

# University Geoscience UK

## Annual General Meeting of University Geoscience UK

Minutes of the meeting held at 14:00 on 30 November 2017 at Burlington House

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**Present:** Tim Minshull (Chair), Gordon Curry (Executive Secretary), Andy Aplin, Peter Burgess, Sian Davies-Vollum, Gerald Roberts, Kevin Taylor, Sarah Boulton, Stuart Egan, Michelle Hale, Jacqui Houghton, Helen Lever, Norman Moles, Tim Reston, Ros Rickaby, Kathryn Whaler

**Apologies:** Mark Anderson

**In attendance:** Nic Bilham, George Jameson

### 1. **DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of interest.

### 2. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies as set out above were noted.

### 3. **MINUTES OF LAST MEETING**

The minutes were approved.

### 4. **MEMBERSHIP OF THE EXECUTIVE**

Gordon outlined recent changes to the make-up of the Executive. Three positions became available during the year. Jon Gluyas resigned leaving the role of Vice-Chair vacant. This led to the nomination of Mark Anderson, Plymouth University, as the new Vice-Chair. Mark previously held the position of Executive Secretary. The Vice-Chair of UGUK is also the Chair-elect, which will see Mark being appointed as Chair when Tim steps down in May 2018.

During his tenure, Jon led on the research agenda that includes infrastructure and facilities and postgraduate research. Andy Aplin will take over this responsibility.

The employability agenda was also vacant. This is being taken over by Rebecca Williams, University of Hull, however she is currently on maternity leave. During her absence, Sian Davies-Vollum will oversee this portfolio.

The committee voted in favour of the proposed nominations to the Executive. With these appointments confirmed, the Executive is now fully populated.

### **Actions**

## 5. REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

Tim began by clarifying that the report from the 'Future Science' event, which has recently stalled, will be published before he steps down in May 2018. He stated his intention to contact those who have volunteered to provide content.

**TM**

University Geoscience UK has been invited to make nominations for the Research Excellence Framework (REF) sub-panel. The Geological Society can also make nominations. At yesterday's Joint Higher Education meeting, it was agreed that both organisations would coordinate on this. Heads of Departments should have recently received an email inviting them to put individuals forward for nomination. For those departments who submit nominations, HEFCE are requesting a detailed summary of how they ensure diversity, equality and inclusion are addressed within the process. The deadline UGUK have set for this is the 8<sup>th</sup> of December. This will allow the executive time to review all nominations before submitting them to HEFCE who have set a deadline of the 20<sup>th</sup>.

Tim highlighted a number of recent consultations the Society intends to submit responses. Tim indicated that these would be circulated, via email, to Heads of Departments. One of the consultations concerns international students and is a topic Tim feels is extremely relevant to the geological community given the reliance on international students on masters' level courses. UGUK will feed into the Society's response/submission.

Tim drew attention to an approach he received from UNESCO. They have created a new education initiative for developing countries to support the development of the next generation of earth scientists in these regions. Part of the programme would see PhD students attending fieldtrips organised by Universities in developed nations. The field trips would primarily be at MSc level. Tim intends to inform them that there are undergraduate courses that would also be appropriate.

**TM**

UNESCO have requested a list of field courses who would be willing to participate in the project as well as detailing the prerequisites for those courses. The selection of individual participants will be carried out by UNESCO.

The issue of insurance was flagged with committee members enquiring if the University would incur the charge or if it would be covered by UNESCO. Tim intends to raise this concern when he talks with the UNESCO rep.

**TM**

The timescale including advertising and selection of students is set to begin in Spring 2018 with the aim of fieldtrips beginning around Easter 2019. An email will be circulated enquiring if individual departments are willing to include their courses in this project.

Tim drew attention to the upcoming Higher Education Network's annual meeting that is being hosted by the University of Plymouth on January 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>. This year's theme focuses on graduate employability. EDINA is delivering a free QGIS workshop on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> Jan 2018, 1-4pm which delegates are invited to attend.

Tim pointed out a proposal for the creation of a Geoweek, organised by Chris King with support from the Earth Science Teachers' Association. Geoweek shares similarities with Earth Science Week but will take place on 5-13 May 2018. Tim will

circulate the information he received, via email, to committee members. Peter Burgess volunteered to make contact with Chris to discuss the project. They are looking for volunteers to coordinate events. It was suggested that the Regional Groups of the Society should be made aware of this to help broaden engagement.

## **6. REPORT FROM THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY**

### **i. *Accreditation***

Gordon informed members that UGUK had been informed that the Geological Society will be conducting a review of its accreditation process. A starting date has not yet been decided. The Society's President-designate, Nick Rogers, will be tasked with chairing the review. University Geoscience UK have been approached for their involvement with Gordon currently leading on this. He has circulated a request for comments via email to Heads of Departments. So far, he has received 4 replies and added that comments are still welcome. Gordon intends to collate all comments he receives.

