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## Hiring and/or Admissions Policies for Queen's University

This is what was found by Queen's U Pod at Queen's 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<sup>1</sup> is included in a standard job or admissions advertisement? Are there other inclusion statements and resources publicly available<sup>2</sup>?**

“The University invites applications from all qualified individuals. Queen's is committed to employment equity and diversity in the workplace and welcomes applications from women, visible minorities, Aboriginal peoples, persons with disabilities, and LGBTQ persons. All qualified candidates are encouraged to apply; however, in accordance with Canadian immigration requirements, Canadian citizens and permanent residents of Canada will be given priority.”

“In addition, the impact of certain circumstances that may legitimately affect a nominee's record of research achievement will be given careful consideration when assessing the nominee's research productivity. Candidates are encouraged to provide any relevant information about their experience and/or career interruptions.”

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

Faculty job postings are emailed to colleagues, posted to GSA jobs board, twitter, Earthworks, and a variety of other career boards.

Our pod had some great discussions on graduate student hiring and ads. We found that there is very little transparency in the hiring process, which benefits those who are on the 'inside.' We have a few graduate positions posted to our website, but in reality the way most people hire graduate students is by either directly approaching undergraduates in our own program, or by hiring people who reach out directly without replying to an ad. This creates the appearance that we only have a few open graduate student positions in the department, which isn't true. We discussed how this process can create a disadvantage for students who may not know that they need to contact professors directly.

<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.whoj.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).

# URGEO

## Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

- **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?**

### Requirements:

- 2 letters of recommendation, preferable from academics (at least one).
- Minimum GPA is 3.0 but applicants with lower GPA's may be put on academic probation, typically requiring a B in one or two courses in the first term (although these conditions may vary).
- There is a English language requirement for applicants that have not been educated in English: a TOEFL score of 550 (paper-based) or TOEFL iBT minimum scores of: writing (24/30); speaking (22/30); reading (22/30); listening (20/30), for a total of 88/120. Applicants must have the minimum score in each test as well as the minimum overall score. This can be waived at the discretion of the Department (based on past practices, need to confirm).

### Potential Barriers:

- There is an application fee of ~\$200 which could be a barrier.
- The general lack of transparency could be a barrier for some. Applicants are encouraged to contact a possible supervisor before they complete the application process. This is partly to make sure there is a fit with research interests and that the professor has funding and projects available. It is possible that unconscious bias may play a part in this screening process.
- Although we have 'requirements' set by the graduate school, many of these are not hard rules and if a faculty member vouches for the applicant, they can be waived (sometimes with academic probation). However, this isn't clearly stated anywhere and applicants who are barely below the requirements may not apply because they don't know that there is some flexibility. This again seems likely to benefit students who come from our own program and may already know these things.



## Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

- **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?**

Complete applications (with transcripts, application form, letters of recommendation) are reviewed by ad hoc committees of three faculty members, including the proposed supervisor. Applicant names are not removed. If the minimum requirements are met, and the proposed supervisor is willing to accept and fund the student, it is very likely that the student will be accepted. Thus exclusion of applicants occurs before this stage. This process is not public and there is no rubric. Names are not removed and there are no particular strategies used to address bias.

We discussed this at length in our pod meeting. There is a lot of improvement that could be made to the process of evaluating applicants. As mentioned above, a lot of filtering of applicants happens long before the ad hoc committees see the applications. Faculty members are often flooded with emails from prospective graduate students and we discussed ways to help make the first steps of the process more equitable. This is an ongoing conversation and we plan to start by making some resources available to faculty on ways to check their unconscious bias during the early stages of applicant evaluations. We also discussed the possibility of changing questions on applications and changing the overall structure of how things are done, but recognize that this is a longer process and conversation that needs to continue well beyond the scope of this session.

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

The ad hoc selection committees are chosen by the Graduate Coordinator and include two professors, typically those familiar with the subdiscipline, and the proposed supervisor. The Graduate Coordinator also reviews the application. Applicants are strongly encouraged to interact with prospective supervisors. They are also likely to interact with the Grad Assistant. They may or may not be encouraged to contact other graduate students, this is likely up to the supervisors.



## Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

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

We are currently in discussions with the Associate Vice Principal for EDII regarding our admissions process and hope to get some input from her and/or the Office of Human Rights and Equity. These are all internal to Queen's.

- **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>?**

To our knowledge we have not considered such strategies.

### **In Summary:**

This session brought some of the most engaged discussions we've had so far. There was a sentiment that a lot can be changed about how we hire graduate students and that a lot more transparency should be provided for prospective applicants. In the past few years there has been an increase in the number of graduate students who are hired from our undergraduate pool, and we discussed the ways that our system might provide an advantage to our own students over hiring students from other universities or countries.

Some ideas that we would like to carry on beyond this session include:

- Re-evaluating the rubrics used to assess candidates for faculty positions in our department. A rubric is used for evaluating faculty applicants, but there is room for modifying the metrics we use to evaluate candidates.
- Providing more detailed information on our webpage for prospective graduate students on the processes of applying to our program. This includes things like contacting faculty early and being clear about requirements and the process.
- Providing a set of resources and guidance to faculty on ways to consider equity and unconscious bias in their early stages of recruitment. We discussed the possibility that many faculty may not be thinking much about bias when they are filtering through emails from prospective candidates and that efforts to get them to check-in with their own process could be helpful.
- We discussed providing a set of interview questions for prospective graduate students and urging faculty to either use these questions or come up with their own questions that they ask consistently to applicants, even those they know well, to provide a more even and less biased evaluation of candidates.