

Mark Jones, Secondary Geography PGCE Tutor

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Mark Jones is a Secondary Geography PGCE Tutor at the University of the West of England, Bristol. Mark was awarded CGeog (Teacher) status in 2007. Here's what he says about being a Chartered Geographer (Teacher)....

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

I became aware of it following a discussion with a colleague who encouraged me to apply for it. I realised when reading the application details that I had through my teaching career in secondary schools and now at University a great deal that I could draw upon to support my application. In my present role as PGCE Geography Tutor I have recently created a Masters Level Module for secondary school geography teachers, part of which is a '1000' word professional self-evaluation report which can be used for the CGeog application so in order to speak confidentially about the CGeog application process it made sense that I had first hand experience of the process and benefits as well.

How did you find the application process?

With such a wealth of useful advice and models on the website it was a straightforward task – however like most things in a busy geographer's life it kept slipping down the list. However, meeting representatives of the RGS-IBG at a geography meeting in Bristol put faces to names and with their encouragement I 'just' managed to complete the process by the deadline – I now know where the late posting boxes are in Bristol. I included a range of material in the application such as articles I had written and workshops, CPD events and conferences; those I had attended and others I had organised.

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

I found this a really thought provoking task – it called out to me to put down in 1000 words the geographical journey I have travelled and am still travelling on. What to put in and what to leave out? How to phrase it so it didn't sound like I eat, sleep and breathe geography (which obviously I realise now I do!) I used the metaphor of the journey, describing how in my career to date, I feel I have made positive contributions to promoting geography, both within teaching and with the geographical community in its widest sense.

How have you benefited personally from gaining the accreditation?

I think it has made me realise that I (like many other committed geographers) do a great deal for promoting the subject which goes unrecognised – almost that we take it in our stride and that all we do is a given. It has made me realise that there is also a need to balance hard work with taking time to draw breath, to take stock and to celebrate. It also has made me think about the geographical roads as yet untravelled!

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

Colleagues have been supportive of the recognition and interested to know more. I can now confidently discuss with other interested colleagues the process and benefits of applying for CGeog status and help them to make informed judgements about applying for it.

How has your senior management team responded to you gaining the accreditation?

The senior management team have congratulated me and it has formed part of my appraisal discussions. They are also pleased in that I have introduced a PPD Module at Masters Level to support and accredit the professional development of Primary and Secondary school geography teachers, thus contributing to the profile of the institution.

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

The network should be an added strength to the wider professional learning community of geographers which exists in its numerous forms and at different scales. I hope that it will make available more opportunities for creative and critical dialogue between the wide range of stakeholders who value and seek to promote our subject.

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

The hard work of thousands of geography teachers up and down the country is something that needs to be more widely recognised and celebrated. Take some time to reflect on what you currently do and what you could do with CGeog status. It is time to celebrate your achievements to date and this is one way to do that.