Geography

at Sheffield

Undergraduate Study
Contents

Geography at Sheffield 4 - 5
110 Years and counting - History of the Department 6 - 7
Our Expertise 8 - 9
Fieldwork 10 - 11
Enhance your Degree 12 - 15
Graduate Employment and Careers 14 - 15
Life in Sheffield 17
Next steps 18
Our research and teaching works across the boundaries of physical sciences, social sciences and humanities to understand and to tackle complex global challenges.

Our Geography degree programmes engage with the most important issues of our time such as climate change, international development, global inequalities and environmental sustainability. All our undergraduate geography courses are accredited by the Royal Geographical Society.

The Department of Geography is a world-leader in teaching and research and has had tremendous impact on the discipline of Geography since it was founded more than 100 years ago. Today, Sheffield is ranked within the top 15 UK departments (REF 2014) and the top 40 in the world (QS 2016). The impact of our research is recognised as world-leading or internationally excellent.

The department is housed in an award-winning, purpose-built building on the edge of Weston Park, lying close to the University Library, the Students’ Union and central lecture theatres. Our modern facilities include analytical, sediment and microscopy laboratories, teaching laboratories and IT suites, as well as field centres in the Peak District National Park and Tanzania.

The department has three guiding ambitions for teaching and research:

— To provide quality teaching at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, informed and invigorated by the research and scholarship of academic staff.
— To provide access to the widest possible range of sources of knowledge, and the resources to enable the pursuit of learning and scholarship.
— To provide an environment in which all members of the department can enhance their skills and apply them to a wide range of theoretical and practical problems in the service of the wider community.
Leading the Way in Geography

Over the years Sheffield Geographers have made fundamental contributions to the discipline of Geography both at a National and International level.

1909 Rudmose-Brown takes part in Bruce’s Scottish Arctic Expedition
1926 Rudmose-Brown is president of the Geography Section of the British Association
1932 Alice Garnett becomes founder-member of the Institute of British Geographers (IBG)
1937 Rudmose-Brown takes over as President of IBG
1947 Alice Garnett becomes Hon Secretary of the Geographical Association (GA)
1960 Ron Saviggar & David Linton founders of British Geomorphological research Group
1968 Alice Garnett becomes President of the Geographical Association
1971 David Grigg receives Gill Memorial Award from the Royal Geographical Society (RGS)
1972 John van Genderen becomes founder member of the Remote Sensing Group
1977 Stan Gregory takes on Presidency of IBG
1981 Stan Gregory is founding editor of the International Journal of Climatology
1984 Stan Gregory receives the Murchison award from the RGS
1990 Ron Johnston receives the Edward Heath award from the RGS
1997 Rob Ferguson is president of British Geomorphological research Group (BGRG)
2000 Gill Valentine receives the Gill Memorial award from the RGS
2002 David Thomas becomes president of BGRG
2006 Paul White receives the Edward Heath award from the RGS
2007 Peter Jackson receives the Victoria Medal from the RGS
2008 Andrew McGregor is awarded Rolex Enterprise Award
2012 Ben Hennig receives the German Study Award (Deutscher Studienpreis)
2013 Tariq Jazeel & Danny Dorling win Excellence in Leading Geography award from the GA
2015 Gill Valentine receives the Murchison award from the RGS
2016 Richard Phillips is part of Curriculum Advisory Board revising Geography A-Level
2017 Ann Rowan awarded Geographical Society President’s Medal
2017 Peter Jackson is elected as fellow of British Academy
2018 Joe Cook is awarded Rolex Enterprise Award

110 Years and counting - History of the Department

The University of Sheffield received its Royal Charter in 1910 but only in 1907 did Sir George Goldie, then Chair of the Royal Geographical Society, suggest to the University that studying Geography would help understand the world and the market-place therein. William Edgar Allen, a founder member of the University Council donated £350 per year for five years so that Geography could be introduced. Rudmose Brown, a polar explorer, Scottish Geographical Society medal winner and assistant to the Professor of Botany at University College Dundee was appointed. He set up the first courses in Geography in 1908 to which 5 students enrolled. By 1910 Rudmose Brown, among others, lobbied for the creation of a Geology department arguing “Geology is an integral part of the geographical course for a degree, and at present no teaching in it is offered.” Dr Sorby (1826-1908), the founder of the Sheffield Geography Department.

In the early years the Geography department was located in Western Bank and was small with one lecturer. Even by 1914 it had only 15 (predominantly locally based) students. The First World War saw reduced student numbers apart from ‘a special course’ related to the war effort for which 41 students enrolled; probably studying map reading and surveying.

