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An assessment and progression framework for geography



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This guidance for assessing how pupils are progressing in geography is aligned to the 2014 National Curriculum requirements and is linked to GCSE criteria. The framework is based on a clear vision of what it means to make progress in geography and expresses age-specific national expectations for pupils aged 7, 9, 11, 14 years. The guidance informs planning and the marking of pupil work and supports good assessment practice.

The full guidance with supporting material is available on the GA website at www.geography.org.uk/curriculum2014/assessment

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A clear vision

Long-term planning and assessment depends upon teachers having a very clear notion of 'standards' within their minds, and a clear vision of what they are trying to achieve. There are three aspects of achievement or 'big objectives' of teaching geography.

The three aspects of pupils' achievements in geography:

- Contextual **world knowledge** of locations, places and geographical features.
- **Understanding** of the conditions, processes and interactions that explain features and distributions, patterns and changes over time and space.
- Competence in **geographical enquiry**, the application of skills in observing, collecting, analysing, mapping and communicating geographical information.

What does progress in these three aspects of achievement look like? Here the broad 'dimensions' of progress – what it means to 'get better' at geography – are essential when thinking about both planning for progression and assessment:

- Demonstrating greater fluency with world knowledge by drawing on increasing breadth and depth of content and contexts.
- Extending from the familiar and concrete to the unfamiliar and abstract.
- Making greater sense of the world by organising and connecting information and ideas about people, places, processes and environments.

- Working with more complex information about the world, including the relevance of people's attitudes, values and beliefs.
- Increasing the range and accuracy of investigative skills, and advancing their ability to select and apply these with increasing independence to geographical enquiry.

Teachers should also have a grasp of the details of the National Curriculum, its aims and purpose as well as the content for the key stages. These are set out in the geography Programme of Study.

Finally, teachers need an understanding of progression and assessment and its relationship to planning, teaching and achievement, in order to construct a system that works in their school.

The framework

Benchmark expectations

By combining the three points above, teachers can gain a clear view of what they expect students to achieve. The GA has written age-related benchmark expectations for 7, 9, 11 and 14 years and also linked to GCSE subject criteria. These provide a way to map out progression when planning. They can help promote a shared understanding and a common language about achievement in geography. The GA is establishing this national framework to enable teachers to make end of key stage judgements about pupil attainments.

The benchmark expectations can be used to inform your understanding of progression and expectations in geography when planning and provide guidance for writing mark schemes. Their main use is to underpin long and medium term judgements of pupils' attainment. They can be used or modified to set standards in your school, and shared with

parents/pupils. The benchmarks can be adapted to show expectations for each year group, e.g. 'an expert geographer in year 5 knows...' and personalised by relating them to your curriculum plan, e.g. by adding specific places, themes and skills.

Planning

Teachers can then begin to plan an engaging curriculum that allows pupils to progress by providing opportunities to revisit the elements of the benchmark expectations and build on previous achievements. It is frequently acknowledged that geography benefits from a spiral approach to the curriculum, revisiting places and topics in ways that build depth of knowledge and understanding rather than a simple step-by-step process.

