

John Cannings, International Geography Teacher, Switzerland

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John Cannings is a geography teacher at the Intercommunity School in Switzerland. John was awarded CGeog status in 2005. Here's what he says about being a Chartered Geographer (Teacher)...

Why did you decide to apply to become a Chartered Geographer (Teacher)?

Basically, to get some professional recognition for my own on going development and leadership in Geography teaching. I had just finished my masters degree in education with a dissertation focused on Geography and also published an article on that research. In addition to that, I was also involved as an assistant examiner in Geography (for the IB Diploma) and helped mentor some less experienced teachers in the subject. At a school level I had been involved in curriculum writing for the IB middle years programme (This is the equivalent of key stage 3).

How did you find the application process?

It took some time to accumulate the evidence and also to contact fellow colleagues who could act as referees (Not so straight forward as I am the only geography trained teacher in the school and my colleagues work at other international schools). I submitted an article I had written for 'Teaching Geography', outlined my role as chair of the ECIS Committee on Social studies (in organising workshops with geography teachers and the professional development associated with teaching IB Geography). It is difficult to quantify the total amount of time involved.

What sort of experience and activities did you include in your professional self evaluation report?

- Professional development (attendance at conferences, leading workshops etc).
- Writing of curriculum material for geography
- Mentoring of less experienced teachers in geography
- Continuing work as an examiner in geography.

How have you benefited personally from gaining the accreditation?

It has helped me be more focused in things that I want to achieve professionally. It is also made me reflect on the real value of some activities.

How have your department and school benefited from you gaining the accreditation?

It has made me more aware of the need as departmental chair to promote geography within an integrated humanities department. Most of the teachers have a North American training with little background knowledge of geography.

How have your Headteacher and senior management team responded to you gaining the accreditation?

It is assumed that staff members will work individually towards their professional development and achieve excellence in their field. As a person that has been classified as a leading teacher within the school I am expected to be involved in leading academic initiatives within the school.

As the CGeog (Teacher) network grows, what would you like to see happen / be available to you?

A greater sharing of teaching resources. Perhaps an indication of useful academic articles and hopefully, a growing international involvement outside of the UK.

Any words of advice for aspiring Chartered Geographer (Teachers)?

Chartered Geographer forces you to think about your role as a teacher of the subject and your own growth of knowledge about the subject. I also think that it reinforces the need to be continually growing professionally and for you to catalogue and evaluate your own efforts in this area. Most importantly it encourages you to think reflectively and critically about your own work.