**Hiring & Admissions Policies for Department of Earth & Planetary Sciences, Yale University**

This is what was found by the Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences at Yale University on Hiring and/or Admissions Policies, as well as what the pod would propose to change and improve.

**What EEO (Equal Employment Opportunity) statement is included in a standard job or admissions advertisement? Are there other inclusion statements and resources publicly available?**

Yale has a public statement on Equal Employment Opportunity for general viewing ([https://your.yale.edu/sites/default/files/eeoc-poster.pdf](https://your.yale.edu/sites/default/files/eeoc-poster.pdf)). This statement largely covers the legalities of EEO, and should issues arise, they direct the reader to contact federal representatives to report discrimination.

A standard academic job posting relays the following EEO statement:

“Yale University is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity employer. Yale values diversity among its students, staff, and faculty and strongly welcomes applications from women, persons with disabilities, protected veterans, and underrepresented minorities.”

This statement is included in both EPS faculty and postdoc fellowship job advertisements.

**For GSAS Admission (Yale EPS falls under this umbrella):**

The Yale Graduate School of Arts and Sciences has a diversity statement page associated with the application portal ([https://gsas.yale.edu/diversity](https://gsas.yale.edu/diversity)). Within this page, there are resources for scholarships and other funds, workshops, outreach opportunities, and staff that can be contacted should questions or issues arise related to DEI.

**Where are advertisements posted or sent? Are there other strategies for reaching applicants for hiring and/or admissions, e.g. job fairs, showcases?**

**Hiring**

Job postings are typically listed on the Yale Careers Page, EPS department website, and the Chronicle of Higher Education as well as various list servs (ES_jobs_net) and emails that are sent to sister institutions. Online and print job boards of geoscience societies (e.g. GSA’s GSA Today and GSA website) may also host job postings for Yale EPS.

While there is faculty interest in widening the net of recipients for job postings, how to achieve that is not yet sorted completely. Recent faculty searches have attempted to increase
recruitment among underrepresented groups by advertising with organizations such as the National Association of Black Geoscientists.

For EPS Student Admission:

For Yale EPS, advertising is largely conducted by networking at larger conferences such as the annual meetings of the American Geophysical Union, Geological Society of America, and Society of Vertebrate Paleontology. Depending on the faculty member, positions will also be advertised on their personal websites linked to the department website. Faculty may also advertise for students at the end of conference talks or by reaching out to colleagues at other institutions. Oftentimes students find out about the program via word of mouth. Less often, positions may be advertised on social media. Should current students want to travel to smaller, less frequented conferences, department funds can be allocated for student conference expenses should the student recruit on the department’s behalf. Oftentimes this kind of advertising takes the form of an informational booth with pamphlets that interested students can peruse.

Yale EPS also has a departmental website should interested prospective students want to learn more about the program offerings (https://earth.yale.edu/). Faculty biographies and lab information vary in types and quantity of information.

What are the requirements for an applicant, e.g. letters of recommendations, fees/test scores/grades? Is providing any of these a potential barrier that could be further lowered or removed? Are there any problematic questions asked?

Hiring

The application portal for faculty positions requires the information for 3-5 references (who provide letters of recommendation), applicant research statement, teaching statement, CV, and cover letter. Future faculty searches may require a diversity statement. The generic application portal asks applicants to self-identify with various affinities (e.g., gender, ethnicity, race, veteran status, disabilities), but no problematic questions are asked. Should the applicant be invited for an in-person interview, they are required to give two seminars over the course of two days. EPS covers all costs (travel, food, lodging) for the interviewee for the duration of the visit.

Depending on the postdoctoral fellowship, the applicant may or may not be asked to additionally supply a diversity statement.

EPS Student Admission:

To apply as a graduate student, the GREs, college transcripts, three letters of recommendation, personal statement, diversity statement, general demographic information, and a $105 application fee are currently required. There are no published or standard minimum GREs scores or GPAs. For applicants who received their undergraduate degree or master’s degree in
a language other than English, the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOFEL) or International English Language Testing System (IELTS) is required. There are no minimum scores required by the university, but the EPS department states it prefers a TOFEL score of at least 109. If scores are not sufficient a student is required to participate in English language classes provided by Yale until proficiency is achieved. A student may not participate in teaching activities prior to completion of the English language training. In this case, a student’s teaching requirements are delayed for up to four semesters and the student is required to teach for both semesters for at least two years, unless otherwise funded. A fee waiver available for people with documented financial hardship and participants in special programs and events or some holders of a special status. Examples: Americorps, Peace Corps, Yale Diversity Preview Days Attendee. We note that obtaining the documents required for a fee waiver or participation in special programs may present a significant barrier to some applicants.

