

Meeting of University Geoscience UK Executive Committee

Minutes of the meeting held at 13:30 on 13 June 2018 at Burlington House

Present: Mark Anderson (Chair), Gordon Curry (Executive Secretary), Peter Burgess, Andrew Aplin

Apologies: Sian Davies-Vollum, Gerald Roberts, Kevin Taylor

In attendance: Nic Bilham, Andy Saunders, Flo Bullough

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. IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS OF AN OTHER BUSINESS

- i. Gordon informed the committee that he has one item he would like to raise under any other business, concerning a letter he received from Prof. David Manning.

5. MATTERS ARISING

- i. Gordon brought the Committees attention to the recent UNESCO approach, stating that Tim wrote to them seeking clarity on their initial correspondence. He has yet to receive a response. The Committee agreed to follow up on this.
- ii. Gordon reported on 'Geoweeek' stating that the organisers of the weeklong project eventually established a working website. About 50 events took place throughout the UK; however, UGUK and GSL have no information on what these events were. Peter intends to write to Chris King, one of the organisers, and ask if it would be possible for a summary of the events to be produced.

Next year, the Committee agreed to advertise 'Geoweeek' to heads of departments and schools on order to highlight the benefits of linking up with their local Geological Society, as this would circumvent any insurance concerns.

Actions

PB

- iii. An action from the previous meeting required Gordon to circulate an email to the wider membership about Geoweek. Gordon confirmed that he circulated the email but is unsure if there have been any responses as the email advised people to contact the Geological Society.
- iv. A newly introduced standing item at the meeting of the Joint Higher Education Committee sees the Society's business plan being formally embedded into the workings of the committee. As a result, University Geoscience UK and the Society are jointly responsible for the delivery of business plan items specific to both organisations. The main topics raised at the earlier Joint Higher Education Committee meeting included the following;

Future Science

Outputs from the town hall meeting held in February 2017 have stalled. The first output would see a long form document being produced with the aim of using it to influence funding bodies. The second output would be a much shorter version of the long document aimed at policy makers. It has been decided that the Society will now attempt to take this forward. It is hoped that this will be finalized and launched at the November 2018 thematic event. It was agreed that Andy would now act as the point of contact for this.

AA

The Wakeham Review

The review was discussed at the earlier meeting. It looks certain that a review of the original report will be taking place soon. As a result it was agreed that University Geoscience UK and the Society will need to be conscious of this. It is expected that this will take place in 2019. The aim was that Sian would begin work on a project, this summer, to identify the skill set requirements for geoscience graduates, but this may need further consideration. It is hoped that any action now will pre-empt some of the issues raised in the Review.

SDV

Accreditation Review

In discussion between the GSL members, it became clear that there was a breakdown of communication between the Accreditation Committee and the Society resulting in the Society's accreditation officer, Andy Saunders, being unaware that a review was already underway. Andy is now a member of the JHEC and it is hoped that this will help improve communications between UGUK, GSL and the review.

Funding Priorities

A brief conversation focused on what the Committee felt would be priority areas to spend funds on should GSL funds become available. Fieldwork equipment was mentioned as a potential idea but this may be difficult, as individual departments will have differing needs. Funding was suggested on the topic of diversity and inclusivity. Alternative provision (e.g. virtual fieldwork) was also suggested. It was felt that the Society could potentially label these as accreditation friendly. This would allow certain students the ability to complete their degree without any issues. The Committee indicated that it would be good if the Society outlined how these alternative provisions would work in relation to obtaining an accredited degree.

Availability Of Data

The Society conducted a scoping exercise to determine the quality and availability of Higher Education diversity related statistics and presented their findings at the JHEC meeting earlier. It was agreed that this issue could be raised at the Parliamentary Affairs Committee with the aim of it being addressed in parliament. A suggestion was made to look into the possibility of using a freedom of information request to gain access to the data. Mark added that he has contacted HEIDI and is trying to find out whether CHUGD's access can be transferred to UGUK.

