

# Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

## ● Approach to reviewing and reporting

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In June 2021, the Society's Council agreed that the Society's approach to, and performance on, the broad range of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) issues would benefit from regular review and associated internal and external communication.

Additionally, it was agreed to bring an annual report to Council every June, and to present versions of this report publicly on the website, in the Trustees' Annual Report and in the Annual Review that is sent to all Fellows and members.

Below is the report that went to Council in June 2021 and it includes an overview and review of EDI-related activities in each of the Society's departments.

### **Introduction**

The Society can show evidence of good awareness and valuable activity across the broad areas of equality, diversity and inclusion stretching across many years. It has also, somewhat intermittently, reported on this through the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Group (EDIAG).

EDIAG has now been reconstituted to review and advise on the Society's work with respect to equality, diversity and inclusion, and it consists of the three Honorary Secretaries and the Director, supported by the Director's Executive Assistant. The group helps create a framework and format for collating relevant actions, reflecting on progress and informing strategic and programme-based planning. This results in a report being presented annually to Council each June.

The scope of EDIAG relates solely to the Society's charitable activities. Policies and procedures relating to staff and contractors are attended to as part of the professional management of the organisation, although relevant policies and practices will be noted in the annual reporting cycle.

It is worth noting, however, that the Staff Handbook was substantially revised and updated (in parallel with our employment contract) in 2018/19, and further updated recently. It will from now on be refreshed on a regular basis. For example, a new section is being prepared that attends to the fact that we anticipate significant increases in requests for flexible and home working, and hence we are working to give more detailed advice in this area to both managers and staff. A new HR appointment will allow us to further develop our EDI work in relation to staff, including expanding our training and development offer.

Another illustration of the Society's 'internal functioning' where we have also been integrating EDI considerations is in our initiative to move to competitive tendering for all our main contracts, and our wider engagement with contractors. Hence, since 2019, the Society now has contracts for cleaning and security services that guarantee the London Living Wage for contractors' staff. This move has improved quality and reliability of service in addition to addressing a reputational risk, and without additional costs to the Society. Contractors are also expected to comply with the code of conduct that was published in 2019 where they work at the Society's building in South Kensington.

## Monitoring

The Society does not currently monitor staff, members, volunteers or audiences/users in relation to EDI/protected characteristics in most of its work. A relevant recent report, *Equally Professional*, summarises the value of monitoring:

*"Effective monitoring is an important tool for measuring performance and progress towards equality and diversity goals... But monitoring is not an end in itself. Data that is collected needs to be analysed and used to inform appropriate action."* (Equally Professional: Diversity monitoring in professional bodies).

The first step is deciding on data to be collected and who to collect it from. If we collect data, what parameters are to be included? For example, the usual questions included in recruitment diversity questionnaires relate to the protected characteristics within the Equality Act 2010 listed below (in this version taken from the British Council's work in this area):-

- age
- disability
- ethnicity or race
- gender
- religion or belief
- sexual identity.

Monitoring of equality-related issues, and acting on the information, will demonstrate that the Society is following good practice guidance. Some organisations choose to begin monitoring by concentrating on a limited number of characteristics. Collecting data on race, gender and age has been in place for longer (along with legislation) and this may be a good place for the Society to start as there is more knowledge, experience, custom and practice in terms of declaring and collecting this data. This of course does not imply any hierarchy of importance within the protected characteristics.

### *Council, Committee, and Sub-Committee members*

In accordance with the Conflicts of Interest Policy and Procedures, trustees are asked to provide an update on any potential conflicts at the time of each June Council meeting – this would be an opportune time to ask them to complete an EDI survey.

Data will be stored securely and in compliance with GDPR. Data can be compared with comparator data, such as national, regional or sectoral demographic statistics, another organisation, or the previous year's data. An annual summary can be written to record the survey results and any subsequent actions or conclusions.

The findings of the annual report should be used to inform appropriate action in order to advance the Society's EDI-related principle, as expressed within the Strategy:

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*“The Society works towards greater equality, diversity and inclusion within its practices and activities as well as across the wider geographical community”.*

In, conclusion, in terms of monitoring of EDI /protected characteristics, **the recommendation to Council is that the Society should initiate monitoring of trustees and members of sub-committees and, as appropriate, other volunteers.** Subject to the outcome of discussion in Council, staff will also further research potential for and pros and cons of wider diversity monitoring e.g. of the membership and event participants.

