Rationale

Geography makes both a distinctive and a wider contribution to the curriculum. It is an essential component in preparing young people for life in the twenty-first century. As the pace of change quickens, communications get faster and challenges to the environment multiply, a knowledge and understanding of geography is more vital than ever.

Geographical education is indispensable to the development of responsible and active citizens in the present and future world. Geography can be an informing, enabling and stimulating subject at all levels in education, and contributes to a lifelong enjoyment and understanding of our world. Learners require global geographical awareness in order to ensure effective cooperation on a broad range of economic, political, cultural and environmental issues in a shrinking world.

Geography addresses the major challenges that the global community is facing. The resolution of major issues facing our world requires the full commitment of people of all generations. All of the following issues have strong geographical dimensions at a variety of geographic scales. Hence the importance of geography for all students:

- extreme natural events
- global warming and climate change
- deforestation
- desertification
- preservation of bio-diversity
- land-use conflicts
- soil erosion
- atmospheric, soil and water pollution
- use of non-renewable resources
- sustainable economic activities
- population dynamics and migration
- urbanisation
- the processes and impacts of tourism
- access to technology

- access to education – especially literacy
- global and local processes and patterns giving rise to poverty
- unemployment
- disease
- crime
- gender inequalities
- ethnic conflicts
- war
- regionalism and nationalism

In the context of these problems and issues facing humanity, the right to education includes the right to high quality geographical education that encourages both a balanced regional and national identity and a commitment to international and global understanding.

Geography's distinctive contribution to the National Minimum Curriculum (NMC)

The NMC stipulates that geography is a basic subject at secondary school level. The knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes imparted by the study of geography satisfies many of the *Educational Objectives* that are appraised in the relative section of the NMC. The teaching of Geography facilitates the NMC towards reaching its stated goals of preparing students:

- *for the challenges posed by a competitive global economic environment* (NMC, Recognising the Challenges, p.22);
- *to move forward with an identity in a global scenario where the concepts of nation and national identity are constantly called into question through the process of globilisation* (NMC, Recognising the Challenges, p.22);
- *to be able to understand and tackle the threats posed by contemporary societies to work, relationships, values and environment* (NMC, Recognising the Challenges, p.22);
- for basing their future plans and decisions from a global perspective. *An education with a global perspective would allow students to realise that much of what is taking place in our country is conditioned by external events. One ought also to promote the view that the sustainability of life on earth is contingent on our everyday choices* (NMC, Global Perspective, p.27);
- in establishing a *relationship between the different areas of knowledge* by developing the understanding and skills of the subject in an interdisciplinary approach. The gr*eater integration of educational content* (NMC, Principle 7, p.34) afforded by geography helps students in this endeavour;

- *for the world of work by helping them to develop knowledge and information about: the different sectors of the Maltese economy; the global economy and how this affects the Maltese economy; the changing work environment in an information society; different workplaces and the required skills; the European Union as an economy and labour market* (NMC, Objective 9, pp. 59-60);
- *for the world of work* by helping them to *acquire the following skills: planning, organisation and evaluation; discussion and negotiation skills; ability to choose a career in an informed manner;* and *proficiency in all aspects of literacy and numeracy* (NMC, Objective 9, pp. 60-61);
- for adequately responding *to the tension arising from the confluence of two contemporary cultural trends: the trend of inclusion and the erosion of social barriers; and the strong emphasis on the affirmation of identity and difference;* by means of the study of emerging multicultural societies (NMC, Recognising the Challenges, p.22).

General Aims of Geographical Education

- To develop in young people a knowledge and understanding of the place where they live in, of other people and places, and of how people and places inter-relate and inter-connect; of the significance of location; of human and physical environments; of people-environment relationships; and of causes and consequences of change.
- To develop the skills needed to carry out geographical study e.g. geographical enquiry, map work and fieldwork.
- To simulate an interest in and encourage an appreciation of, the world around us.
- To develop an informed concern for the world around us and ability and willingness to take positive action, both locally and globally.
- To acquire an understanding of different communities and cultures throughout the world an awareness of the contrasting opportunities and constraints presented by different environments.
- To foster an appreciation of environments, thereby enhancing a sense of responsibility for the care of the earth.
- To offer a range of skills and techniques in observing, selecting, analysing and presenting data.
- To gain the ability in using a wide range of geographical information in making judgments and reaching decisions.

Distinctive Contribution to the Education of the Individual – The Objectives of Geography

Although the development of knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes constitutes the holistic processes of education, these aspects may be grouped into three classes of objectives. Through studies in geography, students are encouraged to explore and develop knowledge and understanding, skills, attitudes and values.

