



# A Framework for the School Geography Curriculum

GA initiative; Aiming to ensure high quality

## A Framework for the School Geography Curriculum:

- Outlines key concepts, significant features and distinctive approaches of the discipline, geography (disciplinary foundations)
- Highlights how these can contribute to the education of young people (educational potential)
- Clarifies how this should inform the development of the school curriculum at national level (curriculum power)

The Geographical Association	A Framework for the School Geography Curriculum (to influence curriculum development at national and, potentially, lower levels)
1 National level	National Curriculum Currently undertaken by government departments in England (DfE) and Wales  -often drawing on subject working group expertise
2 Planning and Development Level	Exam Specs; Published Resources, CPD material  Organisations using national framework to plan courses, schemes of work, examination requirements, inset (e.g. awarding bodies, resource providers, subject associations, academy trusts, school subject departments, publishers)
3 Classroom – teacher Level	Schemes of work, lesson plans, resources The school geography department and individual geography teachers

## Re-contextualisation

Teachers are not the first re-contextualisers in any situation where the state has a role in national requirements.

‘Discursive gap’ – if filled by the state as curriculum developer, then control is out of the hands of the subject community.

“.. resist the demands of official re-contextualisers and ..... the assumptions of global educational reform” (Hordern 2021)

The GA’s Framework - stay in control - highlight those features of the discipline essential for curriculum purposes and confirm the relationship between school and academic subject **what must be there if it is geography.**

# A Framework for the School Geography Curriculum

## Aims

Curricula based on this framework should provide opportunities for.....

## Disciplinary Knowledge\*

(Features of the discipline significant for school geography)

### *Geographical Concepts*

What geographers know-  
understanding like a geographer

### *Geographical Practice*

How geographers find out – working like a  
geographer.

### *Geographical Application*

How geographers apply their  
knowledge to the world

## Substantive Knowledge\*

The full range of contextual and specific knowledge of the world around us (often called world knowledge)  
that lies behind and supports all disciplinary knowledge

## Disciplinary Knowledge

Geographical Key Concepts	Geographical Practice	Geographical Application
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>What geographers know-understanding like a geographer</b></li> <li>• <b>how concepts and conceptual frameworks help us make sense of the world and generate new ideas.</b></li> <li>• <b>Place, Space, Earth Systems, Environment</b>  <b>Time, Scale, Diversity, Interconnection, Representation</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How geographers find out working like a geographer</li> <li>• Includes critical thinking about how we know what we know, as well as the more practical skills, methods and approaches of geographical enquiry</li> <li>• Qualitative and Quantitative enquiry in classroom and field</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How geographers apply their knowledge to the world</li> <li>• Pupils in school learn how geographers have applied their knowledge and skills to real world challenges, as well as how to apply their growing geographical understanding to their own lives</li> <li>• learning about application and learning to apply for themselves (issues eg climate change, inequalities, racism, sustainability)</li> </ul>



## Disciplinary and Substantive work together

- Knowledge of the world (substantive) must be shaped by disciplinary knowledge (structure/progression)
- Knowledge about how geographers understand the world (disciplinary) must be developed in the context of real world knowledge (grounded/relevance)

Both are essential – can't make a curriculum out of one or the other. (recent examples)

## Using the Framework – at national level

<b>Curriculum Development – unlocking the power of geography</b>	
<b>Outlining broad aims/purposes – disciplinary and educational</b>	<b>What do you want to do?</b>
<b>Clarifying disciplinary framework of geography</b>	<b>What can the subject contribute?</b>
<b>Recognising distinction between disciplinary and substantive and how they work together – progression</b>	<b>How does the subject work?</b>
<b>Selecting minimum content to meet educational aims/purposes and disciplinary logic</b>	<b>How to go about selecting a minimum national content?</b> (leave room for others to select more)
<b>Providing guidance for others incl. teachers to make the curriculum</b>	<b>How to clarify the role of sub-national bodies and teachers?</b>



# Concerned with doing and decision-making

The curriculum field is “a practical discipline centrally concerned with doing and decision-making for the ultimate purpose of advancing practice” (Deng 2018)

This curriculum framework is not an academic treatise, a cpd resource, a guide for teachers - though may impact on all these perspectives

- it is a practical document concerned with doing and decision-making- in first instance at national level but has applications at sub-national and school level

# Engaging policy-makers

- Scotland – Muir and Heywood reviews of curriculum; GA input to RSGS initiative to examine ‘the future role of geography’
- Wales – Eleanor working with a curriculum expert group (ongoing)
- England – positive response from DfE and opposition spokesperson; engagement with all four major awarding organisations, Ofsted and Ofqual
- Contact group with Royal Society of Biology (‘Evolving’), Royal Society of Chemistry (‘Elements’) and Institute of Physics (‘Guidelines’)

# Exploring the framework as a resource

- Over 1300 downloads of the [online version](#) (password cfw25T5783)
  - Events in London and Sheffield for curriculum designers
  - GTE and GA Annual Conference (discussion and workshop)
- Reflections on the use of disciplinary knowledge within a MAT-wide geography curriculum
  - Enhancing curriculum coherence within primary schools
  - Research project equipping secondary PGCE students to make use of the framework in their placement schools and in discussions with their mentors
  - Supporting the work of geography improvement advisors and MAT consultants.

## Biomes, climate zones, vegetation belts climate zones and Ecosystems

### DISCIPLINARY KNOWLEDGE

#### Geographical key concepts – ‘knowing that’

	Time	Scale	Diversity	Interconnection	Interpretation
<b>Place</b>	How stable are biomes in the face of climate change?	What are some examples of biomes at different scales?	Are all examples of a particular biome the same?	How are biomes in different locations linked?	Where are biomes places of conflict?
<b>Space</b>	Which biomes are likely to be most resilient and why?	How are biomes distributed at different scales?	What similarities and differences are there between different biomes?	What patterns can be observed within and across biomes?	How are biomes affected by where they are located?
<b>Earth systems</b>	Has the UK always been home to temperate deciduous woodland?	Are larger and smaller areas of the same biome driven by the same physical processes?	How diverse are the Earth’s biomes?	What physical processes connect different biomes?	How does technology help our understanding of biomes?
<b>Environment</b>	What is the pace of change in different biomes?	Which biomes are currently expanding/contracting: why?	To what extent are biomes modified by human activity?	To what extent do humans rely on biomes?	How might biomes be sustainably developed?

#### Geographical practice – ‘knowing how’

- How might we investigate:
  - The location of biomes
  - The diversity of biomes
  - Ecosystem processes
- How might geographical enquiry and fieldwork support investigation of biomes?
- How can different stories, perspectives, and opinions be collected about biomes?
- How can varied data sets be analysed and shared?

#### Geographical application – ‘knowing how to apply’

- How does knowledge about biomes connect with our own everyday and lived experience?
- How can authentic and purposeful links be between biomes and other aspects of physical and human geography?

#### Where to start...

- [KS2- In the Know: Climate, Biomes and Vegetation Belts](#)
- [KS3- Know How: Climate, Soils, Biomes & Vegetation Belts](#)
- [KS4- Life on the Edge? A study of extreme environments](#)
- [KS5 – Top Spec: water and carbon cycles](#)

### SUBSTANTIVE KNOWLEDGE



#### Misconceptions

Thinking that global warming will give UK residents a warmer climate, or that it will only affect polar bears and other animals that live on the ice, and not the rest of the world.

All areas within a designated biome, ecosystem or vegetation zone/belt will adhere to that designation. For example, little of the UK is currently covered by temperature rainforest.

#### Watch out for

There is no agreement on what constitute the world’s ‘major’ biomes so select resources carefully