

Geography

Geography and employment

Geography graduates have a long track record in gaining employment across a number of different professions and organisations. This is due to the wide range of skills they have developed in the study of the subject through hands-on learning activities such as fieldwork, laboratory work and team-based projects. Working in the natural environment provides opportunities and constraints on project work that are different, unexpected and more challenging than those found in classroom-based activities. The skills and qualities developed through studying Geography are highly transferable into a variety of roles and different working environments, and form the basis of the real contributions highly motivated and able employees can make to an organisation. In particular, the abilities to think through issues, analyse situations and problems and come up with creative solutions, and to work with others in sometimes difficult and tight timeframes, and in unfamiliar environments, are common skills to geographers. As a result, they have a highly desirable suite of skills which are of a premium to all types of organisations.

What is Geography?

Geography is an integrated study of the complex reciprocal relationships between human societies and the physical components and processes of the Earth. It studies interrelationships and significant regional patterns, recognising the differences and links between cultures, political systems, economies, landscapes and environments across the world. Geographers develop their knowledge through fieldwork and other forms of hands-on learning. This helps to promote curiosity about the social and physical environments, discerning observation and an understanding of scale.

Knowledge, skills and competencies

Like all graduates, geographers should possess the following skills and qualities: communication, organisation, critical thinking, research skills, critical analysis, presentation, ability to work under pressure, self-management, interpersonal skills, confidence and a willingness to learn.

More specifically, a typical geographer can offer advanced knowledge and skills in many or all of the following:

Knowledge

- Cultural, political, economic and environmental issues incorporating local, regional and international perspectives.
- Moral and ethical issues arising from an understanding of diversity in people and places.
- Issues of globalisation, environmental sustainability, multiculturalism and citizenship.

Thinking skills

- Expertise in integrating, analysing and synthesising information from a range of sources, gained by working with complex environments and issues.

Practical skills

- By routinely working in teams on laboratory, desk and field-based research, geographers are versed in project management including planning, execution and evaluation; this involves skills such as time-management, risk-assessment, problem solving and analysis.
- Geography requires the generation and use of a diversity of data types (text, numbers, images and maps). They therefore have well-developed literacy, numeracy and graphicacy skills and are accustomed to manipulating and presenting these various data using a range of ICT formats, including geographical information systems (GIS).
- The complex 'real-world' nature of geographical research requires geographers to be flexible and adaptable – they must have the confidence and initiative to be able to deal with the unexpected.

To check the growing range of resources produced by the Subject Centre to support employability and the use of this profile (including the Skills and Attributes map), go to www.gees.ac.uk.

This profile, produced in 2005, is based on the QAA benchmark to be found at www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/benchmark/honours/default.asp.