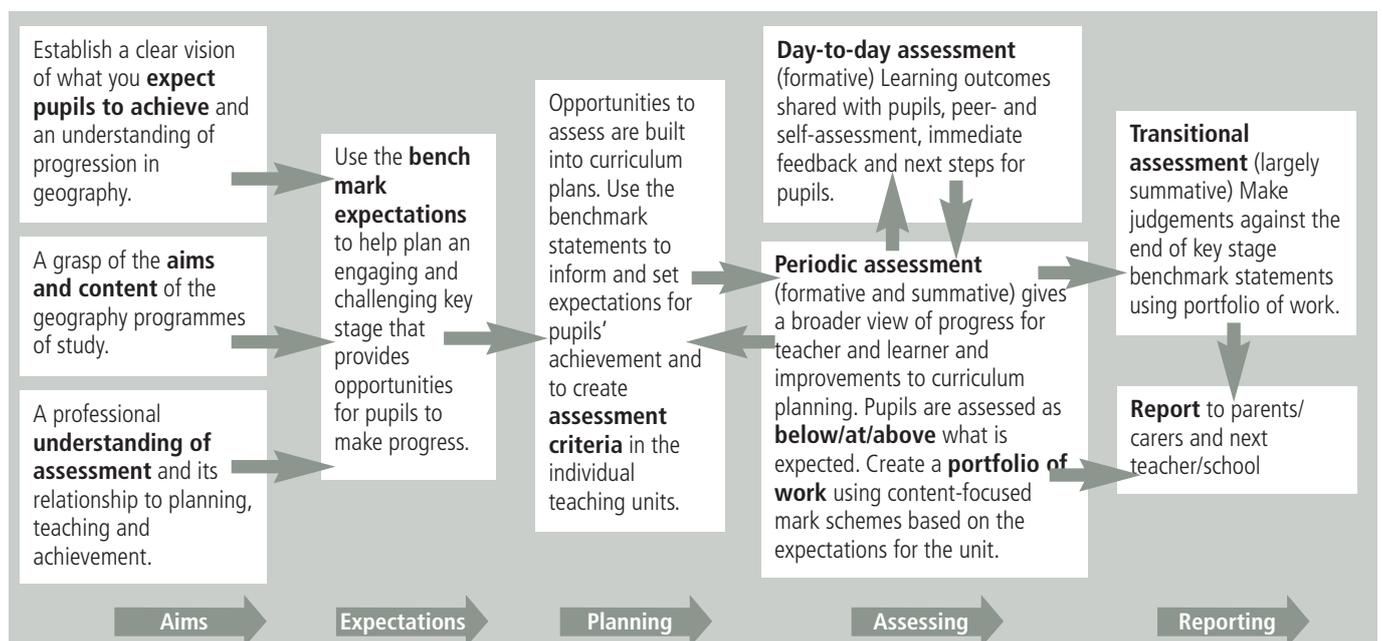
The benchmark statements can be used to inform and set expectations for pupils' achievement and **assessment criteria** in the individual teaching units. These won't use the same general or abstract language, but will **contextualise** the expectations into a mark scheme or assessment criteria that will make sense to pupils, i.e. they will provide pitch. This provides the basis of planning assessment opportunities and shows how benchmark expectations develop in practice.

Using the framework

In order to create a manageable assessment system in your school it is helpful to consider the three familiar levels of assessment thinking; short term, medium term and long term.

Short term (day-to-day)

The benchmark expectations are not for sharing directly with students and are of no use in making day-to-day assessment. However, an understanding of the progression



Using the benchmark expectations in the assessment process.

Unit A: Medium term plans with detailed objectives and criteria

	Aspects of achievement in geography	Your geography curriculum			Reaching these benchmarks
		Unit/topic A	Unit/topic B	Unit/topic C etc	
Geographic cognition	1. Contextual knowledge				Expectations for age 7, 9, 11, 14, GCSE
	2. Understanding				
	3. Geographical enquiry				
		Assessment opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • day-to-day/short term • periodic/medium term 			Long term assessment and reporting

Linking the three aspects of achievement with the benchmark expectations

shown in the expectations is essential underpinning for assessment for learning practices. Progress can be shown on a day-to-day basis, even if assessment information is more informal and ephemeral in nature. Formative strategies such as better questioning (challenging questions, rich questions); feedback (including formative marking, with opportunities for students to respond and improve their work) and effective self- and peer-assessment require teachers and students to understand progress in these terms.

Medium term assessment (periodic)

Pupils should have the chance to demonstrate their achievement through more formal periodic assessment, typically towards the end of a unit of work. Here, assessing using the criteria for the unit can be used formatively to identify broad progress, strengths and weaknesses and to identify curriculum targets, as well as summatively to monitor progress towards the expectations benchmarks.

A 'mixed economy' of assessment opportunities can be built in to test a range of pupils' capabilities and different aspects of achievements in geography. This might include

short tests of specific knowledge, more developed enquiries to assess conceptual understanding and skills, and perhaps occasional synoptic assessment, such as problem solving or decision-making exercises at the end of a year or key stage. These can focus on the extent to which pupils can apply skills, link ideas together and move from the particular to the general, so demonstrating their progress as geographical thinkers. These assessment opportunities will draw upon the benchmark expectations.

Long term assessment (transitional)

The benchmark expectations help set a national standard so that schools can be secure in their judgement for monitoring and reporting purposes.

Recording and communicating the judgement

Teachers will be asked to periodically report on pupils' progress. The NAHT suggests a system of working towards/met/exceeded the expected standards to make judgements about attainment in the long term. This will mean a significant shift from the previous use (and abuse) of levels. If tasks and criteria are planned and written with the benchmark expectations in mind they will become more demanding across the year and key stage. Thus, pupils who continue to meet expectations throughout a year will inevitably show that they are making progress.

