



The Geological Society

Terms of Reference – Geoscientist magazine

Agreed by Council in November 2023

Purpose

Geoscientist is the magazine of the Geological Society of London. It fulfils a Byelaw requirement to communicate regularly with the Fellowship, and assists the Society in respect of its core mission to *support* Earth scientists, *grow interest* in the natural world, and *connect* science, the profession and society. It does so in several ways, including:

- Reinforcing Fellowship in a tangible way
- Serving as a membership benefit and resource for the Earth science community and beyond, with articles that aim to inspire interest within and across many fields of expertise
- Effectively communicating news of the Society, its activities and those of its Fellows
- Facilitating communication between the Society and its Fellows (including a forum for Fellows to feedback on the Society and the actions of its Trustees and Chief Executive, and for related responses), as well as the broader Earth science community

Editorial independence

Geoscientist is funded by the Society and produces content within a framework essentially as prescribed on its establishment in 1991. *Geoscientist* is editorially independent of the Council and Secretariat of the Society, reflecting both the original 1991 establishment of *Geoscientist* on amalgamation of the Geological Society of London with the Institute of Geologists, and the development of independent traditions.

In practice, editorial independence of *Geoscientist* means the ability of the Editor/Editor-in-Chief to make decisions regarding content, within the framework provided by these terms of reference and the Society's governance requirements, without interference from the Society's Trustees or Secretariat.

Content and frequency of publication

Geoscientist is distributed free to Fellows and is produced four times per annum in print and online editions, with the latter offering scope to include more in-depth material and more diverse content types. The main content is:

- News – Updates from the Society and geoscience community.
- Viewpoint – A discussion forum for the geoscience community, comprised of Columns (thought-provoking opinion pieces) and Letters (short notes to the editors).
- Features – Illustrated articles that provide in-depth coverage of a topical geoscientific subject.
- Unearthed – Thought-provoking discussion of a topical geoscience-related issue (to include reports, interviews, careers, and meetings).
- In Brief – Recent discoveries highlighted by our Contributors Team.
- Books & Arts – Reviews of recent books and cultural events.
- Obituaries – Tributes to Fellows recently deceased.
- Five minutes with – Interviews with interesting geoscientists.
- Full range of advertisements for geological services, products, and jobs. The Publishing House, and Events, Outreach, Library, Membership, and Development teams have an allocation for 'house advertising' to use at their discretion, the volume of which might vary depending on (priority) paid advertising.

Content will evolve over time, for example with material aimed at informing and influencing target audiences beyond the immediate Fellowship and making use of the online capability. In general, the content of *Geoscientist* and of the Society's regular email newsletters to Fellows should be complementary rather than duplicative of each other. The development of new types of content beyond those listed above will be undertaken through collaboration between the Society's Chief Executive and the Editorial Team. Significant changes to the content will be endorsed via a revision to these terms of reference.

Organisation

- **Editor(s)-in-Chief:** the Editor(s)-in-Chief (typically one Editor-in-Chief and one Deputy Editor-in-Chief) is ultimately responsible to the Fellows of the Society and has overall responsibility for the content of *Geoscientist*, including legal compliance.
- **Executive Editor:** the Executive Editor is responsible to the Editor(s)-in-Chief for the timely production and management of *Geoscientist*.
- **Editor(s) (to include Assistant, Associate, and Senior):** the Editor(s) is responsible to the Editor(s)-in-Chief and Executive Editor for the timely production of content for *Geoscientist*.

See abbreviated role descriptions (Appendix A).

- **Editorial Advisory Panel:** the primary role is to assist the Editorial Team with regards to scientific content of feature articles, with a lesser advisory role in respect of overall magazine style and content. The Panel is chaired by the Editor-in-Chief and consists of the Executive Editor, Editor(s) plus eight to ten individuals who would ordinarily be geoscientists and Fellows of the Society, but may include non-Fellows with pertinent experience. The primary role of the Panel is mainly achieved via email, however it shall meet (in person or online) at the request of the Editor(s)-in-Chief and/or Executive Editor to review the magazine and develop ideas for new or amended content.

