

# chartered geographers



SINCE GRADUATING in 2000 with a BSc in Geography and MSc in GIS I have had three employers, all of whom had formal performance review programmes and were supportive of personal development. I became a Royal Geographical Society fellow in 2004. Once you are a fellow you don't have to continue to prove your association with geography. However, I've enjoyed attending a range of the Monday night lectures at the RGS, which are provided for fellows and guests. There is something for everyone – from the series editor of Planet Earth, almost in tears, explaining his joy at getting “the shot” to learning about how local dialects of the English language have developed.

**Continuous development** I decided to apply for chartered status as a means of ensuring that my

when I had first become interested in geography, why I had made the career choices I had, what I'd enjoyed about being a fellow and where I wanted to continue to develop my skills. It really wasn't hard to write. You need two referees and they don't need to be geography related – I used my line manager and my GIS software supplier account manager. Any papers you have published can be submitted to support your application (which can include presentations rather than full written papers). In addition you supply details of what continued professional development you have undertaken in the geography field in the last year.

**Becoming a better geographer** To maintain your status as a CGeog you have to have undertaken 35 hours of continued professional development (CPD)

## Chartered geographer status: is it worth it?

Chartered Geographer (CGeog) is the professional accreditation offered by the Royal Geographical Society-Institution of British Geographers to those who can demonstrate competence, experience and professionalism in geography. **Alice Froggatt**, Cgeog (GIS), talks about her thoughts on and experience of the process.

current employer recognised the importance of continuing to develop my geographical skills (and not just covering finance and management courses); as a way of monitoring myself and what I was learning; and proving to future employers that my commitment and knowledge of the subject – my education – hadn't stopped after university.

The process was really very easy. In total, the application took me no more than three hours to put together, I received support from the AGI when I had questions and there is lots of information on the RGS and AGI websites. Your personal statement is just that – personal. It's your way of saying why geography means something to you and why you are keen to continue to develop in the field. I explained

of which 20 hours should be external and 15 hours internal. Many of the GIS events / training courses run are now CGeog accredited so you know how many points there are associated with them. As an example, four points are allocated to AGI day events (e.g. attending the Environmental Special Interest Group conference), with further points allocated if you present at events. If you are attending a course that hasn't had CPD points allocated to it then the AGI can assess the course and provide a points scoring. I found it harder to record / assess my internal training but aspects such as managing, mentoring and training others is included as well as personal development of non-geographical skills that help you become a better geographer (e.g. project



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### So just how many chartered geographers are there?

For the Chartered Geographer accreditation, the following post nominals have also been approved for usage recognising some of the different sub disciplines within geography: CGeog (Econ); CGeog (Geomorph); CGeog (GIS); CGeog (Teacher). There are currently over 250 chartered geographers, and 13% of CGeogs are from outside the UK. The society has a searchable list of chartered geographers on its website – on searching for those with CGeog (GIS) status, 29 records appeared. According to the society, they have received applications from: academics; GI specialists; cartographers; consultants; planners; policy advisors; surveyors; conservationists; and teachers (secondary and primary).

The society list the benefits of becoming a chartered geographer as:

- It recognises your experience, professionalism and commitment to geography and your achievements within the discipline.
- It will allow you to benefit from meeting and sharing the experience of other CGeogs.
- CGeog is the only internationally recognised professional accreditation for geographers.
- CGeog will enhance your professional portfolio.
- Chartered Geographers meet at least once a year at the RGS-IBG for a networking reception.

Source: The Royal Geographical Society : [www.rgs.org](http://www.rgs.org)

management training). When I actually started to record things I found that I did more than enough in my day-to-day job. I don't see maintaining CGeog as being an additional burden but as a means of just ensuring (and recognising) that I do continue to develop my skills.