Many of the fees associated with applying can represent a financial barrier. The GRE costs $205 each time it is taken (sometimes students take the GRE more than once), and this does not include extra fees associated with a testing center. In areas where there is no easy access to testing centers, particularly internationally, travel to and lodging at an area where a GRE testing center is located can be exorbitant. Additional tests for international students, such as an English proficiency exam, can also result in additional costs. Those expenses are taken on by the prospective student and are not reimbursed by Yale.

The EPS Department did not consider the GRE in admissions for the 2020-2021 graduate application cycle because of the pandemic, though all students who choose to come to Yale must take it before matriculating. The faculty will revisit and continue debating whether or not to consider the GRE in the 2021-2022 application cycle.

In non-pandemic times, the top prospective students are invited to an in-person interview usually in the month of February. Lodging and food costs are covered by Yale EPS, and students are reimbursed up to $500 for travel expenses. While $500 is generous for students travelling from the New England Area, it often does not cover the full amount of travel for prospective students in other regions of the United States or international students who may require a combination of flights, train rides, and taxis to complete a round trip to and from New Haven. Reimbursement may take place anywhere from a few weeks to many months. Some international students have reported never receiving their reimbursement.

During the course of the in-person visit, conversations are had in both casual and formal settings, and topics of conversation may flow naturally often about research interests, Yale’s resources and facilities, student life, and living in New Haven.

To lower barriers for future applicants, an FAQ will be posted on the EPS department website giving clear advice on how to apply for graduate school, contact faculty, and clarifying common misconceptions about getting a PhD at Yale – students come from a wide range of undergraduate institutions, graduate students are well-compensated, etc.
How are applicants/applications evaluated? Is that process and/or rubric public? What kind of biases are introduced in this process and what strategies are used to address these, e.g. removing applicant names?

EPS faculty report that the democratic fashion among the faculty allows for a lot of discussion and scrutiny of decisions. No decisions are ever taken lightly. All issues, including those surrounding admissions in particular, are voted upon and discussed openly during faculty meetings. Sometimes there are secret ballots on highly contentious issues, but largely the faculty are very communicative across hiring and admissions decisions. Results of faculty surveys may be anonymized before they are reported to the department.

Names are not removed from applications due to the challenge it presents. While applications may easily have names removed, removing names and other identifying information from other portions of the application, such as transcripts, cover letters, and within letters of recommendation presents a larger challenge. Should a name or other identifying information slip through the cracks by mistake, it could bias the reader in either direction. A name-removing effort at this scale could require a specific hiree, potentially at a higher administrative level. Faculty seem open to the aspect of removing names but are unsure of how to best go about that process given the way names and identifying information are sprinkled throughout application materials.

Additionally, many prospective students and job applicants contact related faculty before the application process in order to better gauge the fit of the program and personnel — self-identifying in the process. Those introductory conversations can make the later application recognizable during the evaluation process, and oftentimes that continuity can be valuable in gauging the applicant’s abilities and how they may or may not be suited for the department. However, there is recognition that the ‘know’ to reach out and network with current members of the department (particularly for prospective students) may be correlated with socioeconomic and educational privilege or pedigree.

**Hiring**

A specific search/hiring committee is formed (~5 people including a committee chair). Usually there aren’t major challenges to the hiring committee’s decision by the rest of the faculty. Typically, the committee is within the same subdiscipline plus one extra person outside the subdiscipline. No formal rubric is used to assess the applicants. Often the outside faculty member may serve as the diversity officer for the search, responsible for keeping track of the demographics of applicants, though as noted above, demographic questions are also part of the formal application.

