

Hints on applying for a secondary geography course

In your application you should demonstrate a commitment to, and enjoyment of, working with children and young people. This may be through voluntary work with young people and, ideally, some experience in schools. You must also convey your enthusiasm for teaching geography.

- Answer as comprehensively as you can. Below are some examples as a guide. **Do not copy these.** You must emphasise your own expertise and experiences.
- Don't make exaggerated claims – ITE providers are likely to explore what you have written in more depth during an interview.
- Remember that training places are limited so try to make your application as original and appealing as possible.

Many candidates find the personal statement to be the most challenging section. These five questions will help you complete your personal statement.

Who or what has influenced your decision to apply to be a geography teacher?

This is your 'opener'. Perhaps there was a specific time when you decided to become a teacher. How did you come to this realisation? Examples of possible openers include:

- 'What attracts me to teaching is... '
- 'I am interested in teaching because... '
- 'Teaching appeals to me as a career because... '

Mention your own experience and skills, and avoid clichés such as 'I have always wanted to be a teacher' or 'I believe that teaching is my vocation'.

Examples

'When I began sixth form college I took up a role with my local rugby club to coach young people who were still at school. I really enjoyed seeing them develop their skills and have a good time. I decided then that I could take this further and become a teacher.'

'In my gap year I helped build a small dam in a township in South Africa. Part of the experience included working with children in a school to help them understand about how the dam worked. I ended up encouraging them to express their opinions about their world and their place within it. This was a fantastic learning experience for me and confirmed my wish to become a teacher. Most importantly, my time there showed me how rewarding a classroom full of enthusiasm can be.'

Why will you enjoy working with young people?

Match specific examples of qualities you have to those which are important in teaching. There are many qualities that can be attributed to good teachers including:

- An ability to relate to young people - good interpersonal and listening skills
- The capacity to be creative, imaginative, energetic and enthusiastic

- An ability to be adaptable and versatile
- A sense of responsibility and reliability
- Good time management and organisational skills
- Resilience, motivation and tenacity
- A desire for self-development

You should focus on the attributes that match your own strengths and identify a specific time when you have demonstrated those qualities.

Examples

'I have good verbal communication skills which I have developed since the age of 13 when I became a Sunday School teacher - a role I continued to enjoy until I left for university. This experience was my first real flavour of teaching; I planned activities and projects and developed my organisational and leadership skills. I learnt how to make information accessible to young children and how to hold their attention. I learnt the importance of making connections that children will remember.'

'During my Sixth Form years I won a Sports Leadership Award based on my personal performance in teaching sport to primary school pupils. The confidence I gained from this encouraged me to run a school badminton team - a role which involved strong organisation and motivational skills.'

Why will you enjoy teaching geography?

Match your skills and experience to teaching. You should reflect on what subject knowledge you have and how you have developed it.

Examples

'I find geography a really interesting and challenging subject to study. I firmly believe it is important for young people understand their own personal geography - how they interact with their own sense of place. Teaching students about how geography links with other parts of the school curriculum and how it gives us an understanding of current world issues is a challenge I look forward to.'

'Geography is a subject that develops an awareness and an understanding of the world in which we live. I have found that this has been the case during my time studying geography and know that I want to encourage students to develop the same sense of enjoyment that I have.'

What have you learnt about teaching from your experiences in schools or other educational institutions?

This is your chance to reflect on your school and/or further education experience. You should identify and comment on a particular aspect of your experience and demonstrate how it affected the teaching and learning process. Some examples include:

- The layout of tables and chairs, different tasks and teaching methods
- The way the teacher assessed work and gave feedback to students
- How the teacher worked with other adults in the classroom

Examples

'When I helped out for a month as a classroom assistant in a challenging secondary school I learnt a great deal about the art of teaching. I saw the teacher produce differentiated work for a

class of difficult GCSE students. This emphasised to me the importance of treating students as individuals and not as an equal group.'

'During my two week work experience in a school I saw the importance of assessment for learning. This involved setting individual targets for students and helping them to achieve them. Although this involved a huge amount of work for the teacher I started to see the benefits to the students even in the short time I was there.'

What can you offer a school apart from geography?

Here, you should focus on other skills you have that would be of benefit to a school. These could be:

- Your interests, like photography, ICT, sport, drama or music
- Training, experience or management skills you have gained in other employment

Examples

'During my gap year I travelled extensively around the world and have many pictures which I have grouped into geographical topics such as culture, cities, and coasts. I look forward to being able to use these in my teaching where relevant.'

'I achieved the Duke of Edinburgh's Silver Award at school and would be keen to be involved with aspects of this in a school. During my time as a sales assistant at a local bakery I had to develop good communication and numeric skills, work independently and in a team to help less experienced workers.'

(Last updated July 2016)