

# IGU CGE Geography Education Questionnaire

**Country:** UK: Northern Ireland

**Name of respondent:** Richard Greenwood

**Email address respondent:** [r.greenwood@stran.ac.uk](mailto:r.greenwood@stran.ac.uk)

1. What is the aim of geography in primary education in your country?

*Geography in Primary schools (ages 5-11) in Northern Ireland (NI) sits alongside history and science & technology within an Area of Learning entitled 'The World Around Us' (WAU). Its purpose is to help children explore some of the big questions concerning the world around them, to appreciate the beauty and wonder of the world, and to develop an awareness of their place in the world.*

2. What is the aim of geography in secondary education in your country?

*At Key Stage 3 (ages 11-14) geography is within an Area of Learning entitled 'Environment and Society' which contains the subject strands of geography and history. The main headings in this Area concern developing pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills in geography and developing pupils as individuals, as contributors to society and as contributors to the economy and the environment.*

3. What is the average number of hours of geography teaching in primary education in your country?

*WAU is studied, on average, for around one hour per week. It is usually taught within cross-curricular topics or projects, so, for example, a portion of Literacy time may involve Literacy work being covered in the context of the WAU-based topics.*

4. What is the average number of hours of geography teaching in secondary education in your country?

*Teaching time allocation varies between schools and there is no specific time set by the Department of Education. However schools tend to offer approximately 3 periods per week, each of some 35/40 minutes.*

*At Key Stage 4 (GCSE) and 5 (GCE) Geography is optional. Hours allocated vary from school to school.*

5. What are the most important themes in primary geography teaching in your country?

*WAU in the NI Curriculum has four main strands within which geography, history and science & technology based topics are taught: Interdependence, Place, Movement and Energy, and Change Over Time.*

6. What are the most important themes in secondary geography teaching in your country?

*At key stage 3 (11-14 year olds) the main themes are as follows: Developing a sense of place and belonging at a local level; developing an awareness of relationships to other places, peoples and environments, from local to global; investigating differences in lifestyle within and between countries; developing an understanding of how people in different places interact with their environment; exploring how we can play a role in helping to promote a fairer world for all; investigating how the skills developed through geography will be useful to a range of careers; investigating how physical processes operate to create*

*distinct and diverse environments; and investigating the impact of conflict between social, economic and environmental needs both locally and globally.*

7. What is the position of geography in the upper levels of secondary education in your country? (optional/compulsory?)

At GCSE Level and at 'A' Level Geography is optional.

8. What is the biggest problem for geography teaching in your country?

*The WAU structure in primary schools may prove to be a positive move for primary geography since a 'connected learning' approach can promote pupil interest and motivation. However, it may be found in the future that specific geographical skills have been lost and that pupils leave primary school not understanding the distinctive contribution which geography can make.*

9. Mention one or more good practices or very successful projects of geography teaching in your country.

*The NI Curriculum includes a number of documents called 'Ideas for Connected Learning' and 'Thematic Units'. These provide teachers with suggestions and ideas for teaching topics in a cross-curricular way, and many of these have a geographical basis. They can be found on the NI Curriculum web site (see below).*

10. Mention research projects in the field of geography teaching in your country.

*My own research has been into the teaching of primary geography within WAU in Northern Ireland, focusing on cross-curricularity and teachers' opinions about this way to teach geography in the primary school. There is negligible research in NI into geography in secondary schooling.*

11. Mention publications or websites with information in English about geography teaching in your country.

*The NI Curriculum is found at: [www.nicurriculum.org.uk](http://www.nicurriculum.org.uk).*

Greenwood, R. (2013) Subject-based and cross-curricular approaches within the revised primary curriculum in Northern Ireland: teachers' concerns and preferred approaches. *Education 3-13*, 41 (4) 443-458.

12. Mention contact addresses for information about geography teaching in your country.

*The organizing body for the NI Curriculum is called The Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA). A contact e-mail address for CCEA concerning the NI Curriculum is: [info@nicurriculum.org.uk](mailto:info@nicurriculum.org.uk). Other information can be found on the NI curriculum website: [www.nicurriculum.org.uk](http://www.nicurriculum.org.uk).*