

# What can I do with a degree in Geography?

# Geography.



## Career planning: what do I need to know?

Knowledge of yourself is important for career decision making. Start by looking at your personal goals, abilities, values and interests to explore study and career options that are relevant to you. Some of these may change over time, so it is important to self-reflect and evaluate your career on an ongoing basis.

### What do employers look for?

Many employers look for generic skills such as communication, customer-focus, bicultural competence, cultural awareness and teamwork. With technology and globalisation changing the nature of society, skills such as resilience, problem solving and adaptability are valuable at work as well as in life.

### How can I develop these skills?

- Some skills are developed through your degree

- Extra-curricular activities can help, for example getting involved in clubs, mentoring, cultural groups, part-time work or volunteering
- Be open to professional and personal development opportunities. Whether it is undertaking an internship, overseas exchange, skills seminar, or joining an industry group — these activities will enhance your employability.

### What else should I know?

The career options in this brochure are examples only and the list is not exhaustive. Some careers may require further study beyond a first degree or additional work experience. Some pathways and degrees have a recommended school background. Find more subject details at

📄 [www.canterbury.ac.nz/subjects/geog](http://www.canterbury.ac.nz/subjects/geog)

If this brochure does not answer your questions, talking to an expert such as a career consultant can help you to identify the next steps in your career decision making journey.

📄 [www.canterbury.ac.nz/careers](http://www.canterbury.ac.nz/careers)

## What is Geography?

Geography is at the interface between Science and humanities. Its focus is on putting various types of knowledge together to find innovative solutions to problems faced by society such as climate change, poverty, sustainability, health and inequality. We aim to provide courses and learning that will enable you to make a difference in your chosen career path after university.

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. This puts Geography at the core of many important current debates. For example, geographers are able to examine the issue of climate change holistically by looking at both the physical factors that affect the problem and also the human responses to the challenges created.



## AT A GLANCE

**MORE**

spatial scientists are needed in Aotearoa New Zealand\*

**\$120k**

is the top salary a senior geospatial specialist can expect\*

**72%**

of geography students were in their ideal employment or working in a step in the right direction\*\*

## What skills have UC graduates gained?

Through their Geography degree, graduates gain a valuable set of transferable skills such as:

- Wide-ranging 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
- Ability to design and carry out research projects
- Practical methods for collection of field data
- Teamwork and independent thinking
- A holistic and integrated worldview
- High level of ability to communicate orally and in writing
- Enhanced ability to synthesise different viewpoints and types of information.

Opportunities to apply your learning outside the classroom are available in this major, through internships, community-based learning, field courses and trips. These utilise UC field stations at Cass, Harihari and Westport. Such experiences deepen your skillset, awareness of others, working knowledge and employability.

## Where have UC graduates been employed?

Graduates have found careers all over Aotearoa New Zealand and the world, from Auckland to Papua New Guinea, Antarctica to California. Many have found careers in:

- Public service
- Tourism
- Private companies dealing with Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and Global Positioning Systems (GPS)
- The Police
- Local authorities and town planning
- Environmental science and conservation
- Education
- Data science
- Foreign affairs and development agencies
- Research and policy
- People-focused positions, like the union movement, teaching and human resources.

### In-demand jobs and sectors

The Resource Management Act has 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.

^ Immigration New Zealand's 2019 long-term skill shortage list [www.skillsshortages.immigration.govt.nz](http://www.skillsshortages.immigration.govt.nz)

\* [www.careers.govt.nz](http://www.careers.govt.nz)

\*\* 2017, 2018, 2019 Graduate Destination Survey results combined



## What jobs and activities do UC graduates do?

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

*Note: Some of the jobs listed may require postgraduate study. See the 'Further study' section.*

### What job titles do Geography graduates have?

#### Geotechnical

- Geotechnical engineer
- Geographical information systems (GIS) analyst / technician / operator / consultant
- Applications specialist
- Remote sensing scientist / analyst
- Geospatial analyst
- Hydrologeologist, hydrological analyst

#### Environmental

- Environmental scientist
- Resource management planner, resource officer
- Environmental and quality coordinator
- Consents planner
- Coastal / marine scientist
- Climate consultant
- Sustainable advisor
- Air quality scientist

#### Planning and risk management

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

#### Human geography

- NGO / aid agency practitioner
- Diversity officer / human rights advocate
- Community development officer
- Geohealth analyst
- Recruitment advisor
- Public relations executive

#### Research

- Qualitative research executive
- Social researcher
- Research assistant
- Research and development manager
- Laboratory supervisor

#### Data

- Statistical analyst
- Data collector / technician
- Database administrator

#### Entrepreneur & self-employment

Entrepreneurship and innovation are an increasing part of the working landscape. Through generating a business idea, or getting involved in a start-up/business venture, you have the potential to create a work opportunity that aligns with your knowledge, skills, values and risk profile. To get started on how to establish, run and grow a new business, go to Te Pokapū Rakahinonga, Centre for Entrepreneurship at the University of Canterbury [www.canterbury.ac.nz/uce](http://www.canterbury.ac.nz/uce)

## What professional organisations can I engage with?

Connecting with professional bodies and organisations can help you to establish professional networks and learn more about different career options in your area of interest. Gaining valuable insight into a profession can assist in making informed career decisions.