MA

6. MEMBERSHIP OF THE EXECUTIVE

Mark confirmed that Tim Minshull has stepped down as Chair of University Geoscience UK. An official handover, between Mark and Tim, was arranged to take place at the BGS Advisory Board meeting, however the board was disbanded before the scheduled meeting date. Mark added that this Advisory Board has been replaced by a Science Board but it is unclear whether University Geoscience UK will have a position on it. Mark has written to them seeking clarification but has not received a response yet.

Mark pointed out that there is a vacancy for the Vice-Chair position. Prof Sarah Davies was named as a potential nomination for the position by Mark. The Committee agreed to make an official approach to Sarah. Mark stated that he would phone her.

MA

Gordon drew attention to the availability of the PGT remit following Gerald Roberts standing down. Gordon noted that with Sian taking over as Executive Secretary, on the 1st of August, this would also leave the undergraduate remit unfilled. The Committee discussed various options to fill the PGT portfolio, and Gordon agreed to contact these individuals to determine if they would be willing to join the committee. It was agreed that the first attempt should be made to Nick Koor (Portsmouth) because of the significance of the development of graduate apprenticeships (which Nick had taken the lead in at Portsmouth and with the GSL). The Committee also agreed to approach Chris Jackson (Imperial College London) and Jonathan Redfern (University of Manchester) to see if they would be interested in joining the committee if the NK declined.

GC

7. REPORT FROM THE JOINT HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The Geological Society's Accreditation Officer has been added as a member of the Joint Higher Education Committee. This is something the committee feel is a positive step.

The Society is producing information materials drawing attention to the recent changes to the A-level geology curriculum. The first is aimed at UK University Departments who may not be aware of all of the recent changes. It is hoped that this will help Heads of Departments etc. to view it as a more credible A-level. The other brochure will be aimed towards career-advisors at school level.

Diversity and Virtual Field Resources: a project being led by Clare Bond (Aberdeen) developing a library of digital teaching resources linked to the 100 Great Geo-sites was discussed. An HEFCE funded 'Inclusive STEM' project being

led by the Open University was also discussed. All of which highlight a lot of activity within the HE geoscience community aimed at making the subject more inclusive.

A Zeiss scholarship will be advertised by the GSL once the Society have developed an advert detailing its specifics. The scholarship will be awarded to a PhD and will be decided by a panel of experts.

WISE (Women in Science and Engineering) – The Society have recently become a member of WISE. However, WISE will be changing its membership model next year and as a result the Society aim to sample the majority of their benefits this year before making the decision to renew under the new model. The cost of the new model is likely to be considerably greater than what was paid this year.

Athena SWAN – The Society intend on running another Athena SWAN workshop this autumn. The workshop will cover bronze, silver and gold levels. This will be advertised by the GSL when an advert has been created.

DiG-UK– On the 4th of June 2018 Diversity in Geosciences UK (DiG-UK) held their launch event at Burlington House. DiG-UK are a chapter of the IAGD but their remit will focus on all aspects of diversity. Mark, who attended the conference, commended their focus on mental health; something he thinks will be beneficial for fieldwork especially. The committee agreed that it would be good to understand what departments are doing around fieldwork and mental health. Mark confirmed that he would be in touch with DiG-UK to express the committee's support for the work they are doing on these topics.

MA

A replacement for Nic Bilham (Director of Policy & Communications) has been appointed. Alicia Newton will be starting on the 20th of August with the title Director of Science & Communications.

8. REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

Mark began by stating that the majority of topics have already been covered earlier in the meeting and do not need to be repeated here. However, he highlighted that he received an extensive comment, from a member, concerning the format of meetings and the inability of members being able to network in the way that they could in its previous iteration as CHUGD. He added that they feels that University Geoscience UK seems to do the Society's work for them, something the committee felt was a little unfair.

The committee felt that the formal link with the Geological Society is something worth preserving. The Committee agreed that it might be worthwhile to organise a CHUGD style meeting each year to influence and lobby the community's opinions. It was suggested that this could be embedded into the thematic meeting, taking place in November. A suggestion was made to circulate an email to members asking them of their concerns on the future of geoscience and build an agenda based on the contributions. The Committee agreed to this proposal. Gordon stated that he will draft a letter detailing this proposal and once signed off by the Committee he will circulate.