The Editorial Advisory Panel members are invited to participate by the Executive Editor/Editor(s)-in-Chief, in order to ensure that the Panel has the requisite capacities to fulfil its role in respect of advising on scientific content. It would thus be expected that the Panel would broadly reflect of the diversity of Fellowship. The Editorial Advisory Panel positions are voluntary with no payment, normally for a 5-year term, extendable by mutual agreement.

- **Contributors Team:** Members of the Contributors Team offer their time on a voluntary basis. They are professional geoscientists and early career researchers who write for the magazine on a semi-regular basis, when required.

Editorial Standards

The Editorial Team shall comply with the professional principles laid out in the National Union of Journalist's published Code of Conduct (Appendix B), and the Society's Code of Conduct and Code of Publishing Ethics.

Reporting

To reflect *Geoscientist's* editorial independence from Council and Secretariat of the Society, at each Annual General Meeting of the Society, the Editor-in-Chief will report to the Fellows regarding the previous calendar year's performance of *Geoscientist*.

Funding and Expenditures

The cost of *Geoscientist* is funded by the Society and the Society's Director of Finance and Operations shall have oversight of *Geoscientist's* costs and advertising revenues. Costs incurred should be within the amount contained in the relevant category in the Society's annual budget and comply with the Society's expenditure policies and control processes. Since the main external cost element of *Geoscientist* is the out-sourced publishing contract, this contract shall be competitively tendered every 3 to 5 years under the oversight of the Director of Finance and Operations. Responsibility for procuring paid advertising is currently within the work-scope outsourced to the publisher, under the oversight of the Director of Finance and Operations.

Appendix A: Abbreviated Role Descriptions

Editor(s)-in-Chief

1. Ensure compliance with the Terms of Reference of *Geoscientist*

The Terms of Reference of *Geoscientist* define the magazine's editorial independence, content, responsibilities, etc. It is a key aspect of the role of the Editor(s)-in-Chief to ensure compliance with these Terms of Reference by the Executive Editor and Editor(s) and, if appropriate, by the Society.

2. Assist, support and advise the Executive Editor and Editor(s) on magazine content

Where there are disagreements amongst the Editorial Advisory Panel concerning suitability of major articles, the Editor(s)-in-Chief will resolve such matters if not resolvable through the Executive Editor. *Geoscientist* provides a forum for Fellows to offer their views and opinions. It is the role of the Executive Editor, Editor(s), and the Editor(s)-in-Chief to ensure that content is suitable for the Society's magazine, in particular with respect to scientific content and external reputation of the Society, effectively communicated and legally compliant. This is particularly the case in respect of areas of sensitive and/or controversial matters and with respect to legal compliance. The Editor(s)-in-Chief has a particular responsibility in respect of 'challenging' content in ensuring that it is appropriate, timely, etc. Although legal advice can be called upon to assist in this decision, it is likely that the mere question of legal compliance would normally suggest that the content should be excluded.

3. Ultimate responsibility for content

The Editor(s)-in-Chief reviews the intended content of forthcoming issues. In the case of any disagreements regarding content, the Editor(s)-in-Chief has the final decision.

The Editor(s)-in-Chief should have a broad knowledge of the Society, for instance gained as a past member of Council or Officer of the Society, and should be able to fulfil all aspects of the role. The appointment of Editor(s)-in-Chief is coordinated between the outgoing Editor(s)-in-Chief and Council of the Society, represented in the first instance by the Chief Executive, and subsequently confirmed (or otherwise) by vote at the Society's Annual General Meeting. The Editor(s)-in-Chief position is a voluntary position with no payment, normally for a 5-year term, extendable by mutual agreement. The Editor(s)-in-Chief should not be a current member of Council of the Society.

Executive Editor

The Executive Editor manages the creative and business components of *Geoscientist*, in print and online.

For the creative components of *Geoscientist*, the Executive Editor:

- Organizes, supervises, and participates in the management and development of all content submitted for publication.
- Procures and writes articles for each issue, edits the publication, and reviews all content before publication.
- Works with the Editorial Team to set the strategy and develop editorial policies, including the mission, vision, and tone of voice, and ensures that editors and writers adhere to these.
- Together with the Editor(s)-in-Chief and Editor(s), ensures that content is suitable for the Society's magazine, in particular with respect to its scientific content and the external reputation of the Society, effectively communicated and legally compliant.
- Works with the Publisher to set and approve the publication's layout, design, and style.
- Works with the Publisher and Editorial Team to deliver four print issues per annum, as well as regular online content, to the established publication timetable.
- Together with the Editor(s), manages the social media output of *Geoscientist*.