Scale/focus	Practice, for example:	Progress and standards
Short term Day-to-day	Assessment for learning classroom practice, e.g. questioning, formative feedback/response, etc.	Evident in teaching and learning, in pupils' ongoing work, response to feedback, etc.
Frequent basic knowledge/skills	Short test, identified piece of homework More in-depth marking	Progress check (confidence vs concern?) can give you a number
Half/Termly conceptual, procedural knowledge	Short research task, problem-solving exercise, etc. Access to work at particular standards, e.g. display Peer/self assessment	Criterion marking and feedback Linked to pitch/age-related expectations
Long term (Year/Key stage) substantial, conceptual development	A major piece of work, e.g. enquiry, decision making exercise, extended writing End of year: perhaps synoptic, drawing learning together	As above, plus an opportunity to develop portfolio of geography work exemplifying and sharing standards and illustrating progress

Monitoring progress at different time scales

The framework

Contextual world knowledge of locations, places and geographical features

- demonstrating greater fluency with world knowledge by drawing on increasing breadth and depth of content and contexts.

Expectations

by age 7

Have simple locational knowledge about individual places and environments, especially in the local area, but also in the UK and wider world.

by age 9

Have begun to develop a framework of world locational knowledge, including knowledge of places in the local area, UK and wider world, and some globally significant physical and human features.

by age 11

Have a more detailed and extensive framework of knowledge of the world, including globally significant physical and human features and places in the news.

by age 14

Have extensive knowledge relating to a wide range of places, environments and features at a variety of appropriate spatial scales, extending from local to global.

by age 16

Have a broader and deeper understanding of locational contexts, including greater awareness of the importance of scale and the concept of global.

Understanding of the conditions, processes and interactions that explain features, distribution patterns, and changes over time and space.

- extending from the familiar and concrete to the unfamiliar and abstract;
- making greater sense of the world by organising and connecting information and ideas about people, places, processes and environments;
- working with more complex information about the world, including the relevance of people's attitudes, values and beliefs.

Expectations

by age 7

Show understanding by describing the places and features they study using simple geographical vocabulary, identifying some similarities and differences and simple patterns in the environment.

by age 9

Demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the wider world by investigating places beyond their immediate surroundings, including human and physical features and patterns, how places change and some links between people and environments. They become more adept at comparing places, and understand some reasons for similarities and differences.

by age 11

Understand in some detail what a number of places are like, how and why they are similar and different, and how and why they are changing. They know about some spatial patterns in physical and human geography, the conditions which influence those patterns, and the processes which lead to change. They show some understanding of the links between places, people and environments.

by age 14

Understand the physical and human conditions and processes which lead to the development of, and change in, a variety of geographical features, systems and places. They can explain various ways in which places are linked and the impact such links have on people and environments. They can make connections between different geographical phenomena they have studied.

by age 16

Gain a deeper understanding of the processes that lead to geographical changes and the multivariate nature of human-physical relationships and interactions, with a stronger focus on forming valid generalisations and abstractions, together with a growing awareness of the importance of theoretical perspectives and conceptual frameworks in geography.

Competence in geographical enquiry, and the application of skills in observing, collecting, analysing, evaluating and communicating geographical information.

- increasing the range and accuracy of pupils' investigative skills, advancing their ability to select and apply these with increasing independence to geographical enquiry.

Expectations

by age 7

Be able to investigate places and environments by asking and answering questions, making observations and using sources such as simple maps, atlases, globes, images and aerial photos.

by age 9

Be able to investigate places and environments by asking and responding to geographical questions, making observations and using sources such as maps, atlases, globes, images and aerial photos. They can express their opinions and recognise that others may think differently.

by age 11

Be able to carry out investigations using a range of geographical questions, skills and sources of information including a variety of maps, graphs and images. They can express and explain their opinions, and recognise why others may have different points of view.

by age 14

Be able, with increasing independence, to choose and use a wide range of data to help investigate, interpret, make judgements and draw conclusions about geographical questions, issues and problems, and express and engage with different points of view about these.

by age 16

Be able to plan and undertake independent enquiry in which skills, knowledge and understanding are applied to investigate geographical questions, and show competence in a range of intellectual and communication skills, including the formulation of arguments, that include elements of synthesis and evaluation of material.