Nic added that the timetable depends on what exactly is determined to be under review. The Society's Accreditation Committee have requested University Geoscience UK to nominate members to become members of the Accreditation Committee especially those who have regular dealings with the process within their institutions. Gordon requested that those who are interested email Margaret Jackson to express their interest.

### **ii. *Employability***

Gordon reminded members of one of the actions from the Employability event last year was to identify examples of geology graduates in non-geology careers. This was run over the summer months with 50 different careers being highlighted. 15 of those identified have provided a short biography; these will be shared on the Careers section of the Society's website. This is very welcome as Gordon felt that some of the current profiles on the webpage seem slightly dated.

Given the progress made on this, Gordon requested permission from members to commence a project, with the help of an intern, to develop a brochure highlighting the transferability of skills from geoscience degrees. In Becky Williams's absence, due to maternity leave, Sian has volunteered to take the lead on this project. When completed it can be used as promotional material for Professors to use. It was agreed that this should also be made available to schools to maximise its potential reach. Members agreed that this project would be a beneficial exercise to take forward.

Gordon added that the video competition flyer that Peter is leading on would be circulated to members again given that it too is a useful tool to use in advertising the geosciences to school level students. The issue of Heads of Departments not receiving promotional material like this was discussed and if any member has any thoughts or suggestions on how to more effectively communicate these projects to please share with the group.

An action was placed on members to think about more effective ways to communicate more widely when it's appropriate.

### iii. **AGI Exit Survey**

Gordon drew members' attention to the current attempt at having an AGI Exit Survey tailored for the UK. It is a yearly survey conducted in the US, canvassing the views of all earth science graduates. A 60-70 page report is produced each year based on its findings.

With the assistance of the Geological Society, the AGI agreed to allow a UK version produced to canvas UK graduates. This was trialled 2-3 years ago but received little engagement. At the time, they were conscious of not having the survey overlap with the National Student Survey (NSS).

Ideally, the survey would be released before the summer recess in order to ensure that all graduates are contactable on their university email address. One suggestion made to increase uptake would see its inclusion in a Fellowship application pack, as all applicant Fellows require a degree this could be a way to ensure it is answered. Although, it was acknowledged that this may be a difficult task.

Nic outlined plans the Society has, earmarked for 2018, to carry out an in-depth overview of the geoscience landscape of the UK.

Gordon brought members attention to a recent study conducted in the Republic of Ireland highlighting the economic value of geoscience to the Irish economy. Members agreed that this would be a great idea if this were replicated for the United Kingdom's economy.

Gordon and Tim asked members if they have any thoughts or ideas on this matter to get in touch with them. They both agreed to find out what data their institutions hold before making a decision on how to bring this forward.

## 7. **REPORT FROM THE TREASURER**

Kevin began by highlighting that he has now been in the position for 1 year, taking over this time last year, having replaced Hugh Rollinson. Transferring over the UGUK accounts to Kevin took over 3 months. This account transfer hindered Kevin in sending out the subscription invoices. That is why, this year, the subscription charge spans a two-year period.

The current balance stands at £4952.00. Kevin intends to send a full account summary to Gordon. The main outgoings in the year were to Margaret for administrative support and for the internship project. The income is predominantly subscription fees received. Kevin pointed out that members will see a slight increase in the subscription fee to help finance potential future projects.

**KT**

## 8. **REPORTS FROM OTHER MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE**

- i. Sian highlighted changes to geology A-level and how that might affect uptake in future. It will take a number of years before these trends are established.

The Teaching Excellence Framework will become subject level in 2019/20. This is currently being run under HEFCE but will be transferred over to the newly established Office for Students. A pilot study is ongoing. A component in this new set up will focus on teaching intensity. It is unclear if this will have an effect on fieldwork. A grade inflation metric will record the proportion of firsts, 2:1s and other grades as a percentage of all classified degrees at that provider 1, 2, 3 and 10 years before the year of assessment. There may also be changes to the benchmarking metrics.

- ii. Gerald Roberts brought members attention to a newly introduced Postgraduate loan for masters degree students normally residing in the UK. The loans, amounting to a maximum of £10,280, will be non-means tested and available to students under the age of 60, on the first day of the first year of the programme.

## **9. FORMAT AND THEMES FOR FUTURE MEETINGS AND PROJECTS**

Gordon suggested members think of potential themes future meetings should focus on. The future of geoscience was mentioned as a possibility. This is a quite pertinent area because the syllabus evolves rapidly when compared to other subjects. Recruitment was another suitable topic suggested. Recent data trends depict a drop in enrolment levels into the geosciences.

Thoughts on who to invite were raised. It was felt that having end users from industries that do not rely on geoscience now but will do so in the future would be a useful approach. Industries such as the insurance and financial sectors were given as examples.

## **10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There were no items raised under any other business.

## **11. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

The following dates were set for the meetings of the Joint Higher Education and Executive Committee, with the JHEC meeting to start at 10:30 at Burlington House:

- Wednesday 7 March 2018
- Wednesday 13 June 2018