**Student Admission**

Different subdisciplines in EPS vary on their procedures for reviewing applicants. The faculty within one subdiscipline (e.g. Paleontology, Geophysics) may choose to meet together to review
all applications and jointly select their top choices for an in-person interview. The discussion that unfolds during this meeting covers a broad range of topics about the applicants, taking into account their personal, professional, and academic experiences as indicated by the transcripts, letters of recommendation, personal statement, pre-application email exchanges and conversations, and considerations related to diversity. Additionally, the conversation is sensitive to the different levels of opportunity and privilege the applicants may have had and how the applicant may thrive in the environment at Yale EPS. No formal rubric for evaluating applicants existed at the department level until recently, but a rubric was developed and used for the 2020-2021 application cycle to encourage a more holistic evaluation. Each subdiscipline was encouraged to systematically evaluate each application they reviewed according to all of the above metrics, and to record each faculty member’s observations in order to foster consistency and accountability and attempt to limit unconscious bias.

The rubric that was introduced for the 2021 application cycle is not scored, but provides a series of guiding primary questions about the applicants' potential as a researcher and student, drive to conduct research at the graduate level, work ethic, intellect, leadership potential, and analytical and writing abilities. Secondary criteria include the applicants' fit in accordance with the kinds of research and advising capabilities within the department. The characteristics of the applicants are also balanced with the internal department need to balance positions across the different subdisciplines within the department, the need to support junior faculty who are building their research groups, as well as diversity considerations.

Following the in-person interview, the top applicants from all subdisciplines are discussed among the faculty. Typically, at the subdiscipline and departmental levels, there is general consensus among the faculty of which prospective students are offered a position in the EPS PhD program.

Who is on selection committees and who makes the final decisions? Who interacts with the applicants?

Please see previous question regarding how decisions are made.

Hiring

For interaction: If prospective hires are invited for an on-campus interview, they meet with faculty for one-on-one meetings over a two-day period. Typically lunch and/or tea with students and postdocs is arranged. While faculty vote on hiring decisions, they may unofficially ask for student and postdoc input in an informal capacity. Asking for student and postdoc input is highly dependent on the interests of the faculty member, and it is not a ubiquitous practice among the faculty.

Student Admission
Pre-pandemic, any faculty member was able to meet with any prospective graduate student during the in-person open house event. Additionally, any current research scientist, postdoc, and graduate student is allowed casual interaction with the students at various events over the course of a two-day period. Depending on subdiscipline, faculty may or may not ask for input from current students on the prospective applicants.

**Has your hiring and/or admissions process been evaluated by outside consultants? What is the process for changing it?**

There are no outside consultants, but there is internal oversight, often on the part of higher offices at Yale. Faculty vote is required for changes at the departmental level. Internal oversight is provided by Yale’s Dean of Diversity, however the involvement of this office is generally limited.

**Has your university or company implemented or considered strategies like cohort hiring, mentoring, dual career support and partner hires, re-visioning your work culture, or other considerations outlined in “Leveraging Promising Practices”?**

Cohort hiring is something that Yale does sporadically, often on an ad-hoc and inconsistent basis, though it has been shown to be extremely successful at other institutions (e.g. Rice). EPS is reportedly pushing toward these kinds of practices, but it can be difficult to get traction at higher levels. The department is aware that cohort hiring improves retention rates and fosters good relationships among faculty, while also developing good scientific practices for budding disciplines.

Typically mentor-mentee relationships within EPS are formed in a more organic way for students, postdocs, and faculty. Incoming faculty were at one point ‘assigned’ a mentor to aid in discussions about tenure, but recent faculty hires have noted that this is no longer the case. Several graduate organizations at Yale (e.g. WISAY) and on the departmental level have developed mentorship programs, typically for graduate students and postdoctoral fellows to mentor undergraduates. Following conversations in our URGE pod, the DGS is planning to implement an opt-in mentoring program between junior and senior grad students, and potentially between postdocs and senior graduate students.

Partner hires do happen, typically for non-faculty dual career support, but there is not really a system present. Partner hires may come during negotiations of a single party of the couple. If a department is in favor of pursuing a partner hire, discussion may move forward to administrative levels or be expanded to include additional departments or schools within the university.

Individual faculty set the tone for work culture within their own lab. The department does not push for a “standardized” work culture. The Department Chair has occasionally emailed faculty not to require their students to work on break days, and the pandemic has of course imposed additional pressures and restraints and required renavigation of working arrangements. Some bad practices exist, but it is not a part of the department culture to work students to the bone.