

Terms of Reference – Geoscientist magazine

25th September 2017

Purpose

Geoscientist is the magazine of the Geological Society and is the main means of communication between the Society and its Fellows. It fulfils a Charter requirement to communicate regularly with the Fellowship *in toto*.

Geoscientist assists the Society in respect of its core purpose to *inspire* interest in the physical world, to *connect* science, profession and society and to *support* the work of geoscientists. It does so in several ways, including:

- Reinforce Fellowship in a tangible fashion
- Effectively communicating news of the Society, its activities and those of its Fellows
- Providing interesting, topical, geologically-oriented articles as a complement to the Society content of *Geoscientist*
- Providing a forum for Fellows feedback on the Society and the actions of its Trustees and Executive Secretary

Editorial independence

Geoscientist is funded by the Society and produces content within a framework essentially as prescribed on its establishment in 1991. Reflecting both the original 1991 establishment of *Geoscientist* on amalgamation of the GSL with the IG, and to a degree the development of independent traditions, *Geoscientist* is editorially independent of the Council and Secretariat of the Society.

In practice, editorial independence of *Geoscientist* means the ability of the Editor/Editor-in-Chief to make decisions regarding content, within the framework provided by these terms of reference and the Society's governance requirements, without interference from the Society's Trustees or Secretariat.

Content and frequency of publication

Geoscientist is distributed free to Fellows and is produced 11 times per annum in print and online editions, with the latter offering scope to include more in-depth material. Presently the main content is summarised below. In addition there is currently a crossword and cartoon ("Sticks and Stones"), which are perhaps best considered as optional content.

- Two in-depth geological features
- Books and arts – reviews of recent books and exhibitions
- People – Geoscientists in the news and on the move
- Fellows Obituaries
- Soapbox – Fellows opinion piece
- Letters
- Society News
- From the Regions – occasional series highlighting Regional Group activities
- Society events calendar

- Full range of advertisements for geological services, products and jobs. The current expectation is that the Conference Office and Publishing House will supply enough adverts to cover two pages (i.e. one spread) in each edition, which might vary depending on (priority) paid advertising.

Content is anticipated to evolve over time, with current new content ideas including careers-related material and material aimed at influencing target audiences beyond the immediate Fellowship, perhaps making greater use of the online capability. It would in general be expected that the content of *Geoscientist* and of the Society's regular email newsletters to Fellows would be complementary rather than duplicative of each other. Reflecting this aspiration, the development of any new types of content beyond those listed above will be undertaken through collaboration between the Society's Secretariat and the Editor and significant changes to the content will be endorsed via a revision to these terms of reference.

Organisation

- **Editor-in-Chief:** the Editor-in-Chief is ultimately responsible to the Fellows of the Society and has overall responsibility for the content of *Geoscientist*, including legal compliance. See abbreviated role description below.
- **Editor:** the Editor is responsible to the Editor-in-Chief for the timely production and content of *Geoscientist*. See abbreviated role description below.
- **Editorial Advisory Panel:** formerly termed the Editorial Board, the primary role of the Editorial Advisory Panel is to assist the Editor with regards to scientific content of feature articles and it has a lesser advisory role in respect of overall magazine style and content. The Panel is chaired by the Editor-in-Chief and shall consist of the Editor plus normally up to 8 individuals who would ordinarily be geoscientists and Fellows of the Society, however may include 1 or 2 non Fellows with pertinent publishing experience. The primary role of the Panel is mainly achieved via email, however it shall meet annually to review the magazine and to develop ideas for new or amended content.

The Editorial Advisory Panel shall ordinarily include the Executive Secretary of the Society and Panel members are invited to participate by the Editor/Editor-in-Chief, in order to ensure that the Panel has the requisite capacities to fulfill its role in respect of advising on scientific content. It would thus be expected that the Panel would be broadly reflect of the diversity of Fellowship.

Editorial Standards

The Editor and Editor-in-Chief shall comply with the professional principles laid out in the National Union of Journalist's published Code of Conduct (Appendix B).

Reporting

To reflect *Geoscientist's* editorial independence from Council and Secretariat of the Society, at each Annual General Meeting of the Society, the Editor-in-Chief will report to the Fellows regarding the previous calendar year's performance of *Geoscientist*.