## **Departmental review – Collections**

The work of the Collections team supports diaspora and community group engagement with the Collections, specifically providing access for largely non-academic community partners to use the Collections as a resource in planning exhibitions and projects, and where practical, in providing opportunities for the development of dialogue and improving access to the Collections for wider use.

To support this work we published ‘Working with the Society’s Collections’ a guide on this work for new and future users from this audience sector. This important piece of work could be revisited and updated.

There have been a number of Society-supported exhibitions where the Collections formed an element of the exhibition and were supported by a complementary ‘On View’ display. These include:

- ‘Far from the Western Front’ (November 2016) an exhibition and talks series hosted at the Society by the Asian Centre, working collaboratively with the Society.
- Collections historical content to support an exhibition on the Spiti Valley in the Himalaya, championing the people of Tibet (2018).
- Collections historical content to support the exhibition ‘Conservation Partnerships in the Australian Outback’ (May 2018).
- ‘Migrants on the Margins’ – exhibition led by the project and RHED (August – October 2018) showcasing outputs from the fieldwork project.
- ‘Keep Out! Barriers and Boundaries, Ancient and Modern’, Collections displays and events linked to the theme of human movement of peoples (2018).

‘Shackleton’s Endurance: Discovering our Shared Antarctic Heritage’ was a National Lottery Heritage Fund funded project that enabled audiences in Manchester, Birmingham, Hull and Edinburgh to use the content of our exhibition ‘The Enduring Eye’ as the basis for community and educational activities linking local communities with the story of the Endurance expedition. This project ran from April 2016 – June 2018 and audiences and responses included: A school visit from St. Philips in Hulme for pupils with learning difficulties, where the visit was documented as having improved literacy and inspired writing skills at Manchester Central Library. Manchester City Council’s Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee also highlighted the success of the project in attracting new and diverse audiences. At Edinburgh’s National Library of Scotland the project delivered: social events for those with dementia, hearing or visual impairment; a visit to the exhibition by ‘The Welcoming’, an Edinburgh-based organisation that works with refugees in the city; an event for ‘Contact the Elderly’ for those who are socially isolated.

‘Dreams and Dystopias: East Africa at the Crossroads’ was an exhibition of photography by Guillaume Bonn with curated East African early photography from the Society’s Collections, shown at the Ismaili Centre in London, October-November 2019, accompanied by a talk at the Society

between the photographer and curator Rozemin Keshvani (which was followed by a Monday Night Lecture on the same subject).

Programming activities linked to the Society's Collections, specifically the 'Be Inspired' talks and 'On View' displays provide opportunities to broaden audiences and enable a wide range of speakers to participate, examples include:

- 'Revisiting the Freeing of Slaves in East Africa', Patrick Vernon, 2017
- 'Supposed-to-be-Land', 'Indigenous Tales of the Beaufort Sea', Peter Martin, 2018
- 'Unarticulated Narratives of Women on David Livingstone's Expeditions', Dr. Kate Simpson, December 2020.
- 'Kalli on the Ship': Indigenous Intermediaries and the Co-production of Arctic Knowledge', Peter Martin, 2020.

In terms of the approach to the interpretation of potentially sensitive materials, the Collections team provide a balanced and open approach to the display and contextualisation of potentially 'difficult' materials in the work that is undertaken online and in person at the Society. The framing of material, its relevance today and importance for research is clearly stated and the displays and activities in the Foyle Reading Room are open to all.

#### *Areas for potential improvement and innovation:*

Although the Collections are often seen through the lens of collaborative Society projects such as 'Hidden Histories of Exploration' (where the input from the Collections team to support the work undertaken by the investigator is of prime importance), we should seek to define potential audience need and build on the work started by the 'Crossing Continents' programme and be more visible in the wider community, through simple and time-effective opportunities, such a working with Westminster Council or Kensington and Chelsea Council around community engagement opportunities, and build in more events for audience groups (as the National Library of Scotland example above shows) and build on that work outwards.

Developing UK-wide opportunities, working with a partner gallery or museum to repeat the kind of responses and results that the community NHLF Shackleton project achieved.

