

Claire Sladden, Geography and Assessment Specialist

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Claire Sladden is a Geography and Assessment Specialist. She was awarded Chartered Geographer status in 2009. Here's what she says about being a Chartered Geographer...

Why did you decide to apply to become a Chartered Geographer?

As a geographer, the possibility of accreditation had interested me from the time I'd heard of it being introduced, but I'd thought, wrongly, that, being self-employed and working internationally, I didn't fit the categories. A chance meeting with Claire Wheeler, who runs the scheme, on a visit to 1 Kensington Gore encouraged me to put in an application.

How did you find the application process?

I found that it was straightforward, given the quality and clarity of the documentation available on the RGS website. The challenges were to identify suitable materials as evidence and, because of my not being part of a department or institution, to find someone to sign off the application. I chose two different types of recent work: some training materials for use with teachers in the Middle East (PowerPoint) and a paper I'd written for an awarding body about an international A Level Geography qualification. Someone who'd known me and my work over a period of about 10 years agreed to validate my application. Overall, it took about a day to collate the materials, find referees and complete the application. I felt that it was a worthwhile investment of time and effort and was grateful that colleagues I contacted were supportive – even enthusiastic.

What sort of experience and activities did you include in your professional self evaluation report?

Although initially awed by the prospect, I found that the PSER largely "wrote itself" as I reflected on about 25 years' involvement, mainly in examining or assessing the subject. Beyond the chronology of a career in assessment, and the steps in my professional development, I tried to express what I actually believe about geography.

How have you benefited personally from gaining the accreditation?

It has helped me to *feel* recognised, which is welcome for someone who is self-employed and as a consultant, usually working alone. And, because it's RGS-IBG there is respect for the accreditation, even from people who don't know quite what it involves. I use Chartered Geographer

– as well as FRGS – when I introduce myself, both to other geographers internationally and to colleagues more widely.

How have your contracts benefited from you gaining the accreditation?

For most of the agencies which award me contracts, it probably doesn't change anything, but new ones know from my CV what they're getting. One awarding body with which I do some work is pleased to be able to say that I'm recognised in this way. Assessment is, increasingly, being done by people who are professionally accredited, so for me CGeog sits naturally alongside CEA (Chartered Educational Assessor).

How have your colleagues responded to you gaining the accreditation?

I've been teased about a growing string of post-nominals (!), but have some good conversations with colleagues who want to know what it involves and who might consider making an application themselves. Geographers seem pleased that our subject has such accreditation available, as chartered status is widely understood in relation to other professions.

As the CGeog network grows, what would you like to see happen / be available to you?

I'm interested in new areas of involvement professionally, so my own CPD, and being able to train, encourage and mentor other geographers working within the assessment community.

Any words of advice for aspiring Chartered Geographers?

Not to make the mistake I made, that is to think that if you don't quite fit the categories, it's not for you.