

BA/BSc Geography

Josh, a third year student studying BSc Geography, describes his experiences of the course and his time in the School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences

Title: [BA/BSc Geography - School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences \(click here to watch video\)](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/courses/undergraduate/gees/geography-bsc.aspx#optTab2ID)
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Duration: 6.52 mins

Speaker Names (if given): S1 Josh Baldwick, BSc Geography student

S1 My name's Josh and I'm a third year Geography BSc student. I came to study Geography for a number of reasons here at Birmingham because firstly I like the campus setup and I like the course, but in particular it was the ability to do Human and Physical [Geography] modules because I came out of A level liking both and some units wanted you to pick straight away or decide in your second year to go down the path that you'd chosen. So if you were BSc you had to do the majority of Physical in your second year. So I wasn't too happy about doing that because I wasn't sure still so I spoke to the people here and they were happy for you to just pick whatever as you go through. If you find that you are doing more Human in the end then that's fine you are allowed to do that. So I was actually a BA student but at the end, when it came to third year I realised that I was picking about 50/50 still but I was really enjoying the Physical side and I thought my best marks would be in Physical. So they actually swapped me over to the BSc in my third year so, that's why I liked it because it was really flexible.

Geography requires a lot of team work, especially in the first year there a lot of group exercises and stuff. It's important because it allows you to get to know other people on your course and, in the end, you're going to be quite reliant on them because when you're doing your dissertation and it's getting quite, you've got a lot of work on, you need to have other people to talk to, to fall back on. I think that was what was good about doing these field trips - I was in Berlin and have been to Wales and stuff - is that you kind of get to know these people and you get to know a lot of different people off the course. So when you're doing your modules you've always got someone that you know and I think that was a really good, positive aspect of the course. Kinvig as well do field trips - that's the Geography Society - so I've been to Bruges, Prague and Paris with them and that was just another way to meet the other years as well and they'll help you by getting to know the second and third years or first years as well you can offer hints and tips and they can give you advice as well for modules that you might want to do or books that you might want to read.

So while I've been here I've been involved in Kinvig. I've been a first year rep and then I've been promoted into being Chair as well. Basically, that was really good fun and the important thing with being in a society and the reason why I wanted to be involved in other things is that it's a good skill to have for later on and it also breaks up your learning because if you're just doing your lectures all the time and just doing your reading it can get a bit much. You're going to have times when you're not going to want to read geography all the time you're going to want to do other things. Being in Kinvig allowed me to, sort of, do something a little bit different, talk to other people and sort out fun events with fundraising events for charities. We also got to know other university's geography societies. So we invited them over and talked with them. It was just good fun and it was just a good way to develop skills that you were maybe learning through your lectures and through the things that you were having to do.

Living in Birmingham, I think that was a really good positive reason for me to come here because you've got the campus in the middle, you've got halls on the one side of the campus and that's all the first years all together and it's a nice lake and everything, so it was a really nice environment. And then in your second and third year, I was worried because I know what other universities were like, you had like a 40-minute journey into uni. But here you've just got Selly Oak on the other side of the campus and that's even closer than the first year halls. And there's just so many houses that it wasn't really a worry at all, and the rent's pretty reasonable for Birmingham as well and so for me it's like a two-minute walk into uni in second and third year as well. You've got all the supermarkets and everything as well so, I think for the living side it's just so convenient and so close that you just don't need to worry about anything.

So the programme layout for Geography: in the first year it's very much Human and Physical [Geography]. You all do the same. The reason for that is that they don't know what you've learnt at A level so, generally, you're doing everything, so BA and BSc are all together. And then in your second and third years you start to pick modules and I ended up doing two Human modules in the first term and then two Physical modules in the second term. So, the two Physical ones were Ecology and then first term ones were Migration and Energy and Capitalism. And then into third year you've obviously got your dissertation which is a large part of third year. And I got to go on a fieldtrip in third, in my second term, because I was doing river restoration so we went to Buxton and we were looking at different restoration schemes along certain rivers and that was really good because you could see how it was being applied which is the really important thing because you start to see how your course has tailored you to certain jobs or potential prospects in the future.

Another important aspect of Geography that they've kind of improved whilst I've been here has been contact time. Your lectures are usually about 12 hours a week which, for some people, was quite low but the important thing about Geography is that you are meant to be reading around the subject as well and that's meant to, that's kind of like, another 12 hours on top of it. But as well as that you've also got your tutor hour and in first year that's every week for your first term, which is really important because again you're kind of in a different environment to what you're used to. So they're there talking you through everything, explaining how to reference and everything like that. But then, importantly, what they added in for us in third was a dissertation hour. So you get allocated your own supervisor who knows exactly what your question is for your dissertation and will help you through it.

A lot of the courses are tailored for you to go and just do other things. So, literally, just throw yourself into everything. If you get asked to do anything just say yes because at the end of the day if by the second year you feel like maybe you've taken on a bit too much you can just start cutting down on things. But, if you don't say yes straight away then you won't meet people, you won't start networking and getting to know other people and that's so important because at the end of the day you've got to have fun!

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