Post war student numbers soared reaching 50 in 1919. In 1923, Sheffield University was contracted to train staff of the new London and North Eastern Railway company and Rudmose Brown taught ‘Railway Geography’ to 153 students. After 16 years with only one staff member, 1924 saw the arrival of Alice Garnett as an Assistant Lecturer and the establishment of a BSc degree in Geography. A BA degree in Geography followed in 1929. The first MSc to be awarded in Geography was in 1926 in 1930 the first Geography PhD was awarded. World War II saw Geography focussing on economic and characteristics of places which troops would encounter.

Sheffield Geography was transformed at the end of the war with the retirement of Rudmose Brown and the appointment of a geomorphologist Professor David Linton as Head of Department and student numbers had increased to 108. Through the 1960’s the department continued to grow but the primary role of academic staff remained as it always had been from the outset as education. Geographical research was undertaken but followed staffs’ own intellectual curiosity. The department’s growth continues without losing sight of academic excellence which is shown in numerous prices and awards won by the department’s members of staff.
Our Expertise

"The course at Sheffield is great for those who are still unsure if they want to specialise in human or physical geography. In my first year, there were a few core geography modules including skills-based modules such as GIS and Remote Sensing and Statistics. However, I also had plenty of scope to study modules in other disciplines, I opted for modules in Urban Studies and Planning and in the Modern Languages Teaching Centre, where I tried my hand at German.

After my first year, I realised that I wanted to focus solely on physical geography and specifically contemporary glaciology and palaeoenvironments. This led me to choose Glacial Environments and Environmental Change and these helped to form the topic of my final year dissertation: Glacial overdeepenings: their influence on sediment transport and evacuation at Findelen Glacier, Zermatt, Switzerland.

In addition, the course gives opportunities for great international fieldwork. All BSc Geography students go to Spain in the second year. In my final year I had the opportunity to attend an amazing field class in New Zealand."

Geography is a key discipline for the 21st century. All of our students are trained in the intellectual debates, research methods and analytical skills that geographers use to explore the world. Our degrees offer specialisms that reflect our research expertise and the international agenda. Your course is also highly flexible: you tailor it to your interests. All students are able to choose modules from across our human and physical geography specialisms. But you can also study modules from other disciplines such as biology and ecology, sociology, urban studies or modern languages, regardless of the degree you undertake.

Social and Cultural Geographies explore the relations between identity, difference and space that shape our world and ourselves. Our social practices matter for tackling major challenges like migration, urban life, energy demands and food security.

New Development Geographies address key issues and challenges in international development and the geographies of development, from sustainable development, natural resource politics to urban transformations and social justice in the Global South.

Political Geographies explore how relationships between societies and individuals are affected by social, political, economic and environmental processes that are profoundly uneven and highly geographical.

Environment and Society brings together the expertise of human and physical geographers to address the social and environmental challenges posed by issues such as population growth, climate change, food security and sustainable energy.

Cryosphere and Climate uses a range of approaches from field and laboratory investigations, through Earth Observation, GIS analysis and environmental modelling to explore how ice sheets and icebergs impact on the ocean, its thermohaline circulation, and hence weather and climate, in the past, present and future.

Landscape Dynamics use present-day observations of processes shaping the earth’s surface, as well as evidence from the past, to understand the impact of climatic changes on different environments and the activities of humans who inhabit them.

Environmental Quality examines ecosystem processes at a variety of spatial scales, from the molecular and landscape scale, to the global system. A range of state-of-the-art monitoring techniques, from remote sensing to field sampling, are used as tools to assist environmental management and decision making.

For further details about our courses, modules and course structure please see the inserts in the back of this booklet or visit www.sheffield.ac.uk/geography/undergraduate
Fieldwork

The hands-on, practical experience of fieldwork is a key part of Geography. Working in the field allows you to put into practice the skills and ideas you acquire in the classroom.

Through fieldwork and field classes you will continue to advance and deepen your understanding of the relation between theories, real problems and practical solutions. Fieldwork is embedded throughout the programmes as part of modules - from day trips in Sheffield and the Peak District, to site visits and trips further afield in the UK.

A fully funded international field class is included in Year 2. Departmental scholarships for optional Year 3 field classes are available. Many students conduct fieldwork as part of their research projects and the departmental scholarships are also available to support ambitious independent fieldwork. Recent scholarships have supported research into music and identity in Algeria, the migration crisis in Greece and glaciology in the French Alps.

“I was aware of the refugee crisis, however it was only until the field class I realised how detached I really was from the issues. It’s rare that a field class can completely open your mind and change your perspective but the trip to Lesvos has done exactly that for me. It will definitely be an experience I will take with me wherever I go.”

Rob, BA Geography

Case study: Uganda

This field class is based on development challenges and opportunities in Uganda.