In particular they should develop knowledge and understanding of:

- locations and places in order to set national and international events within a geographical framework and to understand basic spatial relationships;
- major bio-physical systems of the Earth (landforms, soils, water bodies, climate, vegetation) in order to understand the interaction within and between ecosystems;
- major socio-economic systems of the Earth (agriculture, settlement, transport, industry, trade, energy, population and others) in order to achieve a sense of place;
- different ways of creating environments according to differing cultural values, religious beliefs, technical, economic and political systems. This helps facilitate understanding of the diversity of peoples and societies on Earth and the cultural richness of humanity;
- the structure and processes of the home region and country as daily action space; and the challenges of, and opportunities for, global interdependence.

Learners are encouraged to develop skills in:

- cartography where appropriate;
- practising such methods as field observation and mapping, interviewing people and working with qualitative information;
- using and creating geographic data in text, tables, graphs and drawings;
- interpreting secondary resources and using statistics; as well as
- using communication, thinking, practical and social skills to explore geographical topics at a range of scales from local to international.

Learners should explore attitudes and values consistent with:

- their local surroundings and in the variety of environments on the surface of the Earth;
- an appreciation of the beauty of the physical world, on the one hand, and of the different living conditions of people, on the other;
- concern for the global quality and planning for the environment and human habitat for future generations;
- an awareness of the issues of globalisation with reference to the preservation of indigenous cultures;

- understanding the significance of attitudes and values in decision making;
- readiness to use geographical knowledge and skills responsibly in private, professional and public life;
- respect for the rights of all people to equality; and
- dedication to seeking solutions to local, regional, national and international problems on the basis of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Approaches to Teaching and Learning in Geography

Geography is the discipline which seeks to explain the character of places and the distribution of features and events as they occur and change the surface of the earth. Geography is concerned with human – environment interactions in the context of specific places and locations. In addition to its central concern with space and place, it is characterised by a breath of study, a range of methodologies, a willingness to synthesize work from other disciplines and an interest in the future of people – environment relationships. The attention of teachers is drawn at the Guidelines for the teaching of geography to students with learning difficulties whose attainment level description progresses up to Level Description 2 (Special Education).

Geography often starts with the following questions:

Where is it?
What is it like?
Why is it there?
When did it happen and how does it change?
What impacts does it have?
How should it be managed for the mutual benefit of humanity and the natural environment?

Finding answers to these questions requires investigation of the location, situation, interaction, spatial distribution and differentiation of features. Explanations of current situations come from both historical and contemporary sources. Trends can be identified which indicate possible future developments. Some of the central concepts of geographical studies are location and distribution, place, people-environment relationships, spatial interaction, and regions.

Geographical enquiry and Fieldwork

- provides opportunities for the first-hand investigation of people in their environment
- awakens students to a diversity of environments and cultures, in their local area and beyond
- teaches students to collect, analyse and present data, sharpening their observation, measuring, recording and evaluation skills.

All option classes are expected to be given experience in fieldwork focusing on the topics being covered during the particular year. The students are then to compile a follow up report. The final fieldwork report handed at Form V level must satisfy the requirements set in the SEC Syllabus for Geography.

Working with maps and images

- teaches students to use both maps from the Atlas and those of Ordnance Survey and make simple maps and plans
- enables students to travel confidently
- illuminates current events
- teaches young people to interpret a wide range of visual information namely aerial photographs and satellite images

Information and Communications Technology (ICT)

- provide a range of information sources to enhance geographical understanding
- support the development of a body of geographical knowledge
- provide images of people, places and environments
- develop their ideas using ICT tools to amend and refine their work and enhance its quality and accuracy
- exchange and share information, both directly and through electronic media
- review, modify and evaluate their work, reflecting critically on its quality as it progresses
- contribute to pupils' awareness of the impact of information systems on the changing world
- contribute substantially to the development of a range of ICT capabilities, especially in regards to data handling, use of communication technologies and information sources and modelling

- develop the students' skills in the following ICT toolkit namely word processor; spreadsheet; presentation software e.g. PowerPoint; desktop publishing (DTP) software; internet browser/e-mail; electronic atlas; electronic encyclopaedia; geographic information system (GIS); automatic data logging weather station; digital camera.

