- It makes no difference to a student’s experience of the course
- It makes no difference to chances of being accepted
- All colleges have sports teams, music and drama, and all of the University activities are open to all students
- 15-20% of successful candidates get an offer at a college other than the one to which they applied
Final decisions made on the basis of a variety of evidence:

- Academic record

- Interview which may include:
  - Response to spatial data, images and graphs etc.
  - Scenarios and case studies
What next? Why study Geography?

GIS; Cartography; Climate modelling; Forensic Science; Charity / NGO work

Civil service; Law and financial services; Marketing and advertising

Town Planning; Surveyors; Environmental Management; Heritage; NASA

Graduate Destinations

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Data supplied from Oxford University Careers Service; May 2016

Further Study

Where can I find out more?

Visit us on the web:
www.geog.ox.ac.uk/undergraduate
www.admissions.ox.ac.uk

Get in touch:
School of Geography, Oxford University Centre for the Environment, South Parks Road, Oxford, OX1 3QY

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