Geography: 30 reasons why it really matters

#Choosegeography

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2020
The Royal Geographical Society (with IBG)

- The learned and professional body for geography
- Schools, higher education, with the professions and public
- 16,000 Fellows
- A focus on the discipline and subject knowledge

“Advancing geography and geographical learning”
www.rgs.org/schools
Contributions from the community.

Geography:

• helps young people understand the places where they live
• helps children and young people to begin to make sense of the fast changing, highly interconnected world
• provides students with an opportunity to identify their importance and responsibility within the wider world
• connects the local with the global
• gives students the tools to not only analyse the world, but participate in the making of new worlds
• unites us, binds us, and reveals our true ‘place’ on this planet
• knowing why ‘where’ matters
• enables students to understand and recognise the complexity of global issues
#1 We have a fashion style ... just for us
Geography is the language of our landscapes: now & in the future

- Whether in human or physical landscapes, geography give us the knowledge and skills to better understand the challenges of the present & approach the future with positive agency

- What would you pupils miss if they didn’t study geography?
Geography has always been more than (just) content

We speak of geography, not as a barren catalogue of names and facts but as a science that ought to be taught in a liberal way, with abundant appliances of maps, models and illustrations.

Sir Roderick Murchison President and Council of the RGS (1871)

Geography helps us understand the world. It gives us the science, the data, the insights to plan for the future (and) it’s an incredibly exciting subject.

Nick Crane RGS President (2015-18)
Geography helps answer the issues of our age
YouGov Q1. Which, if any, of the following GCSE subjects (i.e. a qualification for 14 to 16 year olds) do you think currently help teach children about climate change?
So is A Level geography

A Level subjects that teach about climate change
(YouGov/RGS 2020)
Geography entries have been growing

GCSE
• 265,000 students
• Geography the 6th most popular subject at GCSE level
• 50% more entries than 2011
• 2010 27% of cohort took geography. 2018 40+% 

A Level
• ~35,000 students in England, Wales and Northern Ireland sat an A Level
• Increase on 2018 (& recovered ~50% of the 2017 drop)

Higher Education
* Expanding numbers in HE from ~5,000 pa to ~6,500 pa
GCSE growth has made the subject more representative (… but)

- GCSE growth has come disproportionately from those students previously less likely to study geography i.e.
  - BAME, disadvantaged, lower prior attainment, and those studying in comprehensive school

- **But** more work to do to support such pupils continuing their geography into A Level and degree
In HE we are a ‘part-STEM’ subject

A number of subjects contribute to the provision of STEM skills, STEM learning and research, and to the STEM workforce. Geography is one such discipline (formally recognised by Hefce as ‘part-STEM’ in higher education).

RGS evidence to House of Commons Science and Technology Committee Inquiry into STEM skills gap (2017)

Closing the STEM skills gap

Our written evidence to the House of Commons Science and Technology Committee inquiry into the STEM skills gap highlights geography's role in developing quantitative skills with reference to Society projects and work.
A Level Geography supports entry into HE

Subjects that can be viewed as ‘facilitating’ subjects are:

- Mathematics and Further Maths
- English
- Physics
- Biology
- Chemistry
- Geography
- History
- Languages (Classical and Modern)

These ‘facilitating subjects’ are the subject most likely to be required or preferred for entry to degree courses, and choosing them will keep more options open to you at university (2011)
Geography opens doors to other degrees

- Did not progress to a degree
- Combined Education
- Creative arts & design
- History & philosophical studies
- Languages
- Mass communications & documentation
- Business & Administrative studies
- Law
- Social studies
- Architecture, building & planning
- Computer science
- Engineering & technology
- Mathematical sciences
- Physical sciences
- Agriculture & related
- Veterinary science
- Biological sciences
- Subjects allied to medicine
- Medicine & dentistry
- Geography
Geography has the best gender balance

Difference between boys’ and girls’ subject choices at GCSE (UK, 2017)

HE
F 56% M 44%

A Level
F 51% M 49%

GCSE
F 46% M 54%

F outperform M at GCSE & A Level
Geography is now part of Government evaluations

Magenta Book
Central Government guidance on evaluation

March 2020

“There is a requirement to understand if the same results would be achieved in a different place or context.”

Magenta Book
You can be a demigod & forge a great career

Dr Kate Edwards CGeog @geogrify
* Microsoft’s first Geopolitical Strategist
* 6 years at Google
* listed as one of "The 10 Most Powerful Women In Gaming" in 2013 by Fortune
* 2014 she was named as one of the video games industry's six "People of the Year"

View RGS ‘Digital Worlds’ lecture by Kate
The Civil Service has a Head of Geography

David Wood
@GovHeadGeog

Geography is part of the Government Science and Engineering Profession

And there are over 1,000 like him working in the Civil Service and Government Agencies
It’s official … geographers are ‘professionals’

- Chartered Geographer means geographers are recognised in the same way as other professions (accountants, engineers, environmentalist etc)

- See CGeog (Teach)
I’m a geographer and proud of my career

Dr Kit Ying Angel Ng - Senior Geomorphologist
Dr Kit Ying Angel Ng is a Senior Geomorphologist at Arup, based in London.

