

URGE

Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

Unlearning Racism in Geoscience (URGE; www.urgeoscience.org) is a community-wide journal-reading and policy-design curriculum to help Geoscientists unlearn racism and improve accessibility, justice, equity, and inclusion (AJEDI) in our discipline. URGE's primary objectives are to (1) deepen the community's knowledge of the effects of racism on the participation and retention of black, brown, and indigenous people in Geoscience¹, (2) use the existing literature, expert opinion, and personal experiences to develop anti-racist policies and strategies^{2,3}, and (3) share, discuss, and modify anti-racist policies and strategies within a dynamic community network and on a national stage. By meeting these objectives, we hope that Geoscience departments and societies will be able to implement a well-researched crowdsourced group of anti-racist policies.

Deliverable - Pod Guidelines

Education is essential but action is also imperative for achieving the objectives of URGE. Therefore, each URGE topic is paired with deliverables for individual pods to draft and share. *This deliverable is a set of agreed upon guidelines and group norms for your pod.*

Before you begin your work as a pod, it is critical to lay a strong foundation as a group so that all members of the pod can participate and learn. As a group, discuss what you need to ensure a safe, inclusive environment to discuss difficult and potentially controversial issues.

1. Examples of Widely Used Ground Rules⁴

Ground rules should be developed and adapted for your specific pod. Appropriate ground rules may depend partially on who is in your pod - is it all graduate students? Tenured faculty and non-tenured faculty? Is the group all white or are there individuals with lived experience with racism? What are the power dynamics in play? The following list of common ground rules can serve as a starting point for your process of creating a similar list suitable to your own pod:

1. Listen actively -- respect others when they are talking.
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 individual 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 (even 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.

¹R. E. Bernard, E. H. G. Cooperdock, No progress on diversity in 40 years. Nature Publishing Group. 11, 1–5 (2018).

²<https://notimeforsilence.org/>

³<https://www.change.org/p/geoscientists-call-for-a-robust-anti-racism-plan-for-the-geosciences>

⁴Adapted from <http://www.edchange.org/multicultural/activities/groundrules.html> and https://www.mnvs.org/assets/1/6/ground_rules_-_arc_discussion.pdf



2. Making decisions as a group

Each pod needs to decide how you want to make decisions as a group. This will be relevant during the formation of deliverables, reporting back to the larger URGE group on activities, etc. Do you want to go with group consensus (<https://www.seedsforchange.org.uk/shortconsensus>)? A majority vote? Make sure the group discusses these decisions before beginning on deliverables.

3. Pod member roles and responsibilities

Pod leaders are the main points of contact between URGE and the pods. Pod leaders submit files to the URGE website (e.g., sign up form, updates to pod membership, and deliverables). It would work best if there is a designated person from the pod who submits files to URGE to avoid sending duplicate deliverables files.

Apart from this, you may organize pods in whatever ways work best for your members. You may have multiple pod members leading discussions or developing the deliverables, a different one for each session, for example. This spreads out the job of facilitating Zoom meetings, moderating discussions, and finalizing edits, in addition to engaging all pod members and leveling any power dynamics.

How you organize your pod is up to you, however, the group needs to make roles and responsibilities clear. Here is a list of recurring tasks that need to be assigned to a group member. When assigning tasks, please keep in mind that white women and people of color are more often asked to do 'secretarial' tasks than white men. Feel free to rotate tasks, as long as it's clear who is responsible for each task during each unit (two weeks).

1. Schedule meetings (use when2meet, doodle, etc to make this easier!)
2. Take attendance (important for accountability)
3. Take notes as needed, especially in discussions of deliverables
4. Upload deliverables to the URGE website
5. Schedule meetings with organization/institution leadership (Week X)
6. Read supplemental articles / materials for deliverables as needed (for example, the asset mapping deliverable will be accompanied by a short paper about the purpose of creating community asset maps and how to generate your own.)
7. Draft deliverables and share with pod for review/edits/discussion at the pod meetings

Pods should upload their pod's guidelines, including your decision making method and plan for division of work, to the URGE website. We also encourage pods to post these guidelines on the organization's website and share over social media (use #URGE and tag @URGEoscience). Sharing deliverables will propagate ideas, foster discussion, and ensure accountability.