

Diversity, equality and inclusion, and the Society

In recent years, the Geological Society has taken many positive steps to expand on its commitment to Diversity, Equality and Inclusion (DEI), with the aim of making the geoscience community as welcoming and inclusive as we know it can be. George Jameson provides an update.

Declaration signed

Our first step on this journey was in 2014, when the Society became one of the original signatories to the Science Council's Declaration on Diversity, Equality and Inclusion. The declaration committed member bodies to be proactive and improve opportunities for all individuals who wish to fulfil their scientific potential, irrespective of their background or circumstances, thus helping to attract the widest possible talent into science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) careers and ensuring a greater diversity of scientific ideas, research and technology.

We carried out an extensive review of our communications and attempted to better understand the demographics of our Fellowship with the introduction of our Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Survey. The survey aimed to identify real and/or perceived barriers to inclusion, guiding us on where to direct resources to make the Society and Earth science community more inclusive, and providing a baseline to track our progress.

Framework

In 2016, the Science Council and the Royal Academy of Engineering collaborated to develop a Diversity and Inclusion Progression Framework. We took part in a trial run, feeding back our experience and helping to fine-tune the process before it was officially launched in 2017. The specially created framework aims to help organisations to plan, track and assess progress in eight main areas of work: Governance and leadership; Membership and registration; Meetings, conferences and events; Education and training, accreditation and examinations; Prizes and awards; Communications, marketing and publicity; Employment; and Monitoring and measuring.

The Society was one of 21 scientific bodies to participate in the benchmarking exercise, along with 20 professional engineering institutions. The findings of this report are available in a link in the online version of this article.

The Science Council and Royal Academy of Engineering brought together their respective scientific and engineering professional bodies in a steering group to address the findings and recommendations from the report. Four subgroups are now considering these in more depth, focusing on communications and language; developing better measures; extending use of the framework; and sharing of resources.

Working with others

Our work to advance inclusivity is not limited to signing a declaration and participating in a Progression Framework. We work in partnership

with other key organisations who specialise in specific strands of Diversity and Inclusion work. Some of the more visible organisations include:

International Association of Geoscience Diversity (IAGD):

An Associated Society founded in North America in 2008 as an advisory group that raises awareness of improving access, accommodation, and inclusion for students, faculty and geoscientists with disabilities. In 2015, the IAGD came together with others at Burlington House for the 'Confronting Barriers to Inclusion' event—a very successful and informative day highlighting the advancements the Earth sciences is making, especially around fieldwork.

Diversity in Geoscience UK (DiG-UK): The recently established UK chapter of the IAGD, DiG-UK aims to expand the mission and vision of the IAGD while focusing specifically on the needs, values and resources in the UK. DiG-UK held their launch event at Burlington House in June 2018, focussing on key themes of mental health, advocacy and leadership for supporting diversity.

Athena SWAN: Originated as a national charter mark in 2005 to recognise commitment to advancing women's careers (and men where appropriate) in STEM employment throughout Higher Education. Since 2017, The Society has facilitated workshops offering guidance and opportunities to share best practice for Earth Science Departments submitting for an award.

WISE: This year the Society joined the WISE Campaign, which provides expertise and support to organisations seeking to improve gender balance issues. WISE recently launched 'People Like Me' a fantastic project breaking down gender stereotypes and showing that anybody can be a part of the STEM community.

APPG on Diversity in STEM: The Society is involved with the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Diversity and Inclusion in STEM. Established by the British Science Association, it aims to improve outcomes for people from diverse backgrounds in STEM. Recent meetings have focused on education and skills, the Industrial Strategy and regional disparities.

Updating policies and procedures

Over the past year, we have undertaken positive strides, while recognising that much remains to be done. The Society was part of the AGI ad hoc Committee on Harassment in the Geosciences and is currently developing our own version for the Society and its affiliated groups and networks. We have a new Equal Opportunities Statement and we will to review our Professional Code of Conduct very soon, so watch this space.

Images

Top: A recent Access Anglesey Geological Field Trip (led by co-founder of DiG-UK)

Bottom: Previous GSL Executive Secretary, Edmund Nickless, and Council member, Natalyn Ala, signing the declaration