Based in the town of Jinja, on the shore of Lake Victoria and home to the ‘source of the Nile’, the students spent time working with local guides in the townships of Walukuba and Masese, as well as visiting water projects in surrounding districts, and conducting an urban transect of the urban centre.

Uganda is an excellent field site for investigating the learning objectives of the module.

The experience of the field class, from meeting with local political leaders to interviewing community members, brought to life many of the issues studied in the lecture theatre. Students gained first-hand experience of the complexities of conducting research in the development sector, including negotiating local political systems through to the practical dynamics of working across language and cultural differences via translators.

Not only this, students gained direct experience of the complexities and contestations associated with concepts of ‘development’ and ‘democracy’ through carrying out detailed studies of issues such as housing provision and security, access to water and sanitation services, and the multiple ways in which households seek to ensure security of livelihoods and income.

Students returned from the field class not only with a deeper understanding of key concepts and theories, but equipped with a range of transferable skills that will benefit not only the rest of their studies but their employment after their degree.

“ The fieldclass to Spain was a definite highlight for me, The chance to go out and put what I’ve learnt into practice was different from having lectures, and the hands-on experience was invaluable.”

Benjamin, BSc Geography
Enhance your degree

There are many ways to enhance your undergraduate study and to get more from your time as a student at Sheffield. Most students are able to extend their degree over four years by spending a year in industry or studying abroad. All students are eligible for a range of work placements, research apprenticeships and volunteering opportunities, both within the university and across the world.

Degree with Year Abroad

This course includes an additional year studying abroad at one of our partner universities around the world. The 3 years in Sheffield follow the same structure as all other students, ensuring you do not miss out on fieldtrips and core modules. But you will return to Sheffield in your final year with enhanced study and life skills, and with a truly international experience.

For more information about the Degree with Year Abroad and other opportunities to gain international experience, visit: www.sheffield.ac.uk/studyabroad

Susan C, BA Geography with Year Abroad, University of Hong Kong

“Spending time abroad provides you with amazing opportunities. It will challenge you in ways that you can’t predict, but it will build you too. There are lots of uncertainties that come with going abroad, however university should be a period in which you are challenged and tested, and you will finish your period abroad with a clearer understanding of what you want from the future.”

Degree with Employment Experience – DEE

A placement year is an excellent opportunity to spend a year in employment as a recognised part of your degree programme. Your placement year can be based with an organisation in the UK or overseas. It allows you to:

- Gain insight into a particular industry
- Take on real responsibility and increase your confidence
- Apply knowledge that you have gained during your degree
- Gain experience of a specific role, company or industry

A year in employment will also enable you to further develop your transferable skills, become more commercially aware and may even secure your entry onto the graduate career ladder.

For more information about the Degree with Employment Experience and other placement opportunities, visit: www.sheffield.ac.uk/placements

SIDshare is a student run social enterprise and NGO. It offers students with an interest in international development the chance to become involved in the sector through formal volunteering roles and projects with our international development partners.

“Being part of the team working on the new field centre in Tanzania has been an exciting chance to see a project from initial stages to completion. The chance to go to Tanzania with SIDshare in the summer gave me unique insight into NGO operations abroad.”

Joanna, BA Geography and SIDshare Marketing Officer

“It’s been really reassuring to know that when I graduate I will be able to fit into a business culture and be confident and able to work with a variety of individuals. The advice I have been given from professionals has been second to none. I have really enjoyed the responsibility that comes with a placement and being able to have an impact on the business. Seeing material I have produced and reports I have created being used in customer meetings has been really rewarding.”

Paige O’Hara, Marketing intern, schülke UK

Jumalia, BA Geography and SIDshare Marketing Officer
Graduate Employment and Careers

Our programmes will develop your ability to analyse global problems from a range of perspectives and at different scales. Our students gain benchmark geographical skills as well as transferable skills that are highly valued by employers. Your Geography degree can take you into a wide range of careers throughout the world.

Graduating from a world-leading geography department, you will stand out in a competitive job market with an internationally recognised and highly prestigious degree. You will also be able to take advantage of a host of opportunities to enhance your employability during your time in the Department of Geography, and be able to articulate your skills to potential employers.

We work closely with the Careers Service to provide a series of training, events and placement opportunities for Geography students. The Careers Service offers high quality guidance in collaboration with the Department of Geography’s dedicated Employability Officer. In addition to a full programme of employability activities organised by the Students Union, the Careers Service, and your department, your personal tutor will encourage and support you to look for ways in which you can make a truly unique contribution to your employability throughout your time with us. For more information: www.sheffield.ac.uk/geography/undergraduate/careers

Placements, Internships and Mentoring

Geographical Association internship
We collaborate with the Geographical Association (the UK’s subject association for geography educators) and each year there is a Summer Internship available to our undergraduates.