Obtaining and learning from feedback and response from engagement activities.

Engaging audiences with the Wiley Digital Archive and we are actively working through this with the Collections Advisory Group's input to open access to community users (internationally).

Appointing a Collections 'champion' to be responsible for network engagement with events and activities, so that we can be seen more overtly to be part of the hub of organisations in central London that are not museums, but engage most effectively, proposing some 'pilot' partnerships with library partners.

## **Departmental review – Education**

The Education team have commissioned/undertaken a series of research projects to help understand better the challenges facing geography as a discipline in schools. These include:

### *Geography of Geography*

The Society's Geography of Geography (2020) research report continues to be widely cited and used by the wider geography teaching community. The Black Geographers initiative referenced the

report's data in their [Participation of Black students in geography 2020](#) and we understand Ofsted are likely to draw on its data in their forthcoming subject report on geography.

The report has also been the theme of presentations to the Geography Teacher Educators conference (February 2021), Birmingham Teacher Training students (February 2021), Harris Trainee Teachers (March 2021), The Geographical Association annual conference (April 2021), and the Geography and Education Research Group (May 2021).

#### *Equality, diversity, and inclusion – the views of young people*

The Society has commissioned a second piece of research which explores the views of young people about geography. This external research was undertaken amongst a sample of 500 English young people aged 16 – 21; 250 of whom were from Black, Asian or other minority ethnic backgrounds; 100 were from low income backgrounds; and the sample included both those who were and were not studying geography. We have received the data tables and are currently collating its findings with a view to publishing the findings in the autumn of 2021 as a companion report to the Geography of Geography research.

#### *Black, Asian and minority ethnic trainee and early career teachers*

We are currently undertaking focus group discussions with Black, Asian and other minority ethnic (BAME) trainees and early career geography teachers from our Geography Scholars programme. These discussions will explore their own motivations for studying geography at school, any barriers they faced, their decision to choose geography teaching as a career, and their experiences as BAME geography teachers. We have further plans to undertake similar discussions with Geography Scholars who have entered teaching from low-income backgrounds.

The Society's annual Medals and Awards give us the opportunity to recognise and reward teachers and students from a wide range of backgrounds. In 2021, Hafsa Bobat received one of the Excellence in Teaching Awards, while LGBTQ+ perspectives were recognised through the 'special mention' for a submission to the Society's Ron Cooke Award for an outstanding A Level individual investigation. This was given to an investigation which explored how the presence of the LGBTQ+ community in Brighton has influenced the place characteristics of Kemptown.

EDI concerns, particularly in relation to the representation of Black, Asian and minority ethnic geographers and related themes, continue to be profiled in the Society's ongoing Education Programme including:

- Featuring relevant perspectives within the Society's open access and member-only resources. For example, newly published resources include a unit on West African Empires and a review of Jini Reddy's *Wonderland*.
- Regularly profiling BAME geographers within the 'Ask the Geographer' educational podcast series.
- For International Women's Day in 2021 we reprofiled the podcast [Gender Inequality and Women in Geography](#) which features Dr Sarah Evans exploring the contribution that women had made to the development of geography as a discipline and the Society as an institution.

Working with colleagues we have also developed the [School Enrichment Resource Portal](#) within the *Geography Directions* research blog. This portal profiles relevant articles written by geographers in higher education which have been tagged under the following headings:

- Migration: national identity and human rights
- Social inequalities: levelling up and down
- Difference identity and everyday experience

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We continue to work with undergraduate, postgraduate and professional geographers, from a wide range of backgrounds, to help promote the value of further study and careers in geography to young people. This includes:

- Face to face and a developing digital presence for our Geography Ambassadors, profiling geography A Level, careers and further study
- Highlighting the range of careers undertaken by geography graduates through [www.rgs.org/iamageographer](http://www.rgs.org/iamageographer)
- We've highlighted Francisca Rockey, Dr Anjana Khatwa and Prem Gill within our developing series of Geography Superheroes

Future developments planned within the Education department include:

