

UA Department of Geological Sciences grad student pod guidelines

Mission Statement: Education is essential but action is also imperative for achieving the objectives of URGE. We believe that our department can be an agent for positive change toward dismantling racism in the geosciences. As a product of our engagement with URGE, we will work towards developing an action plan that the department can undertake toward the goal of supporting our students of color, increasing diversity and inclusivity in the geosciences and academia, and ending racial injustice in our department and in academia. We seek to initiate and maintain an open dialogue surrounding equity and accessibility for underrepresented groups within the geological sciences department so that the exchange of ideas and conversation never remains static, but rather evolves with the department and its students.

1. Ground Rules

Because our pod is exclusively graduate students, and includes only a few underrepresented groups, it is important to consider and discuss the power dynamics at play in our discussions. We do not all share the same lived experiences, nor can we speak for those of different backgrounds. The rules below should help to maintain balance within the pod:

1. Listen actively -- respect others when they are speaking. To prevent anyone from being spoken over, type an "*" in the chat box, or use the "hand raise" feature. Session co-leaders will oversee the meeting signals to ensure everyone has the opportunity to speak.
2. Speak from your own experience instead of generalizing ("I" instead of "they," "we," "you").
3. Do not be afraid to respectfully challenge one another by asking questions, but refrain from personal attacks -- focus on ideas and problems rather than people.
4. Participate to the fullest of your ability -- community growth depends on the inclusion of every voice.
5. Instead of invalidating somebody else's story with your own spin on their experience, share your own story and experience.
6. The goal is not to always agree -- it is to gain a deeper understanding.
7. Be conscious of body language and nonverbal responses -- they can be as disrespectful as words (especially over Zoom!)
8. Assume everyone's good intentions but also acknowledge the impact of saying something that hurts someone else, even if it is unintended.
9. **Maintain confidentiality.** All stories shared in this space stay in this space unless explicit permission is given by the person sharing the story that it can be shared in another setting.

2. Making decisions as a group

As a pod, we will meet biweekly to discuss the readings and lectures, as well as complete the deliverable action items together. To make sure these are cohesive documents accurately reflecting the opinions of our pod, we agree to make decisions via a simple majority vote. If we do not achieve a quorum in our meetings (4/7 pod members in attendance) then we will turn to our online Slack group to obtain the remaining votes. Additionally, as our pod is not entirely

representative of the diversity of our department, we will be sharing our documents with a departmental Diversity Alliance committee (students, faculty and staff) such that they have a set amount of time to read and respond to the deliverable documents before they are submitted to URGE in each session.

3. Pod member roles and responsibilities

Permanent Role

Official Pod Leader

The official pod leader, who is registered with URGE, will endeavor to complete any overarching tasks, such as determining the schedule for the sessions, and setting meetings with institutional leadership when it is called for.

Rotating Roles

We have used a scheduling spreadsheet where pod members have signed up for their respective responsibilities for each session. The responsibilities rotate, so people can adjust for busier points in their schedules, as well as choose to be more involved in topics that are of particular interest to them.

There are three roles for these rotating responsibilities:

1. Deliverables Co-Leaders (2 individuals)
2. Session Note-Taker

Deliverables Co-Leaders

With 7 pod members, we are able to have two people co-lead each session (sending reminders, uploading content, leading work on deliverables with the group, submitting deliverables). While co-leading the session, they facilitate the chat and dialogue to be sure everyone has the opportunity to speak and share (see ground rule 1).

Session Note-Taker

For each session, one member has volunteered to take notes on our discussion. This includes attendance, recording important points, tasks that we set ourselves, and any other “meeting minutes” information. These notes will be available to pod members by the end of the session, in our group Google Drive folder. Summarized and anonymous notes of action items will also be shared with the Department.