

WHERE GEOGRAPHY COMES ALIVE: HOW KASU'S FIELD STUDIES ARE SHAPING THE NEXT GENERATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROFESSIONALS



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For many university students, learning begins and ends within the lecture theatre. Concepts are introduced through lectures, reinforced with textbooks and, eventually, tested in examinations. But for students of Geography and Sustainability Studies at Kaduna State University (KASU), education extends far beyond the classroom. It unfolds along riverbanks, through bustling urban streets, inside quarry sites, and across the diverse landscapes that define Northern Nigeria.

The fortnight beginning on 13th July 2026 exemplified this philosophy. Over two weeks of intensive field-based activities, undergraduate and postgraduate students from the Department of Geography and Sustainability Studies left behind the familiarity of lecture halls to immerse themselves in the environments they have spent months studying in theory

Accompanied by experienced academic staff, they embarked on carefully designed field exercises across Kaduna metropolis, with additional studies extending to Zaria and Kano, transforming these locations into living classrooms where knowledge was tested against reality.

The exercise reflected Kaduna State University's growing reputation for delivering education that is not only academically rigorous but also professionally relevant. It also underscored the University's vision of producing graduates equipped with the practical skills, critical thinking, and analytical competence required to address the increasingly complex environmental and developmental challenges of the twenty-first century.



Within the Department of Geography and Sustainability Studies, experiential learning has become more than a teaching strategy. It is a defining feature of the academic experience. Under the leadership of the Head of Department, Dr. Asma'u A. Muktar, the Department has continued to strengthen field-based instruction, complementing the University's broader drive towards academic excellence, innovation and increased global visibility.

The GEO 334 Field Studies programme, alongside postgraduate field exercises, demonstrated the Department's belief that geography is best understood by engaging directly with the physical and human environments that shape everyday life. The programme provides students with opportunities to observe, investigate and analyse real-world geographical phenomena while developing the professional competencies expected of modern environmental scientists and geographers.

For the Master's students, the journey was an intensive two-day field study across Kaduna metropolis on 20 and 21 July. Before venturing into the field, participants received detailed briefings on the objectives of the exercise, research ethics, safety procedures and data collection techniques an important reminder that successful fieldwork demands not only scientific knowledge but also professionalism, discipline and careful observation.

The learning experience extended beyond the water itself. Students identified economically valuable tree species growing within the riparian ecosystem, discussing their ecological functions, economic importance and the conservation measures required to preserve these fragile environmental corridors. It was a powerful lesson in the interconnectedness of biodiversity, livelihoods and sustainable environmental management.

From flowing waters, the students moved to the Halliru Dan Toro Quarry in Malali, where another chapter of the Earth's story unfolded. Rock formations and active quarry operations provided a practical setting for examining geological structures, weathering processes and mineral extraction techniques.

Yet the visit was not merely about understanding how rocks are formed or extracted. It challenged students to think critically about the environmental consequences of quarrying and the delicate balance between economic development and environmental sustainability. Discussions on land restoration, responsible mining practices and sustainable resource utilisation encouraged students to appreciate that every development decision carries ecological implications.

The following day shifted attention from natural landscapes to the complex dynamics of urban systems. Along Yakowa Road and Ali Akilu Road, students carried out modal split analyses and road condition assessments, documenting traffic flow, transportation choices and infrastructure quality. These observations provided valuable insights into urban mobility while demonstrating the role geographical research plays in informing transport planning and sustainable city development.

Their final exercise took them into the residential neighbourhoods of Unguwan Rimi, where they compared high-density and low-density communities through detailed neighbourhood analysis. By examining housing quality, infrastructure, environmental conditions, land-use patterns and access to public services, the students gained a deeper appreciation of the social and spatial inequalities that influence urban life.

Collectively, these exercises transformed abstract concepts into lived experiences. Skills that could only be partially understood through lectures (environmental observation, spatial analysis, field measurement, data collection and interpretation) were refined through direct engagement with real environments.

While the postgraduate field study demonstrated the application of advanced geographical research techniques, the Department's undergraduate GEO 334 Field Studies extended the same philosophy to another generation of aspiring geographers. Designed as far more than an academic excursion, the programme offered students an opportunity to connect classroom knowledge with practical geographical observations, professional engagement and experiential learning across diverse landscapes.

Beyond its academic value, the GEO 334 programme also reflects the University's broader ambition to project Kaduna State University as an institution where innovation and practical education go hand in hand. Every field excursion serves not only as a learning experience for students but also as a demonstration of KASU's commitment to producing graduates capable of applying knowledge in solving real societal problems.

Such programmes are made possible through the collaborative efforts of dedicated academic staff whose planning, supervision and mentorship ensure that every field activity becomes a meaningful educational experience. Their commitment reinforces a culture in which students are encouraged to question, investigate and understand the environments around them rather than simply memorise theories.

As environmental degradation, rapid urbanisation, climate variability and resource management continue to dominate global conversations, the demand for graduates who can interpret landscapes, analyse spatial data and propose sustainable solutions has never been greater. Through sustained investment in experiential learning, Kaduna State University is ensuring that its students graduate with more than academic qualifications. They leave with practical competence, professional confidence and an appreciation of the complex relationship between people, places and the environment.

For the students who spent those two weeks traversing rivers, quarries, transport corridors and urban neighbourhoods, geography was no longer confined to lecture notes or examination scripts. It became something they could see, measure, analyse and understand through direct experience.

In the end, that is the enduring value of field studies. They transform information into insight, theory into practice and students into professionals prepared to engage thoughtfully with the environmental and developmental challenges of an ever-changing world. At Kaduna State University, the landscape itself has become an indispensable teacher and for the geographers of tomorrow, there could be no better classroom.





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