

# CAREERS WITH GEOGRAPHY

## BUSINESS WORLD

Geography graduates are equipped with an excellent range of transferable skills which explains why this sector of business, law and finance is attracted to geography graduates. Team workers, self starters, highly IT literate, good data interpretation and research skills- these are all attributes where geographers 'tick the box'. Detail and accuracy and a professional attitude are all nurtured during an undergraduate geography degree.

Invariably the broad subject knowledge helps too. Working as a financial risk analyst in a bank for example, a geographer would benefit from their understanding of borders, peace and security issues, distribution of resources and factors affecting economic growth in various parts of the world. Research skills developed at university would then enable them to access and synthesise further information as required.

Although posts exist at all levels in local councils and national government departments the majority of posts in this field are in the private sector. The majority of these posts will be concentrated in larger urban centres. In 2007 for example 45% of UK vacancies in graduate finance positions were in London.

To succeed in this sector you need to be able to work under pressure and enjoy the drive and focus of meeting targets. As with many sectors you will probably undertake further training and even take additional qualifications relating to the specific area where you work. In some roles such as sales and consultancy, skills of persuasion and negotiation will be especially valuable.

The following business jobs are popular with geographers:

- Financial risk assessor
- Banker
- Accountant
- Insurance
- Civil servant for DTI (Department for Trade and Industry)
- Transport and logistics manager
- Retail management
- Management consultant
- Commercial sales
- Lawyer
- Economic adviser and analyst
- Buyer
- Location analyst



## DEVELOPMENT AND GLOBAL ISSUES

The challenges of global peace and security, economic and social development, human rights, humanitarian issues and international law offer a demanding yet fulfilling career area for geographers. In our increasingly interconnected world this sector is a core employment area for geographers.

As geography is so broad and inter-related, project management makes good use of the wide ranging skills and knowledge. Ability or enthusiasm for languages, good report writing, skills in presentation and communication will be developed as part of a university course. For some posts you would need to command confidence and be outgoing with good networking skills. For all roles in this field empathy and cultural tolerance plus a desire to embrace new experiences are essential.

The following Development and Global Issues jobs are popular with geographers:

- Aid worker
- Charity fundraiser
- Charity Officer
- Civil Servant for DFID
- Armed forces
- HIV education officer
- Human rights officer
- International charity fundraising
- Refugee and asylum adviser
- Economic adviser and analyst
- United Nations terrorism prevention officer
- Diplomat
- British council cultural exchange manager
- VSO (Voluntary service overseas)
- 'GAP' project worker



## ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY

At a time of growing concern about climate change, shrinking energy resources and desire for sustainable solutions geography is one of the most relevant courses you could choose to study. Often the top media story of the day, the environment has moved centre stage to the heart of local, national and international affairs.

Geographers are well placed to contribute to the scientific and political debate about the causes, implications and solutions in this area. Perhaps more than any other subject specialists they have the ability to oversee and manage projects in this area – this comes from the breadth of the subject and the global perspective that geographers have.

The following Environment and Sustainability jobs are popular with geographers:

- Environmental campaign organiser
- Civil servant for DEFRA (Department for the environment, food and rural affairs)
- Conservation worker
- Environmental health officer
- Architect or urban planner for sustainable projects
- Environmental engineer
- Landscape architecture
- Pollution analyst
- Cycle route planner
- Recycling officer
- Forestry manager
- SSSI warden
- Environmental consultant
- Environmental impact officer for oil or quarrying company



## PHYSICAL SYSTEMS

Geographers help us explain and understand the world's weather, oceans, biospheres and landscapes and the way our environment is shaped by wind, water, ice and tectonic activity. To work in this area, many geography graduates will have undertaken research and postgraduate qualifications such as an MA or PhD as a start to their career. This higher education helps with the higher level skills in analysis, report writing and ICT required in this career area.

Many of the roles listed below involve explaining a complex physical process to non specialists so the ability to explain technical solutions in an accessible way would be valuable. Managing an environmental project would require that you are always able to see the bigger picture whilst keeping an eye on the small details too.

The following Physical Systems jobs are popular with geographers:

- Coastal engineer
- Soil conservationist
- Hydrologist
- Earth scientist
- Weather forecaster
- Hazard prediction and management
- Flood protection manager
- Pollution analyst
- Risk assessor
- Weather presenter
- Water supply coordinator



## SETTLEMENT

Geographers look at how and why the areas we live in develop and change. They understand the interactions and flows between the regional, national and international.

Both private and public sector employers are found in this sector and range in size from small consulting companies or housing charities to huge construction companies or government departments. Opportunities exist for openings in both urban and rural environments, contributing to projects from broad based to the specialised and from administrative support roles to managerial and strategic posts.

Besides evidence of a keen interest and understanding of issues affecting settlement successful employees should demonstrate skills in communicating their ideas to a range of audiences, problem solving, computer and IT, good spatial awareness and graphical skills, report writing, synthesis and analysis.

In this category we are mainly profiling jobs based in the UK and Europe. For careers in this field based elsewhere see the section called 'Development and Global Issues'.

The following settlement jobs are popular with geographers:

- Planner
- Housing manager
- Surveyor
- Urban regeneration officer
- Local government services
- Estate agent
- Town planner
- Transport officer
- Environmental engineer
- Construction or property lawyer
- Environmental consultant
- Conservation officer



## SOCIETY

Geographers' broad skills and appreciation of the inter-connections between people and communities equip them with a sound base with which to enter these areas of work. From curating in a national museum, to organising a media campaign for Oxfam, geography graduates are ready for anything.

