



Core units: Key understandings – Years 7–8

Illustration 2: Scale in physical geography

## Geographic scale

Geographic scale refers to the geographical 'extent' of the landforms under study.

Cascades of geographic scale are:

- personal
- local
- regional
- national
- world regional
- global.

Scale can also be portrayed mathematically, with the micro scale having spatial dimensions up to  $1 \text{ km}^2$ , the meso scale  $1\text{--}10,000 \text{ km}^2$ , macro scale  $10,000\text{--}1,000,000 \text{ km}^2$  and the mega scale from  $1,000,000 \text{ km}^2$  to the entire surface of the earth ( $510,072,000 \text{ km}^2$ )

Beach cusps and soil profiles can be studied at the personal scale, coastal stacks and arches at a micro scale, longitudinal dune fields and river catchments at a meso scale, ice sheets in Antarctica at a macro scale and the global distribution of coral reefs at mega scale.

Clearly, geographic scale is relative. A list of Australian landforms and landform features is provided below. Identify good examples, and classify them in terms of micro, meso (regional physical geography) and macro scale studies:

- anabranches
- braided streams
- cirques
- distributaries
- gibber deserts
- glacial troughs
- granite tors
- lunettes next to playa lakes
- oxbow lakes
- potholes in a stream bed
- tablelands
- tent peaks in the arid zone
- The Great Australian Escarpment
- tombolos.