Funding and Expenditures

The cost of *Geoscientist* is entirely funded by the Society and the Society's Director of Finance and Operations shall have oversight of *Geoscientist's* costs and advertising revenues. Costs incurred should be within the amount contained in the relevant category in the Society's annual budget and comply with the Society's expenditure policies and control processes. Since the main cost element of *Geoscientist* is the out-sourced publishing contract, this contract shall be competitively tendered every 3 years under the oversight of the Director of Finance and Operations. Responsibility for procuring paid advertising is currently within the work-scope outsourced to the publisher, under the oversight of the Director of Finance and Operations.

Annex A: Abbreviated Role Descriptions

Editor-in-Chief

1. Ensure compliance with the Terms of Reference of *Geoscientist*

The Terms of Reference of *Geoscientist* define the magazine's editorial independence, content, responsibilities, etc. It is a key aspect of the role of the Editor-in-Chief to ensure compliance with these Terms of Reference by the Editor and, if appropriate, by the Society.

2. Assist, support and advise the Editor on magazine content

Where there are disagreements amongst the Editorial Advisory Panel concerning suitability of major articles, the Editor-in-Chief will resolve such matters if not resolvable through the Editor. *Geoscientist* provides a forum for Fellows to offer their views and opinions. It is the role of both the Editor and the Editor-in-Chief to ensure that content is suitable for the Society's magazine, in particular with respect to scientific content and external reputation of the Society, effectively communicated and legally compliant. This is particularly the case in respect of areas of sensitive and/or controversial matters and with respect to legal compliance. Editor-in-Chief has a particular responsibility in respect of 'challenging' content in ensuring that it is appropriate, timely, etc. Although legal advice can be called upon to assist in this decision, it is likely that the mere question of legal compliance would normally suggest that the content should be excluded.

3. Ultimate responsibility for content

The Editor-in-Chief reviews the intended content of forthcoming issues. In the case of any disagreements regarding content, the Editor-in-Chief has the final decision.

The Editor-in-Chief is normally a former President, or possibly former Officer of the Society, able to fulfil all aspects of the role. The appointment of Editor-in-Chief is coordinated between the outgoing Editor-in-Chief and Council of the Society, represented in the first instance by the Executive Secretary, and subsequently confirmed (or otherwise) by vote at the Society's Annual General Meeting. The Editor-in-Chief position is a voluntary position with no payment, normally for a 5 year

term, extendable by mutual agreement. The Editor-in-Chief should not be a member of Council of the Society.

Editor

***Geoscientist* magazine**

The Editor sets publication standards, manages, writes and procures content for each issue and reviews content of all material before publication. It is the role of the Editor (and the Editor-in-Chief) to ensure that content is suitable for the Society's magazine, in particular with respect to scientific content and external reputation of the Society, effectively communicated and legally compliant. He/she oversees layout, proof-reads and edits material, liaising with designers, photographers, etc. to deliver 11 issues per annum to the established publication timetable.

***Geoscientist* social media**

The editor manages the social media output of *Geoscientist*.

The editor is a paid journalist position, for a science writer with experience in magazine writing and production, with knowledge of earth sciences. The Editor is appointed by the Secretariat of the Society in coordination with the incumbent Editor-in-Chief and should not be a member of Council of the Society.

Appendix B: National Union of Journalist's Code of Conduct (2011)

A journalist:

1. At all times upholds and defends the principle of media freedom, the right of freedom of expression and the right of the public to be informed.
2. Strives to ensure that information disseminated is honestly conveyed, accurate and fair.
3. Does her/his utmost to correct harmful inaccuracies.
4. Differentiates between fact and opinion.
5. Obtains material by honest, straightforward and open means, with the exception of investigations that are both overwhelmingly in the public interest and which involve evidence that cannot be obtained by straightforward means.
6. Does nothing to intrude into anybody's private life, grief or distress unless justified by overriding consideration of the public interest.
7. Protects the identity of sources who supply information in confidence and material gathered in the course of her/his work.
8. Resists threats or any other inducements to influence, distort or suppress information and takes no unfair personal advantage of information gained in the course of her/his duties before the information is public knowledge.
9. Produces no material likely to lead to hatred or discrimination on the grounds of a person's age, gender, race, colour, creed, legal status, disability, marital status, or sexual orientation.
10. Does not by way of statement, voice or appearance endorse by advertisement any commercial product or service save for the promotion of her/his own work or of the medium by which she/he is employed.
11. A journalist shall normally seek the consent of an appropriate adult when

interviewing or photographing a child for a story about her/his welfare.
12. Avoids plagiarism.

The NUJ believes a journalist has the right to refuse an assignment or be identified as the author of editorial that would break the letter or spirit of the NUJ code of conduct. The NUJ will support journalists who act according to the code.