Whilst the majority of these posts will be in the public sector or charities, there are also plenty of opportunities in PR, HR and market research which are huge employment areas in the private sector too.

People skills are obviously important in this sector and those suited to many of the roles in this area might identify themselves as being 'community minded'. Employers seek tolerant, empathetic individuals who enjoy contributing to the work of a team. Strong organisational and administrative skills would help when working in a variety of settings. As you move up the career ladder to managerial and strategic posts it will be necessary to show skills of enterprise in terms of selling your ideas and also perhaps securing funding for new projects.

The following society jobs are popular with geographers

- Teacher
- Social worker
- Youth and community worker
- Emergency services manager
- FE or university lecturer
- Museum explainer
- Exhibition designer and curator
- Health education campaigner
- Advertising executive
- Human resources officer
- Campaign organiser
- Market research analyst
- Public policy research
- Marketing
- PR (Public Relations) Officer

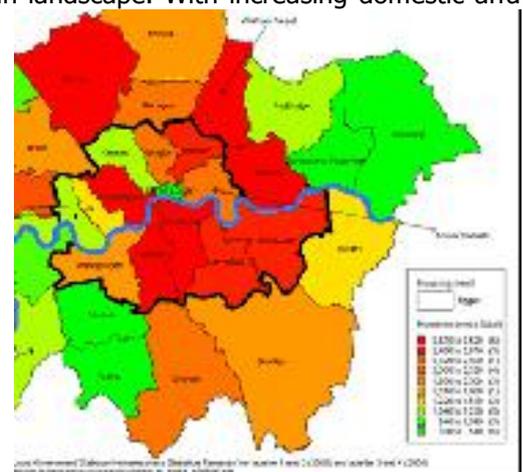


## GEOGRAPHICAL TECHNIQUES

Geographical information systems give geographers the electronic tools to show a range of data on maps to analyse and help us understand changing patterns in both the natural and human landscape. With increasing domestic and commercial applications of electronic mapping software and GPS gadgets, people are becoming more aware of the potential of this sector. There are a wide range of interesting jobs in the UK and abroad.

At university and in subsequent employment you will need to be able to demonstrate good interpersonal skills, communication and teamwork. In addition a keen interest in cartography and good all round graphical and technical skills, you will need an interest in data handling and interpretation, fine attention to detail and the ability to self motivate and carry out independent research and decision making.

Today, GIS is routinely used by a wide variety of public and private-sector employers ranging from specialised large employers such as the Ordnance survey, through to small independent GIS companies with just a few employees. Plentiful opportunities exist with national government departments (The Civil Service), the military, energy and water suppliers, retail companies and local councils.



The following areas are popular choices for geographers with a Geographical Techniques specialism:

- Specialist (Geographical Information Systems)
- Census data specialist
- Location analyst
- Cartographer
- Surveyor
- Military GIS specialist
- Remote sensing analyst
- Geomatics software designer
- CAD technician
- Aerial surveyor

## TRAVEL AND TOURISM

Take geography with you as you lead a group of holiday makers on an expedition, market London to New Yorkers for the 2012 games or research and write travel literature for a guide book company.

It may be that you work in this sector for a short time after graduating such as spending a year teaching English in China combined with a chance for your own adventure.

If you love travel and experiencing different cultures then this sector may appeal to you. You will need to be hard working, outgoing and adaptable and it is essential that you are able to be customer focused and not phased by facing new challenges- the ability to think on your feet could prove very useful.

The following Travel and Tourism jobs are popular with geographers:

- Expedition leader
- Travel agent
- Exhibitions coordinator
- Leisure centre management
- Heritage site manager
- Eco Tour guide
- Tourist information officer
- Visit (London) guide
- Civil servant for DCMS (Dept for culture, media, sport)
- Travel writer
- TV researcher
- Holiday representative
- Cultural arts officer 2012
- TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) teacher



## WHERE TO FIND MORE INFORMATION

- <http://studygeography.rgs.org> This website is the essential guide to Geography in Higher Education in the UK. It provides information on most HE departments with an undergraduate degree or module in geography, the courses offered, and the staff who work there. It also has sections on Why Study Geography; Making a Successful Application; Taking a Gap Year and Careers with Geography.
- **The RGS-IBG website** [www.rgs.org/careers](http://www.rgs.org/careers) has information and useful case studies
- [www.geographyteachingtoday.org.uk](http://www.geographyteachingtoday.org.uk) has **Career cards** featuring young graduates who share details of what their jobs entail and how they use the skills geography has given them in their careers, also **Video clips** of a selection of geography graduates explaining the opportunities geography has given them.
- **Careers websites** including [www.prospects.ac.uk](http://www.prospects.ac.uk) offer useful advice and case studies of recent graduates in geography. Look for their useful **Options series sheet on geography** produced in conjunction with AGCAS.
- **University Geography Departments** usually have careers pages on their websites which you can access on line. When you are visiting universities for open days don't forget to ask about career choices made by recent graduates.
- The **UCAS** website [www.ucas.ac.uk](http://www.ucas.ac.uk) has useful information about applying to university and details of courses available.