Owen Miller - Problem Solving Analyst
Owen Miller is a Problem Solving Analyst for Thames Valley Police.

Layla Batchellier - Communications and Engagement Manager
Layla Batchellier is the Communications and Engagement Manager for the RRS Sir David Attenborough at the British Antarctic Survey.

Dr Andy Markham - Company Director
Dr Andy Markham is the Company Director of Hydrobiology.

Terri Freemantle - Senior Earth Observations Specialist
Terri Freemantle is a Senior Earth Observations Specialist for Satellite Applications Catapult.

Kevin Lee - Assistant Desk Officer
Kevin Lee is Assistant Desk Officer at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, based in London, UK.

Lucy Alliott - Management Consultant
Lucy Alliott is a Management Consultant at PwC. Although she is based in London, UK, she has worked on projects all over the world.

Cengizhan Sehir - Global Trade Programme Manager for the Americas and Turkey
Cengizhan Sehir is a Global Trade Programme Manager for Americas and Turkey at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, based in London, UK.

Farhasaad Shahid - Communications Associate
Farhasaad Shahid is a Communications Associate at the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the UN Refugee Agency, and is based in Stockholm, Sweden.

Lieutenant Colonel Paul Hammett - Commanding Officer
Lieutenant Colonel Paul Hammett is Commanding Officer of the 42 Engineer Regiment (Geographic) at the British Army, Ministry of Defence.

Dr Anjana Khatwa - Programme Manager for Learning
Dr Anjana Khatwa is Programme Manager for Learning at the Jurassic Coast Trust, based in Dorset, UK.
You can impress a Princess

KATE MIDDLETON SAYS SHE IS 'IMPRESSED BY PRINCE WILLIAM'S GEOGRAPHY' AS ROYAL COUPLE VISIT GLACIER IN PAKISTAN

‘I hope to learn what more we all can do to help prevent and mitigate this impending global catastrophe’
GCSE Geography has increased its BAME uptake …but drops off at A Level

A more representative GCSE uptake (A Level)

- White 42% (13%)
- Chinese 52% (7%)
- Asian 43% (6%)
- Black/Black British 37% (5%)
More work needed to support BAME students into geography

- Victoria Ayodeji
- Dr Pat Noxolo
- Cengizhan Sehir
- Shajiyah Begum
- Prof Ash Amin
Students enjoy studying geography

- Geography undergraduate students regularly report some of the highest National Student Satisfaction scores for their experience of studying geography.
- As a consequent they are more likely to complete their degrees and less likely to drop out.
- Geography has the third lowest drop out rate of all subjects.
Geographers are more likely to be in work

- Five years after graduation geography graduates have an **above average** likelihood of gaining employment.
- Geographer employment rates outperform many other disciplines, including politics, physics and history.
Geographers earn above graduate salaries

- Geography graduate earnings **outperform** many other subjects, including technology, biosciences and history
- Geographers' salaries are above the average for graduates:
  - 2% more for men
  - 10% for women
Earnings - comparison with other subjects

- For male geography graduates, mean lifetime earnings were only surpassed by five other subjects, (inc economics, law & medicine).
- The earnings of female geography graduates outperformed those of numerous other subjects, including biosciences, languages and education.

#ChooseGeography
Geographical data is vital for our lives - in work, business, policy, health & leisure

- OS makes 10,000 daily changes to Britain’s base map
- Online maps are the 3rd most popular app to download
- South Korea’s COVID success: ‘a patient’s movement can be compared against those of earlier patients using GIS’
What a geographical analysis brings

Geographers are adept at bringing together perspectives from multiple subjects, thinking laterally across debates, synthesising materials, and holding ideas in creative tension.

Subject Benchmark Geography

One area that is relatively underplayed in the current (school) curriculum is developing investigation using GIS data.

Royal Society
The economic value of geospatial data

- Data is the raw materials of the 21st century. More than 80% of these data have a locational element (geospatial data). The economic value of the global geospatial sector is estimated, in 2017, at more than US$500B. (British Academy)

- Geo-spatial commission. The UK can gain £11Billion from better use of geospatial data

- Esri is a $1Billion global company
We’ve a community committed to #choosegeography
If this is the worse people say about geography teachers we don’t need to worry

“Lionel Messi dresses like your old geography teacher”

“Jeremy Corbyn looks like a geography supply teacher” TES 29.09.15.

His (Bernie Sanders) geography teacher shoes
Geography: a subject for now and the future

Geography illuminates the past, explains the present and prepares us for the future.

What could be more important than that?

Michael Palin, Past-President RGS-IBG

www.rgs.org
What are your reason/s

- For your departmental mission statement
- For your team’s CPD
- To underpin your curriculum
- For your young people to contextualize their geographical studies
- For your young people, and their parents, to encourage future study and careers through geography
Thank you

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