

What can I do with a degree in Geography?

Geography.



What is Geography?

Geography is the study of the interaction between people and the environments they live and move in. Physical, social, and spatial sciences underpin Geography's interdisciplinary field, which also has links to Geology, Environmental Science, Law, Physics, Engineering, Data Science, and Health Sciences.

Geography focuses on finding innovative solutions to our society's most pressing issues and debates, and the human response to these challenges, such as climate change, poverty, sustainability, health, and inequality.

Studying Geography will allow you to take an informed and analytical view of our changing world, and of your place in it. The relationship between people and their environment is a key geographical theme, as is the way in which this relationship can be made more sustainable for the future.

Geographers are able to examine an issue holistically by looking at both the physical factors that affect the problem and also the human responses to the challenges experienced.

Learn more

It is important to do some research when planning a future career. Speak with, ask questions of, and follow relevant professional bodies, organisations, companies, thought leaders and industry professionals to learn more about:

- Career opportunities, work environments and salary information
- Education and training requirements.

Examples of professional bodies

- New Zealand Geographical Society
www.nzgs.co.nz
- Te Roopu Whaka Waihangā Iwi O Aotearoa Population Association of New Zealand
www.population.org.nz
- New Zealand Cartographic Society
www.cartography.org.nz
- Te Hunga Takutai o Aotearoa New Zealand Coastal Society
www.coastalsociety.org.nz
- New Zealand Meteorological Society
<https://www.metsoc.org.nz/>

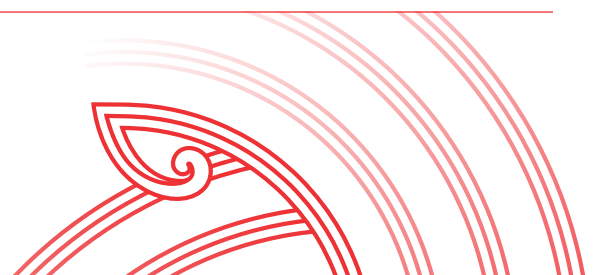
Career and study information

Some study pathways and degrees have a recommended school background, and some careers may require further study beyond a first degree or additional experience.

Gather helpful information from:

- Subject-specific content at
www.canterbury.ac.nz/study/academic-study/subjects/geography
- Job profiles on career websites like
www.careers.govt.nz
- Job adverts/vacancy descriptions
- Industry professional bodies.

This resource is part of a set of brochures focused on subject majors; many can also be studied as minors.





What skills can graduates gain?

Through studying a degree in Geography, graduates develop a valuable set of skills and competencies, which can include:

- The ability to design and carry out research projects
- Analytical skills, including cultural, statistical and geospatial analysis
- Ability to identify positive and negative aspects of the interaction between human activities and the environment
- Practical application of sustainability concepts
- Practical methods for collection of field data; including observational skills
- Enhanced ability to synthesise different viewpoints and types of information
- Problem solving
- Technology literacy
- Teamwork and independent thinking
- A holistic and integrated worldview
- High level of ability to communicate orally and in writing
- Time management, planning and organisation.

Applied learning

Community-based learning, field-based courses and internships with potential employers are available. Such experiences deepen graduates' skillset, awareness of others, working knowledge and employability.

What do employers look for?

Many employers look for generic skills such as communication, client/customer-focus, bicultural competence, cultural awareness, teamwork and initiative.

With technology, globalisation, and other drivers changing society, skills such as resilience, problem solving, and adaptability are important.

Skills that are likely to grow in importance include analytical and creative thinking, systems thinking and technological literacy.*

*World Economic Forum: www.weforum.org/agenda/2023/05/future-of-jobs-2023-skills

How can these skills be developed?

- Some skills are gained through studying
- Extra-curricular activities can help, such as getting involved in clubs, mentoring, cultural groups, part-time work or volunteering
- Be open to professional and personal development opportunities, whether it is undertaking work experience, overseas exchange, skills seminar, or joining an industry group.

Where have graduates been employed?

Geography graduates can look for work across a range of areas such as:

- Organisations using Geospatial data
- Environmental consultancies, protection agencies, and conservation
- Public sector and local government
- Research and policy
- Urban planning and development – city planning departments, property development, transportation agencies
- Natural resources and agriculture
- Education and academia
- Foreign affairs, humanitarian organisations, international development and support organisations
- Media and communication – geography information
- Tech companies using GIS, mapping technology, or developing applications
- Emergency management and disaster relief – GIS support for preparedness and recovery
- Cultural resource management
- Data science, market research and business analysis
- Health agencies
- Transport
- Tourism.

What jobs and activities might graduates do?

Geography graduates have so many diverse career options due to their focus on both the human and physical environment.

Climate change, hazard events, and urbanisation have created a lively market for geographers in consultancy, and in regional and local government. Those who gain technical expertise in areas such as GIS and remote sensing are in demand from both the public and private sectors.

Jobs can be grouped by key geography areas – see some examples below.

Note: This list is not exhaustive, and some jobs may require further study, training or experience. It is recommended to start with the section 'How can I gain a sense of career direction?'