For the business components of *Geoscientist*, the Executive Editor:

- Works with the Publishers to manage production of *Geoscientist*, including managing the content tracking system and helping to set the publication schedule, setting and enforcing deadlines for copy.
- Maintains liaisons between the authors, editors, and publishers.
- Hires, supervises, develops, and manages the editorial staff and freelance contributors.
- Works with the Editor(s)-in-Chief to manage the Editorial Advisory Panel and Contributors Team.
- Manages editorial budgets, ensuring that budget requirements set by the Director of Finance are satisfied.
- Works with the Editor(s)-in-Chief and Director of Finance to conduct negotiations with publishers.

The Executive Editor is a paid journalist position, for a science writer with significant experience in the publishing industry, including magazine writing, production, and management, and with extensive knowledge of the Earth sciences.

The Executive Editor is appointed by the Chief Executive of the Society in coordination with the incumbent Editor(s)-in-Chief and should not be a member of Council of the Society.

Editor(s) (To include Assistant, Associate and Senior Editors)

The Editor(s) supports the Executive Editor in the day-to-day running and timely production of *Geoscientist* magazine, in print and online, and is part of the magazine's Editorial Advisory Panel.

The Editor(s) manages, writes and procures content for each issue and reviews content of all material before publication. It is the role of the Editor(s) (and the Editor(s)-in-Chief and Executive Editor) to ensure that content is suitable for the Society's magazine, in particular with respect to scientific content and external reputation of the Society, effectively communicated and legally compliant. The Editor(s) helps to oversee layout, proof-reads, and edits material, liaising with the Editorial Team and Publisher to deliver 4 issues per annum, as well as regular online content, to the established publication timetable. The Editor(s) (with support from the Executive Editor) manages the social media and communications output of *Geoscientist*.

The Editor(s) is a paid journalist position, for a science writer with experience in magazine writing and production, with knowledge of Earth sciences. The Editor(s) is appointed by the Executive Editor, in coordination with the Chief Executive and Editor(s)-in-Chief, and should not be a member of Council of the Society. The Editor(s) reports to the Executive Editor for line management purposes.

Career progression from Assistant through Associate to Senior Editor is available for editors who acquire significant publishing experience, make increased contributions to magazine content, and take on increased responsibility.

Appendix B: National Union of Journalist's Code of Conduct (2011)

A journalist:

1. At all times upholds and defends the principle of media freedom, the right of freedom of expression and the right of the public to be informed.
2. Strives to ensure that information disseminated is honestly conveyed, accurate and fair.
3. Does her/his utmost to correct harmful inaccuracies.
4. Differentiates between fact and opinion.
5. Obtains material by honest, straightforward and open means, with the exception of investigations that are both overwhelmingly in the public interest and which involve evidence that cannot be obtained by straightforward means.
6. Does nothing to intrude into anybody's private life, grief or distress unless justified by overriding consideration of the public interest.
7. Protects the identity of sources who supply information in confidence and material gathered in the course of her/his work.
8. Resists threats or any other inducements to influence, distort or suppress information and takes no unfair personal advantage of information gained in the course of her/his duties before the information is public knowledge.
9. Produces no material likely to lead to hatred or discrimination on the grounds of a person's age, gender, race, colour, creed, legal status, disability, marital status, or sexual orientation.
10. Does not by way of statement, voice or appearance endorse by advertisement any commercial product or service save for the promotion of her/his own work or of the medium by which she/he is employed.
11. A journalist shall normally seek the consent of an appropriate adult when interviewing or photographing a child for a story about her/his welfare.
12. Avoids plagiarism.

The NUJ believes a journalist has the right to refuse an assignment or be identified as the author of editorial that would break the letter or spirit of the NUJ code of conduct. The NUJ will support journalists who act according to the code.

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