Working with others; improving own learning and performance; problem solving

Geography offers a context for the development of all three of these key skills e.g.
- fieldwork encourages teamwork
- individual study promotes action planning and self-review
- decision making exercises , which require problem solving skills, are an established approach to geographical education at all levels

Games and Simulations adapted by teacher

The philosophy underlying the use of games and simulations is in close harmony with the nature of activity methods. The peculiar appeal of simulation games is the radical way in which they alter the learning environment. Pupils move from the audience to the stage. Role playing and simulation call for
- powers of analysis and synthesis
- an ability to think ahead from an exciting situation
- anticipating the probable actions of opponents
- foresee the consequences of alternatives
- evaluate the pros and cons of alternative courses of action one might take.

Use of Resources

The use of quality media, resources and materials both traditional and modern is essential if learners are to gain realistic images of the earth. Ideally geography should be taught in a special room allotted for the purpose which include,
- adequate space for students
- desks with flat surfaces for practical work especially map work
- adequate storage facilities for teaching resources e.g. maps, books, charts, apparatus, posters and handouts
- wall maps including Maltese Islands, Mediterranean, Europe and the World

- political-relief globe
- activity globe that can be marked and cleaned
- weather instruments
- computers with internet facilities
- Interactive whiteboard
- DVD player
- Water supply for use in simple experiments and model making

Developing the understanding of geographical vocabulary

Students need to acquire the appropriate geographical vocabulary so that they can fully participate in lessons, fieldwork and other activities. A sound geographical vocabulary is also crucial to the student's grasp of knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes related to the local and global environment.

Geography teachers contribute towards the school's literacy policy by ensuring that they,
- encourage accuracy in listening, speaking, reading and writing
- provide pupils with clear definitions of the technical language they need to understand their geography
- provide pupils with the support they need to plan and write logical reports and accounts of their work

Geography across the curriculum

Since geography lies astride the humanities and sciences it lends itself to the students' holistic development through the thematic approach and even the inter-disciplinary approach. The teacher is encouraged to decide and plan unifying themes for learning together with other teachers of different subjects, especially by participating in whole school projects. In this way geography is linked to other relevant areas, thus making learning more challenging to the student. The inter-disciplinary approach creates possibilities for investigation and research and involves the students in purposeful activities through collaboration and social interaction. This approach also connects the teaching of ideas and skills with the realities of the outside world.

Geography teachers may ask colleagues teaching other subjects to establish an exchange of examples and contexts so that students can gain full comprehension of themes discussed. Here are examples of opportunities that link geography to other subjects:

Languages

- Definition of geographical terms that are commonly used
- Geographical information about the country or countries where the language is spoken
- Geographical background to current affairs and issues
- The geography of places discussed in literature

Sciences

- Further understanding of common themes such as ecosystems and world biomes, the natural environment, atmospheric processes (weather and climate), tectonic activity
- Field studies organised jointly with teachers from the Science department
- Sharing of apparatus

Mathematics

- Numeracy gives the opportunity to vary the means of communication.
- The use of numbers can supplement words and so increases the possibility of variety since numbers can be visually represented in so many ways, for example by the use of graphs, histograms, dots or choropleth maps.
- The drawing of maps or diagrams based upon tabulated data
- With the use of statistical methods certain patterns and relationships can be identified and trends can be indicated.
- The use of quantification techniques can help to make teaching a more varied and stimulating experience.
- The teachers of geography may assist mathematics teachers in providing them with data regarding economic, demographic and environmental issues to keep up with current updates.

Arts and Craft

- Using a wide variety of materials to teach basic techniques
- Drawing of maps
- The enlargement and reduction of maps
- Drawing of labelled diagrams

- 3-D models of landscapes and infrastructural models
- Constructing of weather and other instruments
- Drawing of charts
- Knowing about the location of places of great artistic and cultural tradition

Religion
- The geographical distribution of the world's great religions
- Basic geographical knowledge of the Holy Land
- Foster an attitude of respect towards the beliefs of other people

History, Social Studies and European Studies
- Understanding the concept of change through space and time
- Refer to the local environment and community especially in the thematic approach
- Historical environment of Geographical and spatial theorists
- The geographical location and connections of places that are studied in history
- The natural environment that has helped in the economic, social and political development of great civilizations
- The influence of geological and atmospherical phenomena in historical events
- Foster an attitude of respect towards the culture of other people
- Understanding the geographical concepts of waste management, world trade, international aid, development, migration, famine, refugees and displaced persons

Physical Education, Music and Drama
- Knowing about the location of places with great tradition in sport, music and drama
- Role play about environmental and humanitarian issues
- Use of music to create atmosphere linked to country, particular environment or community
- Linking the location of places to participating countries in international sports and song competitions

