

## **Progress Report: BSG Fixed-Term Working Group on 'Communicating Geomorphology' – Lucy Clarke, Daniel Schillereff and Emma Shuttleworth**

The remit of the Communicating Geomorphology Fixed-Term Working Group is to assess the needs and viewpoints of different groups in order to determine how best geomorphology should be communicated and promoted. The FTWG is due to run for 3-year period (with funding from the BSG for 2-years) and began in February 2015. This report is an update on activities undertaken in the first 2-years of the project.

### *Activities undertaken:*

In 2015 we canvassed the views of the BSG membership through an online survey; 137 responses were received (31% of society membership). The survey aimed to determine if and how members actively communicate or have communicated geomorphology, the audiences with whom they have engaged and where they believe the discipline is being effectively communicated. Two focus groups were also held (London, Feb 2016 and Manchester, May 2016) with BSG members that had completed the survey and expressed an interest in attending, to discuss some of the points raised in more detail. The survey and focus group demonstrated that the BSG membership is active in promoting geomorphology outside of the Academy, but there was some debate about the use and necessity for the term 'geomorphology'. The main findings from the survey are summarising in an [ESEX Commentary](#) authored by the FTWG (see below for more information on this) and a 'best practice' guide will be collated by the FTWG at the end of the project to be hosted on the BSG website, to include the range of activities and opportunities mentioned in the survey to raise awareness of these in the wider BSG community. In addition to the data collected through the survey a large number of members volunteered their services in future communications; these will be drawn upon in future FTWG activities and have been passed onto the BSG Outreach Committee.

Following on from survey, the FTWG team did additional research into the 'impact' and use of the term geomorphology within the academy. Analysis of the REF2014 impact case studies submitted to Unit 17: Geography, Environmental Studies and Archaeology showed that out of 85 case studies, 17 (20%) mention geomorphology directly, and 40 (47%) are inherently geomorphological even though the term is not explicitly mentioned. The top 50 journals that geomorphologists submit to were analysed to find whether the term was listed as a keyword and/or present in the journal description; 21 out of the 50 (42%) journals that were looked at explicitly used the word geomorphology in their description, and 14 (28%) use it in their journal keywords. Finally, geomorphology in undergraduate teaching was evaluated by quantifying the presence of geomorphology in undergraduate degrees, module titles and descriptions for Geography degrees in UK, Singapore, Switzerland and the USA (the four countries with institutions ranked in the top 20 of the QS World University Rankings, 2016). In the UK, 79 Geography degrees are run at 72 institutions; 46% offer a geomorphology module. The two universities in Singapore ranked in the QS Top 20, both offer Geography degrees; one offered a range of geomorphology modules, while the other did not mention the term but ran geomorphology related modules. Of 12 universities in Switzerland, four offer a module titled geomorphology at institutions who offer a Bachelor's programme in Physical Geography or a Geoscience degree. Of the US institutions ranked in the Top 100 of the QS Table (n=32), those with a Department of Geography (n=9) tended to run a module entitled 'geomorphology' (78%). Conversely, where geoscience Majors are taught in Earth, Ocean or Environmental Science administrative units (n=22), less than half (45%) delivered a named 'geomorphology' course. Overall, this demonstrated that geomorphology, both as a discipline and use as a term, maintains a strong scientific standing.

The initial findings and research for the FTWG have been written up and published in an ESEX commentary (available online February 2017): [Communicating geomorphology: an empirical evaluation of the discipline's impact and visibility](#)

The FTWG was also involved in co-organising the early-career workshop on 'Communicating Geomorphology' and the BSG Annual General Meeting 2016 held at Plymouth University, and has been in discussion with Aberystwyth about a similar activity at BSG2018.

*Plans for 2017:*

The current work of the FTWG is focused on looking outside of the academy and gauging the views of those who we want to communicate with about geomorphology. We are also trialling approaches to better communicate what geomorphology, such as a tagline, with the public and with input from the BSG membership and EC.

A questionnaire for industry practitioners has been created and will be circulated in March 2017 using the BSG Industry rep and volunteers from the online survey to circulate amongst colleagues in their organisations.

A range of initiatives have been discussed and are being pulled together involving teachers and communicating with education providers. These will be launched over the Summer of 2017, and the FTWG will be drawing on interested BSG members to assist with these.

Next year, there are also plans to engage with policy makers and the media before the project comes to an end. At this stage an Open Access document will be produced to be hosted on the BSG website to include a series of evidence-based recommendations for the optimal methods of communicating geomorphology to each identified audience, from which future BSG communication strategies and wider geomorphological outreach activities can be developed.

We are continually open to suggestions and feedback, and so please contact us if you would like to do this or get involved.

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