Ernst & Young Scholars of the Future
Two scholarships are available to Year 1 students. The scholarships include a place on the Ernst and Young Leadership Programme and a summer internship.

Alumni e-mentoring scheme
We have strong ties with our graduates. This mentoring scheme gives you the chance to be mentored by a graduate who is already working in the career you want.

Case study: Cathy Fenning, Retail Analyst at FSP

What does your current job involve?
I am a retail analyst, so I have to research shopping behaviours all day… I think there are probably worse jobs! We get to work with some pretty big shopping centres, towns, developments and retailers to identify what the best route is for them and how to maximise their opportunities.

What do you enjoy about your job?
It varies so much from project to project! It’s so interesting to understand why some retailers choose to locate in one place but not another, and why retailers may not do as well as they thought in a location. There is so much more behind your shopping experiences than you may realise. We do a lot of bespoke work, so if the client wants something particularly unusual, it means that we may have to look at things in a different way, which can produce some really useful (and interesting) information.

How do you use geography skills in your work?
Pretty much everything relies on geography (in some way or another!) and my job is a particularly good example of that – I use my geography skills all the time. Our clients need to know where they are attracting their shoppers from, who they are, what they like. This can all vary hugely by location, so my whole career is reliant on geography and on things I learnt at university.

What advice would you give to students to enhance their employability?
Personally, I would really recommend diversifying your skills – whilst your studies are very important, it is great to be able to say that you were involved in a society, so that employers can see that you are well-balanced with good time management skills.

For more information about how you can develop your employability during your degree, visit: www.sheffield.ac.uk/careers/skills

“The hands-on nature of the course gave me experience of using software like ArcGIS, IMAGINE and SPSS that has made me incredibly employable.”

Roberta, BSc Geography, GIS Officer, Lichfield District Council

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Life in Sheffield

The University is a member of the Russell Group of leading UK research universities. Our excellent teaching and research, as part of a genuinely global community, is consistently confirmed by international independent assessments.

The Best for Student Life

Choose the University of Sheffield and you are choosing one of Britain’s finest universities. As a place to live and study, Sheffield is impossible to beat. Our students have voted us top for social life for three years running. (Rated No.1 for student experience in the Russell Group).

There’s all the buzz of city life and the Peak District’s beautiful scenery on your doorstep. In Sheffield you get the best of both worlds.

GeogSoc.

GeogSoc is the Department of Geography’s student led society. With over 550 members it’s one of the biggest societies at the University.

Socials and activities run throughout the year, giving students a chance to relax and enjoy themselves. An annual tour is organised by the committee for 100 students to go abroad, visiting places such as Budapest, Prague and Lisbon.

GeogSoc runs many academic and career events, tailored by the student committee to fit what they think is best for the student body. The committee is known for inviting guest speakers and careers advisers in to help guide students through their university lives and beyond.

“I chose Sheffield because it instantly felt like home.”

Georgie, BSc Geography

Number One Students’ Union for the past 10 years

The Times Higher Education Student Experience Survey.
Next Steps

Open Days
If you are interested in our courses you can visit us for a Summer Open Day before you apply. They are a great opportunity to learn more about our courses, to meet our academics and to hear from our students.

We also invite all applicants who are made an offer to attend a Geography Open Day. You will spend time with staff and students in the Department of Geography, taking part in research lectures, laboratory practicals and seminars. You will also have the chance to visit the award-winning student accommodation.

www.sheffield.ac.uk/opendays

Fees and Scholarships
The University provides a range of financial bursaries and fee waivers. In addition, we provide merit scholarships that support students from the Sheffield area and provide support for attendance at international summer schools.

www.sheffield.ac.uk/undergraduate/finance/help

Accommodation
The University guarantees a place in our award-winning accommodation for all first year students.

www.sheffield.ac.uk/accommodation

Contact Us
Our dedicated staff will answer any questions you may have. Call or email us on:

T: +44 (0)114 222 7900
E: geography-admissions@sheffield.ac.uk

The content of our courses is reviewed annually to make sure it is up-to-date and relevant. This is in response to discoveries through our world-leading research; funding changes; professional accreditation requirements; student or employer feedback; outcomes of reviews; and variations in staff or student numbers.

While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information in this publication, for the reasons detailed above, changes may need to be made to modules, course, entry requirements and fees between the date of this publication and the start of your course.

This publication is correct at the time of print, but please see our website for the most up-to-date information. If there is any inconsistency between this publication and our website, the information on our website should be taken as correct.