St Edmund Campion Catholic School.

Geography Department.

A Level Geography.

Bridging work and Assessment.

Moving from GCSE to A Level requires not only a greater understanding of the geographical world, but also a change in how you think about your studies in general. At GCSE your teacher will have given you everything that you needed. You will have covered the course in depth within your lessons and all that you will have been asked to do at home is to revise in the run up to your exams.

This is not the case now that you have chosen A Level Geography!

At A Level you are expected to be far more independent in your learning. You will still have lessons but unlike GCSE, these will only cover the bare bones of the course. The purpose of lessons at A Level is to provide a skeleton of knowledge onto which you add the flesh. In order to do this you will need to get into the habit of conducting your own learning outside of the classroom.

This requires you to do the following;

1. Read your notes and add to and improve them.
2. Read text books, websites and other sources of information to extend your knowledge of the topic.
3. Create notes of the important points from this reading.
4. Watch the news and read quality newspapers to develop your picture of the geography that happens around us every day. (Make notes on this too – the more contemporary examples you can draw on the better!).

In order to be successful at all the things listed above therefore, you need to develop some skills;

1. The ability to efficiently research topics. This includes developing your ability to efficiently research online (by far the biggest and best research tool available to you if you know how to use it properly). It also includes knowing how to use a text book (will you read an entire text book to find out about the effects of coastal erosion?). It may also include skills such as knowing how to use a library effectively.
2. The ability to make swift and effective notes is vital. Note making does not mean simply copying down all the text from a book or webpage. After all, what’s the point in that? You may as well photocopy the page or print the website. Note making involves picking out the important bits of information and making sure that you record those. This is something we’ll practice in the first few weeks of the course. In the meantime here are some note making tips.
   a) Don’t write everything down!
   b) Sometimes a diagram is more effective than words.
   c) Use abbreviations – LOL!
   d) Pick out the important facts – ignore everything else.
   e) Turn each paragraph into one sentence. Now turn each sentence into one word!
A research task

A new element to the A-Level course is the idea of you being a researcher and you being able to collect and use data in your studies. This is also something you will be doing as part of the coursework you complete in Year 13 where you pick your own topic to research and write up a report on. This is something that you have had some experience of already at GCSE in preparation for Paper 3.

This bridging work is going to give you the opportunity to design and carry out your own piece of research on a small topic of your choice. This will also be useful for the Changing Places unit that you will study at the start of Year 12.

You will be required to design and give out a simple questionnaire (if you wish), analyse the results, draw conclusions, and think of some strengths and weaknesses of your design.

You will be required to hand in a report including the following sections:

1. **Hypothesis** – what do you think the results of your research will be and why? Just choose 1 hypothesis as this is only a small investigation.
2. **Methods** – what method have you used to collect your data and what are the advantages and disadvantages of this method? Why have you chosen this method?
3. **Results and Analysis** – what were the results of your data collection? Why do you think your results look the way they do? Are there any anomalies? Why do you think this is? What overall conclusion can you make?
4. **Evaluation** – how successful do you think your study was? How might you improve this study in the future to gain more accurate and reliable results?

The investigation

You can chose to look at any place that you wish. Your task is to investigate how people view that place and why. The aim of your data collection is to gather evidence on people’s opinions of your chosen place – you may choose to do this through a simple questionnaire or through small interviews with them. You may also want to use some secondary data in your study.

**An example – ERDINGTON** (You may use Erdington if you wish as this will be one of our case studies in the Changing Places unit).

You may choose to look at how people view Erdington, therefore some potential hypotheses could be (Remember, you only need to do one):

1. **People who live in Erdington view it more positively than those who do not.**
2. **Older people have more positive views of Erdington than younger people.**
3. **People’s views of Erdington come from what they see in the media.**
4. **The main view of Erdington is that it is a negative place.**

You then need to decide how you are going to collect you data for your investigation – I would advise writing a simple questionnaire to get people to fill in – if you can get 10 people to complete it that will be enough.

Please read the information below on guidance on how to complete each part of your research.
Guidance for carrying out your research and completing your report

Before you carry out your research:

- Choose a topic quickly and stick with it. You could waste a lot of your summer holiday deciding which topic to carry out!
- Ensure in your Hypothesis section you summarise why you think that will be the outcome – do some research on what might lead to people having certain opinions on certain places. EG. Media, experiences etc.
- Draft your questionnaire. It should:
  - Be short. A long questionnaire will be difficult for you to analyse and may put participants off. The shorter the better!
  - Include at least one question that gathers quantitative (numerical) data. This could include Likert scales (look that up).
  - Include at least one question that gathers qualitative (longer, written) data.
  - Not ask for any personal information that could mean the participant is identifiable in any way, i.e., name, personal details.
- Your questions should not make anybody feel embarrassed or upset. Ask for general opinions rather than personal information. You are not allowed to make anybody feel uncomfortable.
- Decide how many people you are going to ask (aim for 10-15) and how you are going to find/approach them.
- Tip; don’t over complicate things! Choose people you can easily access such as friends and family. Keep the questionnaire as simple and brief as you can.
- You might want to include some secondary data in your research – for example, newspaper articles where people may have been interviewed about a particular topic to do with Erdington (or your chosen place).

When carrying out your research:

- Ensure you ask participants politely to take part. Respect their wishes if they say no.
- Make sure they have read the paragraph at the top which outlines the aim of the study.
- Thank them for taking part in the study and let them know that if they have any questions then they can contact you.
- Don’t force them to answer questions if they leave them blank. This was their personal choice and they have the right to do so.
- Take note of the situation in which they are competing the questionnaire. Are they on their own or with people around? Could they be influencing each other’s answers in any way? (You don’t need to change the situation if you are not happy with it, but just make a note of it because it will be relevant when you come to evaluate).

When writing up your research:

- You will need to analyse the quantitative data and produce some form of graph to show the results. This could be the mean, median, mode or range, or could be in the form of percentages. Your graph can be a bar chart, histogram or pie chart. You will be marked on your maths skills.
- In order to support your conclusions, you need to use the qualitative data. Highlight answers in the completed questionnaires that you think are important. Give examples of these answers in your report booklet.
• Refer back to the original research from your justification of your hypothesis in your conclusion. Make a decision as to whether or not you think your research supports or refutes the existing evidence, or is inconclusive.

Evaluation:

Write up at least two fully explained strengths and two fully explained weaknesses of your study. You could consider the following points:

• Was it ethical? Were all ethical guidelines met? If not, why? And what did you do to reduce the impact of any ethical issues?
• Do you think the answers that participants gave were truthful? Why/why not? What could have caused them to lie?
• Did you have a good response rate to the questionnaire? Why/why not? How might this have affected results?
• Did every participant have the same experience, i.e., was it reliable?
• How might the situation have affected certain participants?
• Consider the number of participants that you have asked. Was it large enough to draw conclusions on this topic?
• Consider the demographics of the participants (age, gender, location, etc). Were they similar or different? How might this have affected the results?