

# URGEO

## Unlearning Racism in Geoscience



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Hiring and/or Admissions Policies for Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences, McGill University

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

*Note: We acknowledge this information is not always accessible to students and even staff. If you do not have access to this information, please reflect on your own experience and outline what admissions and/or hiring should be like to foster a diverse and inclusive community.*

- **What EEO (Equal Employment Opportunity) statement<sup>1</sup> is included in a standard job or admissions advertisement? Are there other inclusion statements and resources publicly available<sup>2</sup>?**

For faculty hires, a statement like this is required by the University:

McGill University is committed to fulfilling its mission within an institutional environment that embraces equity and diversity. The University seeks to be proactive in attracting excellent academic staff who are members of designated groups, as identified by federal and provincial legislation, as well as McGill's Employment Equity Policy. These groups include women, Indigenous persons, persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities, racialized persons/visible minorities, and persons of minority sexual orientation or gender identity (LGBTT2SQ\* persons).

Available here under the Employment Equity tab: <https://www.mcgill.ca/apo/academic-life-cycle/tenure-track-academic-staff-professors-and-librarians/recruitment>

Our department has also included this statement (or a similar statement) in postdoc or other hires in the past few years. The Equity office is available to consult on modifications.

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

**Faculty hires:** adverts are posted on the Department website, on the American Geophysical Union careers website, listed in EOS, posted on the Canadian Geophysical Union website (where appropriate). Adverts are disseminated through listservs in Canada and internationally. The adverts are also posted on the Department social media (Twitter and Facebook) and through faculty Twitter accounts.

**Postdoc hires:** all available positions are listed on the Department website. Postdocs that are open to all disciplines in the Earth & Planetary Sciences (e.g. the departmental Wares Postdoc positions) are also advertised through adverts at the Council of Chairs of Canadian Earth Science Departments, Geological Association of Canada, Women in Geosciences, Canadian Geophysical Union websites and disseminated via national and international listservs and through the Department social media. Positions that are specific to a research grant administered by individuals or teams of professors are advertised by the professors, normally through disciplinary mailing lists specific to those fields.

**Graduate student recruitment:** general information is available through the Department website, but specific information about positions available in research groups is posted on research group websites and disseminated via individual professors.

- **What are the requirements for an applicant, e.g. letters of recommendations, fees/test scores<sup>3</sup>/grades? Is providing any of these a potential barrier that could be further lowered or removed? Are there any problematic questions asked?**

**Faculty hires:** applicants supply a cover letter, teaching and research statements, CV, and the names of three references. A "long list" is chosen by a hiring committee from the complete pool of applicants. The references for those candidates on the long list are contacted for letters of recommendation.

**Postdoc hires:** For departmental postdocs, applicants supply a cover letter, CV, transcripts, and two letters of recommendation. For department scholarships, applicants supply a 2-page proposal. There is no standard application procedure for postdoctoral fellowships that are specific to an individual professor or grant.



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**Graduate student applications:** Applicants supply a cover letter/personal statement, CV, transcripts, and two letters of recommendation. The requirements for entry to the graduate school are set outside of the department and rely predominantly on cumulative GPA at undergraduate level and previous graduate degrees, where applicable.

- **How are applicants/applications evaluated? Is that process and/or rubric<sup>4,5</sup> public? What kind of biases are introduced in this process and what strategies are used to address these, e.g. removing applicant names?**

Faculty hires and postdocs: there are potential biases in all stages of the evaluation of candidates. For example, initial assessments are based on CV and cover letter, which are not made anonymous. Evaluation of reference letters is subjective and open to multiple biases. In-person interviews and meetings with candidates are also dependent on individual preferences. The main strategy for addressing these issues is to require faculty serving on search committees to take the Equity in Recruitment workshop. This workshop asks attendees to consider the role bias and discrimination can play in shaping selection and review, and how best to take steps to minimize the impact of these forces.

Graduate admissions are not evaluated according to a rubric. Responsibility lies predominantly with individual professors to be aware of and work against conscious and unconscious biases. The graduate school prioritizes application packages from some designated groups and provides extra financial support for recruitment.

Some additional suggestions for improving the admissions process:

- develop outreach programs to minority-serving schools in Canada to encourage applications from under-represented groups,
- require equity training for faculty in context of graduate recruitment,
- improve transparency of admissions process with updated and expanded information on the department website,
- remove some potential barriers to admissions by improving the information about University requirements, potential projects available, as well as information on money-related affairs like payment of application fees on the department and research group websites,
- review the admissions processes and make the routines explicit and enacted fairly across the department,
- discuss mechanisms for comparing students with different backgrounds. Work towards definitions of merit and excellence that are inclusive.



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- establish a standard rubric for evaluating applicants.
- **Who is on selection committees and who makes the final decisions? Who interacts with the applicants?**

**Faculty hires:** selection is facilitated by a hiring committee consisting of several members of the faculty within the Department plus an external member. To serve on the hiring committee, every member must have completed an Equity in Recruitment training workshop provided by the institutional equity office. Final decision on hiring is made by the entire faculty with consultation from postdocs, graduate students, undergraduate students, and non-academic staff. During the hiring process, all members of the Department have the opportunity to engage with candidates. Faculty are encouraged to meet with candidates in personal meetings as well as interact at presentations from the candidate and group discussion settings. Undergraduate and graduate students, postdocs, and non-academic staff typically meet with candidates in group settings (e.g. a group lunch), but individual meetings are made available to these groups as well.

**Postdocs:** for department scholarships, the selection committee consists of two or three members of the Department faculty plus one external member. For positions specific to a research grant, the professors who administer the grant are responsible for the entire recruiting process and making final decisions. The recruitment process is not standardized, but faculty are encouraged to attend equity in recruitment training workshops. We note that there should be more effort to apply practices recommended in the equity in recruitment training for postdoc positions across the Department.

**Grad students:** the selection committee consists of four Department professors who evaluate all candidates with contribution from the professor seeking to recruit a graduate student. The convention is to allow professors to make decisions about who they hire, with the committee's role to ensure graduate students meet the Faculty of Science admissions criteria and to identify problematic cases or trends. The Admissions Committee can also play a role in supporting an application if there are issues matching the applicants' record to McGill admissions criteria, such as in the interpretation of international transcripts.

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

University-wide policies are developed by the McGill Equity Office who assist in implementing the hiring process. A change to the process can be requested in any given case and is then developed in consultation with the Equity Office.



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Unit-level hiring processes (postdoc, graduate students) have not been evaluated by outside consultants.

- **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”<sup>6</sup>?**

These practices are generally described and awareness among faculty raised through the institutional Equity Training Workshop. To-date, our Department has not formalized a long-term strategy for hiring. Through leadership from the Department Equity Committee, which consists of professors, postdocs, graduate students, and undergraduate students, our Department has begun re-visioning the work culture and environment and has implemented formal and informal changes to the work environment.