GC

9. REPORT FROM THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

Gordon verified that 12 nominations to the Research Excellence Framework panels were submitted, seven of which have been appointed. An equality and diversity statement was required within these submissions asking those to detail how they addressed DEI concerns, and the approach adopted by Tim and Gordon (contacting individuals) achieved a reasonable balance of diversity in the geoscience representation on the panels.

Gordon added that there would be a third phase of REF panel recruitment in 2020 and those who were nominated but unsuccessful will be considered for this round although the main focus will be to recruit 'users' of research output (e.g. employers). The assessment criteria are unknown at this stage but the committee agreed to enquire about this with Tim Minshull.

Chris King of the Geological Curators' Group got in touch with Gordon informing him that they have produced a leaflet titled 'Advice to PhDs' detailing how to properly handle specimens and curate them. Gordon added that he has contacted the creator of this to see if he can have a look at it with a view to publicising it; however, he has not received a response.

Gordon highlighted two points that were raised following the joint GSL/UGUK TEF submission. The first recommended the necessity to include fieldwork if there was any assessment of teaching intensity. The second focused on subject groupings as, currently, geology is included with a number of different subjects such as archaeology etc.

Gordon noted that the Society have plans to review the fieldwork code and enquired to see if UGUK would be interested to have a dedicated representative. At present, the panel is mainly comprised of academics, which the Committee believes, means that there is no need for a dedicated UGUK representative.

Gordon flagged a concern regarding the paper and electronic records of UGUK and CHUGD wondering if these would require further consideration in light of GDPR. Given that these do not include personal details, they should be okay although the committee agreed to give this further consideration.

10. REPORT FROM THE TREASURER

Gordon noted that there is no report from the treasurer for this meeting. He pointed out that there has been no major spending since the last meeting although there is a scheduled payment quite soon for Margaret Jackson. Prize money for the video competition will be coming up quite soon too.

11. REPORTS FROM OTHER MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE

Peter informed the Committee that he has received one entry for the video competition with the deadline remaining open until the end of June. He has received a number of expressions of interest and is hoping to receive more entries before the deadline closes.

Gordon drew attention to a report Sian submitted. In it, she detailed the fact that she is undertaking a project looking at the skillset required from geology graduates

for the UK economy. The Society conducted a survey in 2012 detailing the skills needed by graduates and have supplied that to Sian. Gordon added that he would provide her with the competency statements developed by Geoscience Canada. These detail the skills needed by a graduate, 5 years after graduating.

12. DATES, FORMATS AND THEMES FOR FUTURE MEETINGS AND PROJECTS

Mark outlined that the next meeting will be the scheduled thematic meeting to take place in November 2018. An email will be circulated to the membership quite soon and it will ask members on their suggested topics to cover. Once the Committee has received opinions, it will be in a better position to decide a potential theme. An invitation to a NERC representative was suggested as a potential back-up option. Having Iain Stewart act as a facilitator on the day, the committee thought this would help make the meeting come across as more interactive.

Another suggestion made would be to decide on the November dates for the 2019 meeting. The Committee agreed that doing this would allow those wishing to attend to allocate their coursework in a way that would free them up for the two days at Burlington House.

Mark drew attention to the next Higher Education Network meeting, which will be co-badged with Diversity in Geoscience UK. He thought that it would be beneficial if all departments were encouraged to send a representative to it. It is expected to take place in January 2019.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Prof. David Manning wrote to UGUK raising the point that he is in the process of trying to rebuild Earth Science at Newcastle University and is extremely interested in holding a discussion on the topic of accreditation. He details how their collections were adversely affected following the closure of the undergraduate program in the 1980's.

He wondered if by emailing the UGUK mailing list there might be some departments with materials to spare. He also enquired as to what are the best student-proof petrological microscopes these days. The Committee suggested that it might be better for UGUK to act as a conduit for any teaching resources which had become available and that this request would be more appropriately circulated at the beginning of the next academic year (as many staff were away over the summer).

Following this, a brief conversation took place looking at a potential theme for the November meeting looking at ways to attract students from similar backgrounds into geology, namely geography, physics, chemistry communities etc. A suggestion raised during this would be to invite a careers advisor, who would have a neutral opinion, to offer their perspective on the subject and its potential to attract other science students.