- New Zealand Geographical Society  
[www.nzgs.co.nz](http://www.nzgs.co.nz)
- Te Roopu Whaka Waihangā Iwi O Aotearoa Population Association of New Zealand  
[www.population.org.nz](http://www.population.org.nz)
- New Zealand Cartographic Society  
[www.cartography.org.nz](http://www.cartography.org.nz)
- Te Hunga Takutai o Aotearoa New Zealand Coastal Society  
[www.coastalsociety.org.nz](http://www.coastalsociety.org.nz)
- New Zealand Association of Resource Management [www.nzarm.org.nz](http://www.nzarm.org.nz)
- New Zealand Hydrological Society  
[www.hydrologynz.org.nz](http://www.hydrologynz.org.nz)
- New Zealand Planning Institute  
[www.planning.org.nz](http://www.planning.org.nz)

Having a professional presence on social media networks such as [www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com) and Facebook can help you to keep up to date with important industry developments and trends, networking opportunities, events and job vacancies. Following relevant professional bodies, organisations, companies and thought leaders is a great way to gain a deeper awareness of the industries that interest you. Social media presents an opportunity to build and enhance networks as well as to display your involvement in projects and any academic successes.

## Why do further study and what are my options?

Postgraduate study can facilitate career benefits such as specialist skills, higher starting salary, and advanced research capability. It can also lead to an academic job. It is important to determine which, if any, further study will help your career.

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 eg, in Environmental Science, Geographic Information Systems, Teaching, Urban Resilience and Renewal. For UC listings visit [www.canterbury.ac.nz/courses](http://www.canterbury.ac.nz/courses)

## Useful links

- Te Rōpū Rapuara UC Careers  
[www.canterbury.ac.nz/careers](http://www.canterbury.ac.nz/careers)
- Careers New Zealand  
[www.careers.govt.nz](http://www.careers.govt.nz)
- Geospatial Research Institute  
[www.geospatial.ac.nz](http://www.geospatial.ac.nz)



## Hamish



Bachelor of Science in Geography  
Postgraduate Diploma in Geographic Information Science  
Consultant, Interpret Geospatial Solutions

### Why did you choose UC?

I wanted to complete a BSc in Geography and Computer Science. Geographic Information Science allowed me to combine my interests in both, and UC rates highly in both these departments so it was an easy decision to remain in Christchurch.

### Are there any standout experiences you've had?

I took numerous Geology papers – including two week-long field trip based papers. These papers had us stationed at one of UC's field stations. A lot of hard work and a lot of fun was had on these trips. I also went on a number of day and overnight field trips with the Geography department.

### What does your current role involve?

As a consultant I work with a range of clients on various jobs. My main area of work is in development – I build and develop custom web applications to solve clients' problems. I also perform a range of analytical tasks to complement the web applications.

### What do you enjoy most about your job?

The variety. Working as a consultant opens me up to a huge range of different clients, as a result

I can use my GIS skills to help a huge range of different industries.

### How has your study prepared you for what you are doing now?

My study has given me a broad background in various topics. As I've entered the workforce I have discovered areas that further interest me and used my existing skills to help expand my knowledge in these new areas.

### Any advice for future students?

Go for it. GIS can be used in industries ranging from health to social sciences and more. You can also choose to use GIS in conjunction with a range of other skills. It is both a tool and a discipline – and extremely versatile.

## Read more online

Read Hamish's full story about his university experience on our profiles website. UC alumni like Hamish make a difference in varied ways around the globe. Find out where Geography graduates are now at [www.canterbury.ac.nz/get-started/why-uc/student-profiles](http://www.canterbury.ac.nz/get-started/why-uc/student-profiles)

*The information in this brochure was correct at the time of print but is subject to change.*

## More information

### UC students seeking study advice.

Te Kura Aronukurangi |  
School of Earth and Environment

The School of Earth and Environment staff are active researchers and engaging teachers. We have over 16 active research groups that are working on everything from waterways to ecosystems in Antarctica. Our research and state of the art facilities all are used throughout our classes to allow our students to develop vital skills for further study or the workforce. Earth is the only planet we have and sustains all life, we believe understanding how it works and how humans interact with it should be part of everyone's education!

T: 03 369 4141  
E: [scienceugadvice@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:scienceugadvice@canterbury.ac.nz)

[www.canterbury.ac.nz/science/schools-and-departments/geog](http://www.canterbury.ac.nz/science/schools-and-departments/geog)

### Anyone seeking careers advice.

Te Rōpū Rapuara | UC Careers

UC offers intending and current students and recent graduates a wide range of services, including individual career guidance, seminars, career resources and student and graduate employment opportunities.

T: +64 3 369 0303  
E: [careers@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:careers@canterbury.ac.nz)

[www.canterbury.ac.nz/careers](http://www.canterbury.ac.nz/careers)

### Prospective students seeking study advice.

Te Rōpū Takawaenga | Student Liaison

The liaison team provide advice to future students who are starting their degree for the first time. They can assist with information on degrees, scholarships, accommodation, and other aspects of university life. We have offices in Christchurch, Auckland and Wellington.

Ōtautahi | Christchurch  
T: 0800 VARSITY (0800 827 748)  
E: [liaison@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:liaison@canterbury.ac.nz)

Tāmaki Makaurau | Auckland  
T: 0800 UCAUCK  
E: [auckland@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:auckland@canterbury.ac.nz)

Te Whanganui-a-Tara | Wellington  
T: 0800 VARSITY (0800 827 748)  
E: [wellington@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:wellington@canterbury.ac.nz)

[www.canterbury.ac.nz/liaison](http://www.canterbury.ac.nz/liaison)

