

Gabriele Radzeviciute - Teacher of Geography

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Advancing geography
and geographical learning



Job title: Teacher of Geography

Location: Lancaster UK

How did you get to where you are now?

I was always passionate about geography, especially learning about volcanoes, earthquakes and glaciers, thus I took the subject at GCSE and A Level. I also had very supportive and inspiring geography teachers who saw my interest in geography and encouraged me to pursue it further at university. I studied my undergraduate degree at Bangor University, which enabled me to enhance my knowledge of not only the physical environment but realise how much I loved learning about geological hazards, especially hazard risk management and forecasting. This prompted me to choose a variety of skill-based, human and physical modules so that I could learn in-depth how important those environmental and societal links are whilst dealing with geological hazards. I was also lucky as, during my studies, I had a chance to complete geomorphological fieldwork at Nigardsbreen Glacier with Bergen University and complete a summer placement in Cartography and GIS at Vilnius University.

Outside of my studies, I was involved in a variety of volunteering and outreach activities, where I realised that I enjoy sharing my knowledge, passion and interest in geography, which inspired me to gain a teaching qualification. Therefore, after my geography degree, I went on to complete a PGCE at the University of Oxford with the support of the RGS-IBG Teacher Training Scholarship. Now I am a qualified teacher who is completing a MSc Volcanology and Geological Hazards at Lancaster University, in the hope to pursue research in geohazard risk reduction and education and become an educator who inspires students to choose

geography studies and career.

What are you responsible for?

I am currently studying a Volcanology and Geological Hazards Masters degree as a full-time student, so my time is divided between online lectures, practicals, assessments and dissertation research. I'm currently taking four quite different modules, Physical Volcanology, Geoinformatics, Geological Hazards and Land Contamination, which all include a variety of assessments, such as review papers, presentations, consultancy reports, test and exams. I am also currently researching my dissertation project on volcanic hazard mapping of Tenerife, Canary Island, where I will use GIS and Remote Sensing to create comprehensive volcanic hazard risk maps, which can be tailored for different audiences, to help inform mitigation, planning and to educate people (locals and tourists) on existing and future volcanic hazards on Tenerife.

What skills and characteristics do you need for this role, apart from geographical knowledge?

For teaching, good communication and practical/creative thinking as you need to be able to communicate with different pupils, get to know them and understand their needs, as well as to adapt lesson content for different needs and to create interesting and exciting lessons so that pupils remember and learn more complex information more easily.

For my Masters, some knowledge of physics, geology and maths is needed, especially to understand complex physical processes of volcanoes and tectonics. Also, communication is really important, especially written communication, as most of the assignments will require you to be critical, analytical and evaluative. Hard work, organisational skills and perseverance is something you also need, as postgraduate studies are much more intense and require you to be more self-sufficient and work independently. It will seem that you have a lot of time to complete work, but you need to make sure you are on top of deadlines, so organisational and time management skills are helpful.

How does geography feature in your work?

Most of my current Masters' modules are building on what I learned during my undergraduate degree, and it is very exciting as I can make those connections between different subjects, which previously I never thought could be linked. Also, the geographical knowledge that I gained helps me to understand complex concepts, be more analytical and critical not only about my work but also when reading papers and

researching. It helps me be more confident in what I already know and motivates me to do as well as I can.

What do you enjoy most about your job?

What I enjoy most about teaching is that I can share my knowledge, pass it on to pupils and let them see how important geography is in our everyday lives. Also, I love how every day can be completely different, with some tough and some very rewarding days.

What I enjoy about my current Masters is that it is a challenging degree, as I am learning new things and becoming more knowledgeable in something that I have a strong passion for. I love that I have a chance to learn in-depth about physical volcanology, which I never had a chance to learn during my undergraduate degree. I'm also glad that I am learning more about data analysis, coding and data integration skills. I like how I have more freedom to choose modules that I am most interested in, and so can specialise and build a skill set that is personal to me and my career interest.

What are the opportunities for career progression?

There is so much that you can do with a specialised Masters, like the one I am currently pursuing. You can become a researcher and undertake a PhD in volcanology or geological hazards which then can lead you on to a lectureship at a university, or a research position. You can work in environmental consultancy, become a GIS specialist, work in disaster risk management, tourism, hazard forecasting, data management, etc.

Where might you be in 5 years?

Hopefully somewhere where I can combine my knowledge of geological hazards and geography, and research geohazard risk management, emergency planning, preparedness and forecasting. I would also love to be educating people on geohazard risk management and forecasting. My long term goal is to complete a PhD. I would also love to continue educating pupils on the importance of geography and geographical learning in the hope that I can inspire them to pursue geography at university and as a career.

What advice would you give to someone wanting to go into this career?

If you are passionate about geography and want to study it at university, do some research and find a geography degree with modules that will interest you, but also don't be afraid to choose modules that you might not be familiar with, as you might find it fascinating and will want to pursue a career in that particular part of geography. Go to university open days and ask questions about the course, so you can find a university and geography course that is a perfect fit for you.

If you want to pursue a PGCE after university, I do recommend volunteering, tutoring and mentoring - or even work experience in a school alongside your studies. I recommend the RGS-IBG Geography Ambassador Scheme as it is an amazing opportunity to gain experience in teaching and to see whether

teaching is something that you want to pursue as a career. Having a variety of physical and human geography modules helps too, but don't worry if you don't have that, as you will get lots of help and chances to enhance your subject knowledge during your PGCE and even during your NQT, as learning never ends. You don't need to know everything in geography to become a teacher, but you do need a passion for teaching, a positive attitude to want to take a chance and inspire pupils, a lot of hard work and a bit of perseverance.

If you want to pursue a Volcanology and Geological Hazards Masters, I encourage you to study maths, physics and geology alongside your undergraduate degree, just to keep your skills in those subjects fresh as they feature a lot in this postgraduate degree. However, don't be scared if these skills aren't your strongest, you will have a chance to learn them and enhance them during your course. If you love volcanoes and want to learn more about them, or even pursue a career in physical volcanology, this postgraduate degree is going to fully prepare you not only for further studies in academia, such as PhDs, but also for jobs in hazard risk management, GIS, environmental consultancy, etc.

How do you maintain your knowledge and interest in geography outside of work?

Exploring and travelling (and it doesn't need to be abroad, as there is so much to explore in the UK). I also love reading books and geographical magazines. I also watch quite a lot of documentaries on nature, the environment, animals and resources. I like to keep up with the news, as there's always at least a few stories that are geography related.

Why did you choose geography?

Without geography, you are nowhere, as everything in our everyday life is linked to geography. I was also fascinated by the natural environment and processes and wanted to better understand how important human and physical interactions are in shaping our landscapes, perceptions and understanding of the world we live in.

I think others should choose geography as it is such a broad subject with so many sub-disciplines that will give you transferable skills which you can then use in whatever career or job you choose, and it will make you highly employable. Geography allows you to have a variety of options when it comes to careers, so you don't have to box yourself into a specific career path or job. It also develops you as an analytical thinker as you will be constantly learning about current environmental, societal and political affairs and issues. All the geographical and other skills such as communication, GIS, problem-solving, decision making, will make you not only a well-rounded person but also stand out from graduates in other degree disciplines.

*** This interview was undertaken in 2021 and was correct at the time of publication. Please note that the featured individual may no longer be in role, but the profile has been kept for career pathway and informational purposes.**