ICT
- providing and extending access to large quantities of information.
- students investigate, organise, and edit geographical information

- ICT programmes and software help to enhance the learning situation
- Improve presentation techniques in work handed in by students
- Geographical data and themes lends itself easily to work in ICT
- Able to communicate by means of email, internet, fax, video conferencing and other technologies to exchange information locally and worldwide
- Extend their graphical and mapping skills, and their skills in statistical and spatial analysis

Home Economics and Textile Studies
- Enhancement of common themes such as issues of waste management, organic farming, food miles and the use of resources
- Provenance of raw materials used in textile and clothing
- Location of major textile and clothing industries
- Origin of food and beverages
- Problems of nutrition, diseases, and food supply

Business Studies
- Enhancement of common themes such as world economic development and trade
- Different types of employment and their distribution within and among countries
- The impact of economic activity on the physical and human environments
- Spatial distribution of resources, including energy resources, mineral raw materials and food
- Theories of spatial distribution of industry
- Common themes for fieldwork excursions

Strands

The syllabus of geography is divided into six strands: **map reading and interpretation; weather and climate; landforms and processes; socio-economic human systems; environmental concerns; and location and places.** This division is an essential way of categorizing the outcomes of geographical education in schools. All these aspects are equally important. Although students learn these strands in packages, the inter-relationships between them must be emphasized at all times, since a thorough understanding of each theme is only obtained by reference to all aspects.

Assessment

The learning process involves various methods of assessment:

- **Formative** so that a student's achievement can be recognised and so further steps planned
- **Diagnostic** through which learning difficulties can be identified and appropriate measures can be taken
- **Summative** through recording student's achievements in a systematic way
- **Evaluative** in enabling the school's work to be assessed.

Obviously the assessment used must be appropriate to the objective which is being tested. There must be, first of all, a clear purpose in assessment, for example knowing which objectives a student has accomplished. It is also important to note that the kind of objective being assessed will have an effect on the type of assessment exercise constructed. Assessment exercises must be valid, that is, must be such that they really assess what they are supposed to assess.

Assessment Methods in Geography	
Type of Assessment	***Principal Methods***
Objective tests	• True/false type • Completion tests • Matching • Multiple choice tests • Short answers
Essays	• Timed essays • Resource-based essays
Structured questions	• Data response questions - the student has a clearer idea of what is required of him/her. In such questions, stimulus material, providing information to the student has to be analysed and interpreted.
Enquiries	• Using primary sources: usually involving fieldwork • Using secondary sources: a teacher planned enquiry-based exercise.
Oral assessment	• Presentation: pupil prepares and presents a verbal report to an audience • Discussion work: students interact within a group.
Self-assessment	• Checklists • Evaluation sheets focusing on key words.
Classroom observations	• Teacher records comments on each individual student • Interviews with students or small groups especially in regards to investigative projects.

Homework and Field Reports in Geography

Homework in geography serves a number of useful, interrelated purposes. It:

- promotes independent learning skills, as students extend classroom work and apply skills to areas of personal interest
- provides opportunities for work that takes too long to be accommodated during normal lesson time
- enables pupils to use resources such as Information Technology and reference materials that may not be available in the classroom
- creates opportunities for the development and application of skills, knowledge and values introduced in the classroom
- creates opportunities for teachers to make formative assessments of pupils' work and progress and to evaluate the effectiveness of their own teaching
- encourages research creativity and initiative
- promotes the co-operation of parents and other adults

Good homework practice entails that:

- homework will be set frequently and regularly, as appropriate to the Form and nature of the activities
- a variety of activities will be set
- homework will be differentiated to provide meaningful and accessible activities for pupils
- homework will be clearly relevant to the schemes of work and integral to the teaching of the subject
- marking will be carried out in a way that provides positive and formative support to pupils, and will clearly indicate both areas of success and areas for improvement

Level Descriptors

All six strands (map reading and interpretation; weather and climate; landforms and processes; socio-economic human systems; environmental concerns; and location and places) are covered by the learning outcomes. These are classified by sub-topic, theme and according to Form. The learning outcomes as exposed in the present syllabus complement the Level Descriptors of Geography as published by the Department of Curriculum Management of the Education Division (Malta) in such a way that by the completion of the Form V section the student will be expected to have attained Level 8.

Geography in the school curriculum provides an essential foundation of knowledge, understanding and skills for life-long learning, and equips those students who wish to become specialist geographers with the skills and understanding they will need. Above all, geography is relevant, stimulating and interesting for all students of all ages.