- “*Where we are*”: In partnership with Black Geographers, we applied to the British Museum’s (Paul Hamlyn Foundation) “*Where we are*” fund (value £4K). This fund is supporting co-produced arts or cultural projects with underrepresented young people. We were sadly unsuccessful in this application and are awaiting feedback on our application. The fund will run over 2021-25 and we will explore the opportunity to apply in a subsequent funding round.
- CARICUK: The Education team continue to provide support to the education strand of Pat Noxolo’s CARICUK project. This will develop online resources and other support for geography teachers which explore creative approaches to race and in/security in the Caribbean and the UK.
- Earth Photo – Young People: Alongside the Earth Photo exhibition there is a plan to provide an accompanying education programme for disadvantaged young people.
- Society led initiative to address EDI in school and higher education geography: We are currently scoping a proposal for the development of a Society led pathfinder project to pilot, test and potentially scale approaches and initiatives to address under-representation in school and higher education geography. Our aim is to provide an outline proposal and indicative budget for consideration by June Council with the aim of initiating pilot work in the new academic year.

## **Departmental review – Public Engagement and Communications**

### *Physical accessibility of London-organised public events*

The majority of events are currently online so accessible to those not within commuting distance of SW7 or able to attend due to caring/work/other responsibilities. Events will continue to be recorded/ live streamed even when primarily in-person so access benefits will remain. Event recordings are captioned where possible and definitely on request, and plans are in place to increase the number of event recordings with captions by default. There is a hearing loop in Ondaatje Theatre. The stair lifts between ground floors and to the stage are working; although there is still no step free access to Council Room or Director’s Office.

### *Physical accessibility of public events organised by regional committees*

Physical accessibility (step free access/hearing loops etc) is part of the ‘wish list’ for venues used by the regional committees for their events, although not always possible to ensure, especially where historical venues are used.

### *Event design*



one area of our work to the detriment of others. In particular, we use social media to publicly celebrate and recognise the breadth of geography and geographers.

We also use social media to mark external ‘celebrations’ such as Black History Month, International Women’s Day and LGBTQ+ History Month by creating and sharing content that showcases relevant geographers and geography. Eg <https://www.rgs.org/geography/black-geographers/> ; #IWDGeographers on Twitter.

Alt text should be included on all images to allow people using screenreaders to access our content, but this is sometime overlooked in the rush to publish content. We need to get better at doing this.

All videos shared via social media are captioned at the point of production.

We follow and actively share content created by BAME focused organisations, e.g. Black Geographers; Black Girls Hike etc.

## **Departmental review – Research and Higher Education**

EDI objectives are embedded in all elements of the work of the R&HE department, but there is much more we can and should be doing. Underpinning this is a commitment to forge a more socially representative and inclusive geographical community – across age, gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, disability, and socio-economic background.

In the last year, with strong support of the R&HE Committee, we have developed an EDI Action Plan, which will make more visible the work/initiatives/activity underway and guide the strategic expansion of this work. We will be reporting against that plan (the general framework of which is below) to the committee. What’s here is a very brief summary of work in the last year – the Society’s activities (related to grant-giving, publishing, events, resources etc) and partnerships with the wider geographical community (most notably Research Groups, Departments, other Learned Societies, with individuals on UKRI-bids).

The EDI Action plan is structured in terms of the following seven headings. Here short examples of activities are provided on each. This is not comprehensive.

1. Governance: We are forming an R&HE advisory group with representation across key stakeholders (Research Groups, R&HE Committee etc); EDI is a standing item on all Committee and Advisory Group meetings.
2. Evidence: We continue to invest (£ and time) in an evidence base that monitors diversity trends in the educational and professional pipeline - in terms of participation, attainment and outcomes. This has involved further mining and use and dissemination of the Geography of Geography data and report; surveys of Dept/EDI leads and members of the community to identify priorities and needs (with close to 100 responses); continuation of (long term) data collection on submissions/acceptances to journals, grants etc. This provides benchmarks and focus for attention.
3. Participation: Interventions to increase the number and the success of students (UG, PGT, PGR) and staff from underrepresented backgrounds. This is a major focus. The team’s work ranges from specific support of the Geography Ambassadors programme (notably including professional geographers) and directing attention to placements and mentoring; showcasing the range and diversity of geographers at all career stages and geography through career profiles, presenters and panelists, case studies; Grants funding research and teaching and learning projects to foster EDI; workshops with Author AID, WISMA (and a funded project with Latin American Geography Working Group and BA) to support authors from the Global South;

workshops and blogs with PGF to support ECRs; philanthropic programmes (with Wiley and JSTOR) to enable access to journal content and to APC waivers. We have also been championing apprenticeships and responding to consultations to argue for a plurality of pathways for all geographers more inclusive of different opportunities and experiences.

