



GEOGRAPHY

ATAR course

**Year 12 syllabus – What’s changing: Rationale and Aims
For teaching in 2027**

Acknowledgement of Country

Kaya. The School Curriculum and Standards Authority (the Authority) acknowledges that our offices are on Whadjuk Noongar boodjar and that we deliver our services on the country of many traditional custodians and language groups throughout Western Australia. The Authority acknowledges the traditional custodians throughout Western Australia and their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We offer our respect to Elders past and present.

Background

As part of the Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE) Refreshment for reviewing the nomenclature of courses, the Authority has updated the rationale and aims of each syllabus.

The revised rationale and aims are aligned with the mapping of the general capabilities to provide clear connections between the rationale, aims and syllabus content. The rationale outlines what the subject is about and why it is important. It describes what students can expect to study in the course, along with the knowledge, skills and understandings they will develop throughout the course. It also explains how these can be applied in everyday life and references potential future pathways, outlining how students might connect what they learn in the course to further education, training and employment opportunities.

Important information

WACE Refreshment: Reviewing the nomenclature of courses

This document contains information that will be included in the syllabus effective from 1 January 2027.

Users of the syllabus are responsible for checking its currency.

Syllabuses are formally reviewed by the Authority on a cyclical basis, typically every five years.

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Rationale

The Geography ATAR course provides a systematic, integrative way of exploring, analysing and applying the concepts of place, space, environment, interconnection, sustainability, scale and change. Geography enables students to appreciate the complexity of our world and the diversity of its environments, economies and cultures, and to use this knowledge to promote a more sustainable way of life and an awareness of social and spatial inequalities.

Students explore the challenges and opportunities facing Australia and the world. They study how communities respond to environmental and urban challenges, focusing on sustainability and liveability. Students examine the distribution of physical and human phenomena across space and time to understand the interconnections between people, places and environments. They identify, assess and justify sustainable approaches to the future of places by thinking both holistically and spatially. They evaluate the impacts of land cover change, with particular emphasis on climate change or biodiversity loss, and the causes and consequences of urbanisation.

Students develop a range of skills that allow them to understand the physical world, analyse the past, examine the present and explore sustainable strategies for the future management of places. They learn to represent and interpret spatial and visual data through cartographic, diagrammatic, graphical, photographic and multimodal formats. They develop skills in collecting and analysing data using fieldwork, surveys and spatial technologies, and learn to interpret maps, graphs and images. Students learn to identify, evaluate and justify sustainable solutions while strengthening their skills in communication, research, analysis, numeracy, problem-solving and decision-making.

The course equips students with valuable knowledge and skills which can be applied in everyday life and the workplace. They develop skills in geospatial technologies, digital tools and data analysis while enhancing their teamwork and problem-solving skills, critical thinking and creativity. Through fieldwork, students engage in real-world learning, gathering information via mapping, remote sensing, case studies and direct observations. They learn about diverse perspectives, including those of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

Skills in spatial visualisation, representation and analysis are highly sought after and as the geospatial industry continues to evolve, students with spatial expertise are in high demand, opening up diverse career opportunities. The course prepares students for careers in many fields, including architecture, environmental management, urban and town planning, Geographic Information Systems (GIS), policy, law, economics, demography, cartography, statistical analysis and teaching.

Aims

The Geography ATAR course aims to develop students’:

- understanding of the complexity of the world’s environments, economies and cultures, and appreciation of the interconnected relationships between people, places and environments
- inquiry and research skills through fieldwork, data collection and geospatial technologies, fostering critical thinking and problem-solving skills
- ability to promote sustainability and responsible citizenship by evaluating and justifying sustainable solutions to geographical challenges, and recognising social and spatial inequalities and the role of active, informed citizens
- application of geographic knowledge to real-world issues by analysing spatial data, assessing the impacts of globalisation, natural hazards and environmental changes, and applying geographic concepts to contemporary challenges
- understanding and application of the concepts of place, space, environment, interconnection, sustainability, scale and change through inquiries into geographical phenomena and issues
- critical thinking and communication skills by applying geographical inquiry methods to analyse and interpret data, evaluate different perspectives and communicate findings effectively
- ability to propose and justify solutions to geographic challenges by identifying, assessing and advocating for innovative responses to global and local issues, considering environmental, social and economic factors
- preparation for future pathways by gaining skills applicable to careers and further studies in environmental management, urban planning, Geographic Information Systems (GIS), policy development, economics and teaching.