Environmental / Physical Geography

- Compliance officer
- Environmental advisor/officer/scientist
- Resource management planner, resource officer
- Environmental and quality coordinator
- Consents planner
- Coastal or marine scientist
- Climate consultant
- Sustainability or resilience advisor
- Air quality scientist
- Lab assistant
- Hydrologist
- Geomorphologist

Planning and Policy

- Policy advisor
- Urban or transport planner
- Development planner
- Land management advisor/coordinator
- Natural hazards researcher/analyst
- Project manager
- Policy advisor
- Recovery preparedness coordinator
- QA analyst

Human Geography

- NGO or aid agency practitioner
- Diversity officer or human rights advocate
- Community development officer
- Geohealth analyst
- Recruitment advisor
- Communications executive
- Youth worker
- Qualitative researcher
- Social researcher

Geospatial Data and Research

- Analyst (data, statistical, geospatial or image)
- Data technician
- Data administrator
- Asset information specialist
- Geohealth analyst
- Cartographer
- Research position
- Consultant and advisory roles

Examples of other job titles and careers include:

- Teaching
- Advisory officer
- Biosecurity consultant
- Court registry officer
- Enterprise risk management
- Forestry operations coordinator
- Police communicator
- Political risk analyst
- Marketer.

Further study options

Geography graduates can progress into a number of programmes from honours through to master's and PhD level in the subject. Some do further training in a different field e.g. in Environmental Science, Geospatial Science and Technology, Teaching, Urban Resilience and Renewal.

Further study may facilitate career benefits such as specialist skills, entry into a specific occupation, higher starting salary, faster progression rate, and advanced research capability.

It is important to determine which, if any, further study options align with future career aspirations.

For further UC study options visit:

www.canterbury.ac.nz/study/academic-study

How can I gain a sense of career direction?

Understanding yourself and others is important to gain a sense of direction. This grows with experience; therefore, trying new things and reflecting on an ongoing basis is important.

Career planning checklist

Discover and reflect on:

- Your values, interests, strengths, abilities, and aspirations
- Your connection to whānau, people, and places
- Lifestyle preferences and location
- The skills you want to gain, use, or enhance

Engage in a variety of experiences to learn about:

- How you want to contribute to society, the environment, and global challenges
- The tasks, responsibilities and work environments you prefer
- Your work values, priorities and interests

Learn more and gather career and study information

(refer to page one of this resource)

- Speak with people working in careers that interest you; check the realities of a job/career
- Gather information from various sources

Identify your next steps

- Talking to a career consultant can help you to identify your next steps. Visit: www.canterbury.ac.nz/life/jobs-and-careers



What have other students and graduates done?

Explore career stories of students' university experiences and UC alumni who make a difference globally in varied ways.

Visit: www.canterbury.ac.nz/about-uc/why-uc/our-students/student-stories



Natalie

Urban Regeneration Planner,
Christchurch City Council

Bachelor of Arts, major in Geography 2022

What does your role entail?

My role involves working at a range of scales (from city-wide research to site-specific initiatives) to support regenerating urban areas to reach their potential.

I spend about half my time working in the Enliven Places Programme delivering place-making projects to transform underutilised sites into vibrant and welcoming public spaces including lighting projects and vacant sites activation. The other half of my time supports other central city and suburban regeneration initiatives including a neighbourhood plan, assessing the performance of Ōtautahi's commercial centres and delivering on suburban centre master plans.

What excites you most about this position?

The various hats a planner wears - from project scoping, designing, managing and implementation to relationship building and beyond, you get to dip your fingers in a variety of different areas. It makes things ever evolving and exciting!

The depth and breadth of the role - some projects are high level and implemented over a decade and beyond, while some are smaller scale and implemented within a few months. It's rewarding to see tangible outcomes come from your mahi in a short period like new but also supporting projects that come to fruition over the long term.

Is urban planning and transport something you have always been interested in?

Kind of, yes. My favourite subject at high school was geography, I love understanding how the world works and why it doesn't. How our urban form influences all facets of society and our hauora is fascinating to me.

I'm also a huge advocate for the humble bicycle and bus, riding both to this day. It's helped shape my worldview by seeing the incredible positive benefits active transport has on an individual, collective, and environmental scale.

How did your degree help to prepare you for your chosen career path?

Majoring in Geography helped me comprehend the context of the world we live in and the various challenges we face. I channelled this knowledge towards urban planning, seeing it as a way to create a healthier, liveable and thriving society for all people and the environment. I didn't actually know what my specific job title would be until I applied for my role in third year! A special shout out to the amazing staff in the Geography Department who further sparked my passion in this field with their incredible expertise, enthusiasm and all-around excellence.

Career guidance

Career services are available for future and current students, and recent graduates. To learn more, contact:

Te Rōpū Rapuara | Careers

T: +64 3 369 0303

E: careers@canterbury.ac.nz

www.canterbury.ac.nz/life/jobs-and-careers

Helpful career insights

- Speaking with employers is key to finding opportunities; not all jobs are advertised
- Developing an online presence is useful as employers can search for future employees online
- Learning about recruitment patterns and where to find opportunities is important.

Study advice

Student Advisors at UC help with questions focused on starting, planning and changing studies. To connect with Student Advisors, visit:

www.canterbury.ac.nz/study/study-support-info/study-support

Future students – contact:

The Future Students team

T: 0800 VARSITY (0800 827 748)

E: futurestudents@canterbury.ac.nz

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