

# Paula Cooper, Head of Geography

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Paula Cooper is Head of Geography at King Edward VI Fiveways School in Birmingham. Paula was awarded CGeog (Teacher) status in 2005. Here's what she says about being a Chartered Geographer....

## **Why did you decide to apply to become a Chartered Geographer?**

I am passionate about geography and felt that becoming a CGeog would help me to raise the profile of geography in my school and recognise the work I had been doing. I liked the idea that I was being recognised as a geographer as well as a teacher. I also felt it was a way of becoming involved in the geography community. I was also working at a humanities specialist status school with geography as a lead subject.

## **How did you find the application process?**

It was a little time consuming initially, but I became a CGeog before the specialist 'teacher' version and I know that application for CGeog (teacher) is clearly focussed on aspects appropriate to teaching. I enjoyed the application process really, it makes you reflect on what you have done and, like with many people, when I thought about it I had a range of evidence to support my application, more evidence than I expected! The annual CPD log to maintain accreditation is very straightforward and not very time consuming, log takes perhaps an hour or so to fill in. I now find I always have a full and current CV on file, which has come in handy.

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

I included resources I had published on websites such as the GA's, appropriate performance management and threshold documents, and departmental records. I referred to CPD I had attended and also CPD I had led, and my involvement with networks. I also included teaching schemes I had developed for the pilot GCSE and innovative fieldwork, work with PGCE students and an MA degree.

### **How have you benefited personally from gaining the accreditation?**

I really feel that CGeog has allowed me to make many contacts and friends in the geography community and so it has benefited my personal and professional development, as well as my teaching. It has helped me to become involved in a number of projects, and many colleagues have visited us to see how we work and ask about CGeog status.

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

As a head of department in a specialist school with geography as the lead subject, it helped me to raise the profile of the subject and school, and also demonstrated to my school that my work and the work of my department was being recognised by the wider academic community. Colleagues in the department now also have CGeog or are working towards it.

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

Very positively! I am fortunate to be at a school that values geography and the humanities highly, and I feel that CGeog accreditation emphasises the huge value and importance of geography in education. Accreditation is also positively viewed in terms of our specialist status.

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

I would like to see more contact between CGeogs and the development of networks and peer support to share great practise, especially to support those in schools where the curriculum is changing and geography might be losing out.

I am currently working with colleagues and the RGS to develop a Midlands regional network for and with geography teachers.

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

Just do it. When you sit down and think about it you will probably have more appropriate evidence than you initially think. Talk to other CGeogs. The very fact that you are thinking about it shows that you very probably have a lot to offer, and remember the CGeog is about continuing CPD, reflection and geography teaching, not about doing lots of flash things.