

# URGE

## Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

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### Hiring and/or Admissions Policies for University/Organization

This is what was found by Diversity@Durham at Durham University on Hiring and/or Admissions Policies, as well as what the pod would propose to change and improve.

The aim of this document is to outline the hiring and admissions process for staff and undergraduates at Durham University, with a particular focus on university policy and EDI, and outlining potential areas where changes could be made.

### **Staff**

#### Policy Overview

Relevant university staff recruitment policies can be found here (internal website):

<https://www.dur.ac.uk/hr/password/recruitment/recruiters/recruiterresources/> (Frustratingly the recruitment process is spread across multiple policy documents though.) Generally the institution has a process for full open-ended academic hires in the annual recruitment round (the ARC), and then a process for other hires associated with projects or fixed-term positions. The process for Grade 7+ staff is outlined here:

<https://www.dur.ac.uk/resources/hr/password/recruitment/recruiters/recruiterresources/FacultySearchRecruitmentandSelectionGuidance.pdf> This outlines two different systems, though the interview panel is more commonly used and outlined below. The policy makes the following points about EDI:

#### *Representative Workforce/Equality and Diversity*

- *All applicants should be considered fairly regardless of their gender, ethnicity, nationality, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage or civil partnership status. Recruitment must be based solely on the applicants' suitability assessed against the stated Person Specification for the post.*
- *Equality and diversity must be considered from the outset of the search process. Ensure that, as far as possible, those involved in the search are gender-balanced and representative of other protected characteristics.*
- *Keep diversity of the candidate field in mind at all times; consider whether there is a balanced representation of men and women, from a range of backgrounds, within the potential pool of candidates.*

<sup>1</sup> R. Kelley, 10 Samples of an Effective EEO Statement, [blog.ongig.com/diversity-and-inclusion/eeo-statement-samples](http://blog.ongig.com/diversity-and-inclusion/eeo-statement-samples), (2017).

<sup>2</sup> <https://careers.who.edu/opportunities/diversity-inclusion/>

<sup>3</sup> K. Cobb, #GRExit Resources, <https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.13215461.v1>, (2020).

<sup>4</sup> J. Posselt, Inside Graduate Admissions: Merit, Diversity, and Faculty Gatekeeping, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvjghw8s>, (2016).

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.brandeis.edu/diversity/dei-recruitment-hiring/rubric-for-evaluating-diversity-statements.html>

<sup>6</sup> K. Griffin, J. Bennett, T. York, Leveraging Promising Practices, Washington DC: Aspire Alliance, (2020).



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- Where people from different communities or with different characteristics are under-represented, you may consider proactive approaches during the search stage to candidates to help address any imbalance.
- Anyone who engages in the recruitment process must have completed the appropriate training (see below).
- The University is accredited to the "Disability Confident Scheme" which commits us to good practice in employing and retaining disabled staff.
- If in doubt; take advice from colleagues in HR.

All staff involved in the recruitment processes (search, long-listing, short-listing, assessments and final interviews) must have received appropriate recruitment and selection training (which will incorporate conflicts of interest). It is also strongly recommended that staff engaged in the search or appointment process also attend training on unconscious bias and equality and diversity; both of which will become a mandatory requirement to engage in any recruitment activity in due course.

### Job Advert

Much of the institutional text is boiler-plate and is recommended that it should not be changed. The main areas of text that can be edited are in the role description. Guidance to recruitment panel chairs is that they should keep essential and desirable criteria to a minimum where possible, and that the Chair (or members) of the Search Committee should ideally have input into the job description and advertising outlets used. All adverts must be approved by the Executive Dean (or Provost for Professorial posts).

*Possible action:* Review of text and inclusive language in non-boiler plate parts of advert?

### Job Search

Policy document:

<https://www.dur.ac.uk/resources/hr/password/recruitment/recruiters/recruiterresources/FacultySearchRecruitmentandSelectionGuidance.pdf>

A search committee is necessary for every advertised vacancy in the ARC, which is comprised of staff from the dept (and other departments). The chair is normally on the appointment panel. The aim of the search committee includes spreading the message about the vacancy and sell the department, and using people's networks to find out about potential candidates. EDI is included through the following aims:

- consider the diversity of the department and how it reflects our students and our ambitions to be world leading;
- use the search process to help overcome any equality/diversity imbalances or under-representation in the Department



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There is a requirement that search committee members must have completed the University's recruitment and selection training and should have completed the University's equality and diversity and unconscious bias training.

