

EPSRC Centre for Doctoral Training in Geospatial Systems

EDI Action Plan Version 5 - AY 2023-24

As outlined in the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Policy for the Centre for Doctoral Training (CDT) in Geospatial Systems, the CDT is committed to embedding EDI at the core of all its operations and creating an inclusive and supportive culture that promotes respect and dignity for all its stakeholders.

Our EDI aims are met through wider-institutional commitment and by embedding a programme of activities and initiatives throughout the life cycle of the CDT:

Institutional commitment to EDI - Each of the CDT partner institutions, Newcastle University and The University of Nottingham, has a strong commitment to EDI, each with its own central EDI team, strategy, and policies on Recruitment and Selection, Dignity and Respect, and Flexible Working Arrangements. As a result, each of the CDT partners will operate in accordance with the EDI strategies and policies of their respective institution.

Each of the CDT partner institutions demonstrate a commitment to EDI through their engagement with diversity charter mark schemes. The CDT will look to draw from the knowledge and best practice acquired through engaging with these external charter mark schemes and internal EDI networks.

- Both Newcastle and Nottingham hold Silver institutional Athena SWAN awards in recognition of best practice in promoting gender equality. Moreover, host centres in the Faculty of Engineering at UoN and School of Engineering at NCL hold individual Gold and Bronze awards, respectively.
- Each partner is a member of Stonewall's Diversity Champions programme, with active LGBTQ+ staff and student networks.
- Newcastle is a member of the Business Disability Forum, while Nottingham is an accredited 'Disability Confident' employer.
- Both Newcastle and Nottingham are institutional members of the Race Equality Charter Mark scheme.
- Newcastle has a Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) network for staff and postgraduate research (PGR) students, whilst Nottingham has a BAME staff network.

EDI Leadership and Responsibilities - The CDT will take a top-down approach to ensuring an inclusive doctoral training environment, with the CDT Director (Mills) operating as an EDI

Champion with responsibility for ensuring the CDT adheres to EDI strategies and policies at each of the partner institutions. The Director will be supported in Nottingham by the CDT Director of Training Delivery (Boyd) and together they will work with EDI teams at their respective institutions and take responsibility for the development and implementation of the CDT EDI action plan.

In order to ensure a progressive and maturing EDI Action Plan, there will be:

- A standing EDI item on the regular Programme Management Board (PMB), with specific items for staff and student representative feedback.
- Professors Mills and Boyd will meet annually to undertake a detailed review and update of the EDI Action Plan before submitting to the CDT Programme Management Board for scrutiny and revision prior to approval.
- The CDT will hold regular 'open' sessions where students can raise and discuss EDI related issues. Students will be encouraged to channel any individual EDI issues via the independent Director of Student Development (Ford) or CDT Managers (Stogden / Palmer).
- As part of its wider staff development programme, the CDT leadership and all supervisory teams will attend at least one staff-specific training workshop on EDI to ensure that the CDT management, training and supervision is delivered to the highest EDI standards. Examples of staff-specific training will include disability inclusion and supporting BAME attainment.
- The EDI directors will meet regularly with their respective institutional teams to ensure that the CDT remains current with respect to institutional EDI policy and practice.
- The CDT delivery team, supervision teams and student body will be provided with a copy of the CDT EDI Policy and Action Plan that all staff and students are expected to adhere to.
- The CDT EDI policy will be included in the CDT student and Supervisor handbook.
- The CDT will engage with other CDTs and national diversity initiatives (e.g., WISE, WES, AFBE-UK) to learn and share best practice.

Student Recruitment - The CDT is committed to attracting applicants from a diverse talent pool and the recruitment strategy will be adjusted each year to reflect lessons learned and best practice in how to continue to reach a broad, diverse, audience.