4. Curriculum: Advocating for and facilitating curriculum reform that diversifies and decolonises undergraduate and taught postgraduate geography programme content and developing and sharing resources and content. The current QAA benchmark review is a significant opportunity in this realm to foreground considerations of EDI, anti-racist positive action, and to embed a 'decolonial' approach (we enabled nominations to ensure key voices are involved); we are partnering on an AHRC/NERC Hidden Histories bid to link HE learning and resources to schools; there have been frequent heads of departments and EDI discussions/exchanges of approaches and resources (including reading lists); we have developed teaching and learning resources (virtual visits to the Society which foreground critically inflected insights; anti-racist teaching; student learning; different modes of assessment; decolonising the curriculum; accessibility and fieldwork; under-representation and exclusion (based on CDA PhD work). Special sections on Anti-racist teaching special section (Area); Global Black Geographies (TIBG) have been published and virtual collections curated.
5. Culture and wellbeing: Promoting and adopting good practice and positive change in teaching, research, and workplace culture. We have published, and revised, codes of conduct for events (now more attentive to digital exclusions); enabled the development and then cross-university adoption of Fieldwork Principles; developed *Geography Directions* as a forum for commentary (e.g. most recently Pride in the Field). Through the Society's grants programme and journals/books, we have funded and published geographical scholarship on EDI issues in geography (UK and internationally), giving space to the lived experience of those underrepresented in the discipline. We have also actively encouraged and supported Editor-led initiatives around EDI and decolonising of the Society's publishing portfolio and are leading sector-wide discussions (e.g. Editors of Geography journals), partnering on initiatives (such as Author Aid), and lobbying Publishers to improve on their practices. We have started to share widely scholarly research and other key HE-relevant reports and policies, actively collating and disseminating content through virtual issues, blogs, newsletters and social media (e.g. of UKRI, UUK, Leading Routes, Stuart Hall Foundation etc) (but we need to do more and do this better).
6. Celebrating success. We have provided content and contacts for the Communications Team, working very closely with the community and Research Groups, to celebrate Black History Month, International Women's Day, LGBTQ+ month. We are actively featuring the work of Research Groups through social media and forums to share good practice.
7. Fostering strategic collaborations and partnerships to share practices and to lobby funders/sector bodies such as UKRI, HEA to encourage, and give due support to, EDI initiatives. We are partnering on three bids to the OfS/Research England call on BAME PGRs (these involved HEIs and Learned Society partnerships); a joint bid with Caribbean Studies and Black Geographers to the Antipode Foundation; and work closely with AcSS, British Academy and Society-Environment (and encourage them to be more active in this realm).

These initiatives need to be sustained, better documented and evaluated, and more effectively communicated externally. That requires more resource. In addition, there is a need to be able commission (fund) work on specific elements. Five priorities (there are many more):

1. Commission research on attainment/achievement gaps (framed not in a deficit model) across the geography student population/pipeline; identify effective interventions to address inequalities; and convene meetings across departments and research groups to share insights and catalyse action.

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2. A programme of activities to embed race and ethnicity in teaching across the discipline (at all levels, and in compulsory and optional modules) and the adoption of inclusive and anti-racist pedagogies. This will draw on the expertise of the community (Research Groups in particular) and needs to be coupled with a review of current provision (to highlight the need for change).
  3. Benchmark and accreditation. Ensure the QAA benchmark statement and Society accreditation or programmes both give appropriate explicit attention to EDI. Develop additional resources and prompts for external examiners on these themes, and to make sure these considerations are embedded in curricular review processes at programme and module level.
  4. Champion the fieldwork principles and develop resources and workshop to enable more inclusive fieldwork, as well as to challenge barriers (real and perceived) to inclusion and appeal.
  5. Mentoring, placements, internships, graduate pathways. Work with employers, funders, not-for-profits to create a resource hub for students (at schools and university to benefit from) and for professionals (academics, those in public and private sector) to get support/access resources or to volunteer to effect change.