There is a significant section of the policy that focusses on EDI. The search committee is to be gender balanced and representative of other protected characteristics, and has an EDI champion to maximise attempts to address underrepresentation in the department. EDI data are provided to each panel on gender and BME faculty in the appropriate disciplinary areas in the UK university sector and in the Russell Group, which can be used to benchmark the department, and to ensure that applicants are representative of diversity in the UK talent pool. We are encouraged to take a proactive approaches to candidates from underrepresented groups, and actively engage with specialist networking and social media groups (and share successful uses with HR for future campaigns). We are explicitly recommend to approach leading figures to ask for recommendations (but with an acknowledgement that we should not keep asking the same people.) and to consider the breadth of the search, e.g. look beyond high ranking institutions, 'safe bets', 'local norms', and be clear that career gaps need not be off putting. A later guidance section suggests that departments might want to think about developing a pipeline, e.g. mentoring underrepresented colleagues from other institutions/sectors.

*Possible action:* There are good aims in the university policy, though the thoroughness with which these are addressed may vary between search committees. When used properly it has been effective in producing diverse competitive applicant pools. Follow the lead of the thoroughness of the recent Earth Sciences search (diverse network advertising through social media/direct adverts)! Good to ensure that all search committee members have completed the latter two sets of training. Think about external mentoring?

### Longlisting

Before longlisting, the search applicant pool is reviewed by the Search Committee to ensure that recruitment has been broad and inclusive. The Head of Department, Executive Dean and Provost certify that the search is satisfactory. If the pool is considered insufficient, an expanded search continues.

The Recruitment Panel (n Geography and probably elsewhere, the Recruitment Panel includes the Search Committee Chair as a member) whittles the applicant pool down to a longlist of 10 to 20 applicants, by scoring each candidate against the essential and desirable criteria. The criteria will cover teaching, research and citizenship. Policy suggests that borderline candidates should be given the benefit of the doubt.

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*Possible action:* Assess whether the job criteria are fully inclusive?

### Paper reading

Close reading of the candidates' submitted work (we usually request three or four outputs of the candidates' choice from the last few years) is undertaken *to assess whether the candidate is (capable of) delivering world-class research outputs*. Criteria allow panels to differentiate between demonstrated performance or the *potential* to demonstrate performance in all criteria (not just outputs): this is the critical difference between appointment at Grade 7 and Grade 8. In Geography readings are done by a different (though sometimes overlapping) group to the Recruitment Panel who are experienced in reading and assessing a range of outputs. Papers are assessed using a form that focuses on the strengths of the work and its significance. Reports are passed onto the panel for shortlisting.

*Possible action:* Should those doing the reading also undergo EDI training?

### Shortlisting

Shortlisting by the Recruitment Panel is based on further assessment of the submitted applicants and the reading reports. Policy states there should be *careful consideration as to whether early career researchers have or are establishing themselves as independent academics*. The shortlist will be roughly three to five applicants for a single post, with a couple of reserves. The agreed shortlist is passed for approval to the Head of Department/School, Executive Dean, and Provost.

*Possible action:* Check shortlist representation has not been reduced since lonf-list, and if so consider choices carefully, to make sure candidate selection is fully justified

### Interview/Presentation

Applicants are normally at Durham for two days, with a presentation on day one and an interview on day two. They may also be required to demonstrate sample teaching. In Geography the presentations are given to staff and post-docs (and post-grads). Staff provide comments to the panel chair in a final discussion session after all presentations. The sample teaching is assessed by a student panel (which is often small due to student availability), facilitated by a staff member, usually Director of Education.

Interview is carried out by the Appointing Panel. This is the Recruiting Panel, plus a Panel chair (typically an Executive Dean), possibly plus someone from another department. Senior appointments (Professor) will usually include a senior academic from another university. The panel should be gender balanced. Interview questions are decided on in advance, and have to



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include one on EDI. Following interviews a decision is made based on all the available evidence. The decision has to be approved by the Provost, and the Chair has to confirm that the process has complied with EDI procedures.

One issue to consider is that the requirement for balanced panels mean that female and other minority staff can spend more time serving on panels.

*Possible action:* Risk of bias in student assessments of sample teaching; make students aware of this?

### Contract negotiation

Not much on this in policy. Durham will consider joint/spousal hires on a case-by-case basis. Practice varies between departments on start-up negotiation.

*Possible action:* Push for review of university policies on spousal hire? More transparency about negotiation of start-up pot and provide support for start negotiation norms.