Current planned actions in relation to attracting as diverse a range of applicants as possible to the CDT include:

- The consideration of the wording, timing and placement of adverts to attract applicants from a diverse talent pool.
- Adverts will include statements confirming the CDT welcomes and encourages applications and proposals from across the entire research community of disciplines, including under-represented groups.
- To demonstrate a commitment to EDI, we will use charter mark logos and affiliations within advertising and in all CDT documentation and online presence.
- All University staff involved in recruitment and selection will be required to complete Unconscious Bias training to minimise the impact of affinity bias. Refresher slides will be provided to panels in advance of recruitment and selection.
- Recruitment to the CDT will follow the policy of the institution to which individual students are applying. Where deemed necessary, we will share best practice and lobby the institutions to adopt progressive EDI policies in terms of recruitment.
- Following experiments into anonymization of applications at short-listing stage, we will continue to pursue best practice in terms of application anonymization.
- We will ensure gender representation on all shortlisting and interview panels, in line with University policy at both Newcastle and Nottingham.
- We will build on our success in recruitment and utilise our existing student cohorts as a beacon for diversity and inclusion.
- The CDT will aim to hold recruitment panels and interviews between Core Hours (10:00 – 16:00) and provide flexibility in scheduling so that staff and applicants with caring responsibilities are able to participate.
- Accessibility and other reasonable adjustments, including online interviews, will be offered for both applicants and panel members; ensuring that by doing so this will not affect a student's application.

Culture, Training and Activities – In order to foster a culture of inclusion, the following will be implemented:

- An individual needs assessment will be undertaken for each member of each annual cohort and reasonable adjustments will be made where required. This will ensure there is recognition of when and what adjustments need to be made in setting deadlines for work for students with physical and learning disabilities (e.g., dyslexia), caring responsibilities, etc.
- We will respect student and staff preferences relating to identity, to include name pronunciation, pronouns, etc.

- We will promote mentoring to assist with managing workload and deadlines and ensure access to appropriate University support services. For example, for the MRes group project, students with caring commitments will work in a group based at their home institution, mentored appropriately.
- We will use communications tools such as MS Teams and Zoom to ensure virtual interaction with the entire student cohort takes place regularly throughout the academic year.
- Throughout the CDT we will have a culture of inclusion, making students aware of, and encouraging them to engage with, activities such as School EDI committees, Women in Engineering groups, University EDI Networks (e.g., Rainbow and BAME Networks), plus annual diversity events such as Mental Health Awareness Month, International Women in Engineering Day, and LGBTQIA+ People in STEM Day.

Partner Engagement and CDT Outreach - The CDT aims to act as a catalyst to promote cultural change within academia, industry and the wider geospatial community. In line with this, the following of initiatives will be implemented with the aim of promoting diversity when engaging with industry and the wider-community and increase applications from females, BAME and mature applicants from industry.

- There will be dedicated activity at CDT events to engage with participants on geospatial diversity and inclusion.
- The CDT will investigate the use of targeted practices to increase applications from under-represented groups, such as females, BAME and mature applicants from industry.
- Industry engagement events, including industry seminars, will include targeted sessions from inspirational speakers from under-represented groups.
- The CDT will work on improving BAME diversity via engaging / working with and making our partners aware of organisations such as Colorintech (<https://www.colorintech.org/>) and Association for Black and Minority Ethnic Engineers (AFBE-UK, <https://afbe.org.uk/>).
- The CDT will adopt best practices around physical and mental disabilities by engaging with the Business Disability Forum whom Newcastle University are a member. Newcastle University also hold Committed Disability Confident Accreditation Level 1
- The student cohort will be challenged and encouraged to become EDI ambassadors, and funds are available for all our students to undertake at least one EDI activity during their PhD; including school talks in areas of low uptake of STEM from females, underprivileged communities and BAME, and talks to underrepresented groups at alumni universities.

Monitoring, Reporting, and Measuring Success - The CDT will continually monitor the diversity profile of its annual student applications, shortlisted applicants, and selected cohorts. Beyond reporting to UKRI, this will allow us to review our processes and ensure they are leading to a diverse, inclusive CDT student-body. We will compare our intake to appropriate HESA benchmarking data and set ourselves the challenge to improve upon the national average year-on-year; particularly in relation to underrepresented groups. This will help to increase representation and promote diversity in the academic pipeline.

This CDT Action Plan is an iterative document and will be adjusted accordingly following the continuous review of the activities outlined. The CDT will also look to include, where possible, EDI best practice initiatives from across its partner Universities, industry, and the higher education sector. Beyond this document, the CDT will continually scan the EDI landscape to ensure best practice is followed.