**CGeog – mature enough?** At present I'm not sure the qualification is mature enough to allow chartered geographers and non-chartered geographers to be separated. However, in the last year, it has allowed me to focus my personal development requirements and not just my employer's. I'm not sure the qualification is ready for employers to start including it as a requirement for positions but I'm sure with time that will change, especially in the public sector. I'm also currently job searching and haven't yet been to an interview where I haven't been asked about it – more than anything I have found it to be a useful conversation starter regarding my personal development.

### Chris Holcroft, director general of AGI adds:

As Director of the AGI I experience two main perspectives of Chartered Geographer (GIS). On the one-hand I have had discussions with organisations who see this scheme as ideal for career progression and for maintaining the "currency" of their employees' knowledge. On the other it is refreshing and impressive to see the level of interest from individual practitioners who are not only interested in CGeog, but also the whole process of Continuous Professional Development (CPD).

Last year in *GiSPro* I mentioned how the CGeog scheme brought real purpose and objective to AGI's established CPD scheme. Despite the philosophical debates of the 90s within the AGI about the validity of CPD for GI and GIS, the market has decided in favour of it anyway.

Alice writes positively and enthusiastically about her experiences, which is both reassuring and welcome. Nonetheless CGeog is not for everyone, nor is it as simple as filling in a form, paying the fee and waiting for the certificate to drop through the door. It is a serious venture and requires commitment to attain. Impressively, many AGI members demonstrate that commitment coupled with heaps of enthusiasm.

I think Alice's observations about the maturity of the scheme are valid; it is still after all, fairly early days. The numbers through the system are still modest. That said, the 29 CGeog (GIS) quoted elsewhere is a tad misleading as the split into CGeog categories post-dates some of the first tranche of GIS related people to attain the status. Also this does not reflect the body of individuals now coming through, or looking to enter the system.

Alice also suggests CGeog is a talking point with employers at this stage, rather than a job winning essential. This is true. That said, my discussions with

public sector organisations suggest a formal tie into job grades is likely to come in some quarters. I'd also argue that any vendor would enjoy marketing CGeog qualified consultancy and project management staff to prospective customers. It is fair to say that if interviewing two very similar candidates, the one who has achieved CGeog is going to indicate a clear commitment to the field as well as a tangible level of post university career expertise.

I think that AGI, if required, will look further at enhancing the monitoring and recording of CPD hours to help members on their way to CGeog, as well as a large number that may never choose to go-all-the-way. The latter group should never be forgotten. Many members wish to stay up to date with the industry and their skills by recording CPD points and are happy to never go beyond that.

CGeog is here to stay and many who are serious and dedicated to geography will be taking the journey to attain CGeog and then maintain it.



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## Professional status for AGI Members

### So why should I become a CGeog (GIS)?

Source: [www.agi.org.uk](http://www.agi.org.uk)

Chartered Geographer (GIS) status is offered to AGI members as a professional enhancement to the association's continuing professional development (CPD) programme. The award is aimed at giving those working in the GI science field the option to show their competence and experience in interpreting geographical information and in geographical analysis, based on a wide understanding of using geographical processes. Benefits of the CGeog – GIS accreditation include:

- It demonstrates the desire to maintain your professional standards through continually developing your geographical skills and knowledge
- It enhances your career portfolio and can assist in advancing your career
- Shows commitment to the professionalism of the discipline
- Allows you to select and undertake your own annual programme of continuing professional development (CPD)
- You can use a wide range of CPD activities, including those that you currently undertake, such as training and development courses
- You can become a mentor for other GIS professionals who want to become Chartered Geographers.

Applicants must satisfy the society of their competence and professionalism and be a fellow of the RGS-IBG and a member of the AGI. There are four possible application routes, depending on education and level of experience:

- GI Graduate with 6 or more years of experience
- GI Practitioner with 15 years of related GI experience
- GI Graduate with less than 6 years experience
- GI Practitioner with less than 15 years experience

• For more information on the CGeog (GIS) status and which application route would best suit you, visit the AGI website.