Full list of suggested actions relevant to Staff hiring in Leveraging Promising Practices that are not currently addressed in Durham to consider implementing:

- Consider - what are the metrics we rank candidates against? Are these in-line with our stated diversity values
- Diverse panels = diverse candidates (may prove difficult given current lack of representation)
- Diverse advertising – build on social media, diverse networks and direct emails of departments to reach diverse candidate pool (Earth science implemented)
- Have EDI committee approve wording of all job adverts to emphasise diversity importance (Earth science implemented)
- LONG/SHORT-listing - discuss diversity with selection panel before process begins to make sure everyone is on the same page and keeps this in mind. Emphasise importance of contextual information. Reminder of potential for unconscious bias before this stage begins (this has been shown to reduce its effect)
- LONG/SHORT-listing - look at demographics (gender/ethnicity) at each stage (candidate pool/long-list/short-list) and assess if levels of diversity are (at least) maintained. If not carefully think about selection process in case bias has crept in, recheck your candidates to make sure they are all fully justified. If people are border line, better to give them the benefit of the doubt.
- INTERVIEW PROCESS - brief students (with data examples) on the unconscious bias exhibited by students based on lecturers gender (and other things?) before they assess teaching section of candidate's interviews



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- INTERVIEW PROCESS - emphasise and celebrate EDI during interview stage to demonstrate to diverse candidates our values and to make them feel comfortable - consider having member of EDI committee chat to candidates as part of the interview process?
- INTERVIEW PROCESS - allow candidates to meet with staff/faculty that share their identity, student activists who will share honest opinions on culture, relevant people in the local community outside the university. Offer all candidates these options directly - don't wait for them to suggest people they want to talk to. Might be worth having people lined up for this, e.g. reaching out to the BAME staff network
- TRANSITION - start mentoring new staff immediately after offer acceptance, rather than waiting until starting
- TRANSITION - provide more support on job offer negotiation - some will not have any experience of this and may not have supportive networks they can call on for advice
- TRANSITION - make sure support is provide to help partners and families move along with candidate
- RETENTION - provide mentors who share characteristics of underrepresented faculty if possible (outside department if necessary)
- RETENTION - train mentors in culturally responsive practices?
- RETENTION - provide new staff with information of possible support networks (e.g. BAME staff network/BIPOCA), mention this at interview stage
- CREATING EQUAL OPPORTUNITY - set up academic information days on applying for post-docs/fellowships/academic positions, open to all (outside Durham) to improve knowledge beyond those with support networks
- Make people aware of family friendly policies and celebrate use of them so people aren't afraid it will affect their careers (more information on maternity/paternity - support available at all stages student/post-doc/staff)



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## Undergraduates

The university's undergraduate (and postgraduate) admissions policies are available here: <https://www.dur.ac.uk/university.calendar/volumeii/admissions.regulations/> Information about Fair Access, the Access Agreement and Widening Participation (WP) can be found here: <https://www.dur.ac.uk/study/ug/apply/policy/fairaccess/> The access agreement does include consideration of BME applicants, but the focus is on applicants from areas of deprivation and with low participation in higher education.

### Pre-application activities

Pre-application open days. These have recently included travel bursaries for certain students.

DU STEP (<https://www.dur.ac.uk/step/>), a new programme for 2020. *STEP offers a dedicated space for young Black students, who are typically underrepresented at Durham University, to explore not only their own potential, but all that Durham has to offer as a potential university destination.* This is a three day summer school, and applicants can choose from a range of subjects (including Geography but not Earth Sciences). If they fully engage they are given a guaranteed alternative offer (typically two grades below 'standard' offer).

WP programmes such as Sutton Trust and Supported Progression Scheme (<https://www.dur.ac.uk/supported.progression/>)

Activities run by schools liaison (<https://www.dur.ac.uk/schoolsliasion/>) and ad-hoc outreach done by staff and students.

Conferences for teachers supporting university application, including presentations by department admissions staff.

Geography has also worked with Time for Geography, Geographical Magazine, and the Curious Geographer on YouTube.

*Possible action:* ES to be involved in DU STEP? More targeted schools outreach?

### UCAS application

Students apply between Oct and Jan of their final year of school. They apply to five different universities. The application consists of predicted grades, a personal statement, and a teacher reference. Applicants can also apply the following (or any other year) after receiving their grades.

### Offer making



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Applications are assessed by the central admissions team. We read the entire application, but the extent to which we are selective varies between departments. Some (including Earth Sciences and BSc Geography) are recruiting, and therefore offers are made to the majority of applicants.

Guaranteed contextual offers (<https://www.dur.ac.uk/study/ug/apply/contextualoffers/>) are made to applicants based on meeting two out of home address (LPN or ACORN), state school, free school meals. These offers are typically two grades down (and might reduce further if the applicant firms with Durham).

### Post-application activities (conversion)

Once students have their decisions, they can select a firm and an insurance place. Post-offer open days are run to persuade offer holders to select Durham as their firm choice. This includes the option of an overnight stay in college (meaning that college environments also need to be considered when trying to increase diversity).

### Confirmation (examination results)

A level results are released in August. There is sometimes space to accept applicants who have just missed their grades, and we tend to prioritise WP applicants. This will only include BME applicants if they also meet the other WP criteria.

### After Recruitment

Increasing diversity can't stop once students are here. There is no point in improving recruitment if they have a bad time once they are here.

Rebecca Hodge

25/3/21