Hello future **A-Level Geographers**, and welcome to Geography at UTC Leeds.

As you may already know, at UTC Leeds we follow the AQA Geography A-Level which is 80% examined, with a Physical Geography paper worth 40% of your overall grade and a Human Geography paper that is also worth 40%. In addition, there is a Non-Examined Assessment that makes up 20% of your Geography A-Level grade. In the past, the Non-Examined Assessment would have been called ‘coursework’. The NEA has many similarities to the coursework that used to be part of A Level Geography, but there is one very important difference.

It is described as an ‘independent investigation’, and it is literally that – you will be expected to design a piece of research, collect information, analyse the data that you generate and evaluate your investigation entirely by yourselves. The reasons why the NEA is strictly an independent investigation is a) to ensure fairness as your teachers cannot give you more or less support than teachers might be doing in other schools and colleges and b) to give you a taste of what a university dissertation or even a field study on behalf of a company might feel like.

When you come to do your NEA for real, you will choose an aspect of the A-Level course that you are interested in and you will create research questions about it. I have included a link to the exam specification below in case you would like to familiarise yourself with it. You will conduct wider reading where you will analyse academic texts and articles to see what others have found out about that subject. You will collect primary and secondary, quantitative and qualitative data (i.e. you will do field work) to find answers to the questions that you’ve set yourself. You will then have to select appropriate ways to present your findings to make it possible to come to valid conclusions. The video called ‘Part 1b’ gives you an overview of the NEA enquiry process.

This is a large undertaking, but if you engage with it properly, it can and should be a meaningful and rewarding task that provides you with transferable skills that you can use at university and/or in the work place. You will also create an extended piece of writing that will show you at your very best that can be taken to interviews as part of a portfolio of significant achievements.

In order to get you thinking like an A-Level geographer, I would like you to look through the articles that I have put links to on the PowerPoint called ‘Part 1a’. They are mainly from a website called CityMetric, the sister site of New Statesman which is a magazine that examines current affairs and politics and there are a couple from other sources. These are the sorts of publication that you will need to get into the habit of reading in order to develop your understanding of geography.

Your task is to create the **rough outline** of a possible independent investigation, based on one or more of the articles.

Please note: I am definitely NOT asking you to plan the investigation that will ultimately be submitted for your A-Level. Neither am I asking you to go away and begin collecting information for real. I would simply like you to put some ideas together that we can discuss, either remotely or in person, that show how confident you are at working independently and what you currently understand about the process of a field work enquiry.

If you would like to understand more about the NEA, I have included a link to AQA’s frequently asked questions page. If you can’t find what you’re looking for there, don’t hesitate to email me on alastair.chambers@utcleeds.co.uk and I will be very happy to help.

I’ve also included links to a couple of examples of completed NEAs, together with commentaries about how their marks have been awarded. These are purely for you to see what students have done in the past. I am certainly NOT asking you to produce anything like this for your assignment. Two to three typed sides in a sensible-sized font will be sufficient. Limit yourselves to a maximum of five sides at the very most.

**What I require from you:**

* The title of the article(s) that you were particularly interested in.
* A brief summary of the main themes of the article(s).
* One or more research questions or hypotheses that relate to what you have read. The RGS publication at the bottom of this page has a whole section about how to create research questions. You should watch the video called ‘Part 2’ to help you with this.
* Some **primary** data collection techniques that you might use to **gather** the information you need to answer your research questions or hypotheses.
* Some **secondary** sources of data that could be useful to you, if you were to actually undertake this research. I would like the names of specific websites or other resources that you have come across. You should watch the video called ‘Part 3a’ to help you with this.
* Some data presentation techniques that could be used to display your primary data, and a quick justification of why they might be suitable for displaying the primary data that you suggested you could collect. You should watch the video called ‘Part 4’ to help you with this.

If you would like to conduct some wider research, feel free to do so. Some of you may be familiar with the publication Geography Review. You can take out a free 30 day trial subscription via the Hodder Education website here

<https://www.hoddereducation.co.uk/subjects/geography/products/a-level/geography-review-online-archive>

You could also create a free account with the American Association for the Advancement of Science which gives access to Science Magazine. This contains some academic articles relating to geography and the STEM subjects in general. It can be accessed here

<https://purchase.aaas.org/order/522/1>

Once you have put your enquiry outline together, you can email it to me at alastair.chambers@utcleeds.co.uk .

I look forward to meeting those of you who are joining UTC Leeds in Year 12 either remotely or face-to-face, and I also look forward to welcoming back those of you who have chosen to stay at UTC Leeds following your GCSEs.

Best wishes, Alastair Chambers

The AQA Geography A-Level course specification:

<https://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/geography/as-and-a-level/geography-7037>

Exemplar NEAs that can be accessed by the general public via the AQA website:

<https://filestore.aqa.org.uk/resources/geography/AQA-70373-NEA-C.PDF>

<https://filestore.aqa.org.uk/resources/geography/AQA-70373-NEA-G.PDF>

<https://filestore.aqa.org.uk/resources/geography/AQA-7037-NEA-FAQS.PDF>

The (highly comprehensive) guide to completing an NEA produced by the Royal Geographical Society:

<https://www.rgs.org/CMSPages/GetFile.aspx?nodeguid=882a6e79-5e28-4667-a753-17d26cec8c19&lang=en-GB>