

Consultation: Education Select Committee Inquiry

● Career guidance for young people: response from the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG)

1. The Royal Geographical Society (with The Institute of British Geographers) welcomes this opportunity to comment on the inquiry into career guidance for young people.

2. The Society is the Learned Society and professional body for geography and geographers. It was founded in 1830 for the advancement of geographical science. The Society maintains a strong overview of the discipline, its position and its practice in schools, higher education, and the workplace, including professional accreditation. We advise on and support its advancement, dissemination and practice in these realms and within wider public engagement and policy. We have 15,000 members and Fellows and, as a charity, our work reaches millions each year.

3. Each year the Society works on a face-to-face basis with teachers and pupils from more than half of English secondary schools and our online educational resources receive 400,000+ 'user sessions' annually. **We lead the development of subject specific support for further study and careers within geography.** This work draws on our strength in supporting the discipline across schools, in higher education and within the professions.

Extending the statutory duty on careers advice

4. We believe that the statutory requirement for careers guidance should be extended. In a recent consultation by the Department for Education on careers guidance for schools, sixth form colleges and Further Education institutionsⁱ, the Society welcomed the proposal to extend the new duty downwards to Year 8 (age 12-13) pupils from September 2013. We believe this would provide pupils with an early introduction to guidance around careers and further study.

5. We believe that the extension of the duty for schools to provide careers advice to this younger age group (Year 8) should help them to understand the importance of key subjects in enabling a wide range of further study and career options, particularly the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) subjects (of which geography is included as one of the choice of humanity subjects), in preparation for making choices to study them at GCSE. We have also stated that greater encouragement should also be provided for teachers at this stage to include, where appropriate in their subject specialist teaching, case studies about the relevance and applications of specific subjects to further study and in the workplace. The Society provides high quality case studies on its online careers web pagesⁱⁱ and 'Going Places with Geography'ⁱⁱⁱ publication.

6. In this same recent consultation by the Department for Education on careers advice the Society also stated that we would welcome the extension of the new duty to secure independent, impartial careers guidance for young people aged 16-18, to help inform their choices of further study and careers beyond school. In our experience, too few pupils have a good grasp of the wide range of career opportunities that studying specific subjects and groups of subjects at A Level offer.

7. The Society would also wish to see greater use by teachers and careers advisors of the Russell Group of Universities Informed Choices report^{iv} which identifies a preferred list of 'facilitating subjects' at A Level. We note the importance of the EBacc family of subjects at GCSE and the Informed Choices 'facilitating subjects' at A Level and the inclusion of geography within both.

8. Furthermore, subject specialist teachers should be encouraged to engage with careers and further study on an on-going basis within their subject teaching. The Society would prefer to see this approach instead of a subject's relevance to the workplace being (as is often the case now) relegated to a few sentences in a Year 9 options booklet.

Careers advice support

9. In our experience the careers services on offer to and in schools are very variable and have not met that need for many young people. All too often there is also a lack of up to date and useful information for prospective students about higher education courses on offer and how the various study options at GCSE and A level support future careers choices. Without information such as this there is a risk that young people, and their parents, will not see the ways in which more traditional and academic courses, such as geography, actually deliver great employability benefits.

10. In addition to the provision of general independent careers guidance the Society believes there is a need for a greater focus on the provision of careers and further study advice within a subject specialist context. In common with other learned bodies the Society has the best interests of our subject and its practice at heart, rather than the 'conflicting interests that affect each of the other stakeholder groups' (Ofqual 2012^v). We believe in this regard that we provide an example of good practice which could be further developed within other subject disciplines.

11. The Society's own programme for those interested in following a career in geography, draws on our close links with not only schools, but also higher education, employers and professional geographers in the workplace to highlight the wide range of careers that geographers head into. This information is available on our own website and through the Society's Ambassadors programme (as referenced in point 5). We believe this substantial existing careers guidance, which is regularly updated, could be further promoted and used as a resource by careers advisers. We have also suggested that the Department for Education may wish to consider whether, and how, these could be promoted for use more widely.

12. Our own programme for careers advice support includes the following:

Face to face guidance and inspiration:

12.1. The Society's Ambassadors programme recruits, trains and supports geographers currently at university and graduate geographers from the workplace to act as ambassadors for geography in the classroom. The ambassadors are able to introduce younger students to the benefits of studying at university, of studying geography and encourage them to pursue the subject further, acting as positive role models for pupils and illustrating specific and transferable skills that can be developed as a geographer and how they are used in the workplace. The scheme also offers schools the opportunity to strengthen links with their local Higher Education Institutes and businesses.

12.2. Ambassadors visit schools to give presentations to Key Stage 3 and 4 pupils focusing on the relevance of further study in geography at GCSE, AS, A2 and degree level and on how studying geography can lead to a wide range of careers that draw upon either the knowledge or the skills learned, or both. In 2011 the programme was expanded through a partnership with Esri UK (the UK's leading supplier of Geographical Information Systems) and the development of a new cohort of workplace 'GIS Ambassadors'.

12.3. The Geography Ambassadors programme was launched in 2006. Since this time it has provided presentations to c150,000 pupils and currently reaches 30,000+ pupils annually. More than 1,200 presentations about the relevance of geography to further study and careers were provided to 37,000 school pupils last year alone. The Ambassadors act as informed and passionate advocates and role models for the relevance of geography and help showcase the importance of their subject in the real world. Feedback on the programme has been overwhelmingly positive. Teachers have commented that it has opened their

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- i Consultation from the Department for Education on careers guidance for schools, sixth form colleges and further education institutions: <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/14306/>. The deadline was 01 August 2012 and the Society response can be read here: <http://www.rgs.org/NR/rdonlyres/7493B3F6-CAA7-46FF-B84C-D28FACEC4C8A/0/RoyalGeographicalSocietyreponsetoDfEcareersguidanceconsultation2012.pdf>
- ii <http://www.rgs.org/careers>
- iii RGS-IBG: Going Places with Geography <http://www.rgs.org/NR/rdonlyres/9024A8A8-F45E-449A-9C77-4C6D93351168/0/GoingPlaceswithGeographyBooklet.pdf>
- iv Russell Group 'Informed Choices' <http://russellgroup.ac.uk/media/informed-choices/InformedChoices-latest.pdf>
- v OFQUAL (2012) 'Fit for Purpose' p.141 <http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/files/2012-04-03-fit-for-purpose-a-levels.pdf>
- vi www.rgs.org/careers
- vii www.rgs.org/studygeography
- viii RGS-IBG: Demand for Geography <http://www.rgs.org/NR/rdonlyres/1422E618-F932-4F20-9500-C9C605246076/0/Employabilitydemandforgeography.pdf>
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