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Are diverse geochemists retained and thriving on the UK academic ladder?

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Evaluating Diversity and Inclusion within the (geochemistry) Academic Ladder (E-DIAL), funded by the UK's Natural Environment Research Council, provides a snapshot of diversity and identifies barriers resulting in underrepresentation among intersectional identity groups across the UK geochemistry community. The project emphasis is on the academic ladder within UK higher education institutions (HEIs). As a multi-faceted discipline, geochemistry is central to Earth, environmental and planetary sciences, yet the first specific geochemistry workforce data is only now being collected (e.g., through the 2022 Global Geochemistry Community Survey launched by the European Association of Geochemistry and Geochemical Society). In complement to this timely society-led effort serving the international geochemistry community, our project collects original data and evidence through a UK-wide survey that captures coupled diversity and academic progression and retention data. These data are vital to catalyse policies that actively improve geochemistry career prospects for diverse talents, given that a community's scientific potential can only be reached by including everyone. Specifically, the UK-wide survey data examines information on past and recent rates of appointment, progression and retention of both majority and under-represented groups across all levels of seniority, including research students, within UK HEIs.

In profiling geochemists' career pathways and evidencing lived experiences (e.g., among postdocs), exclusionary obstacles are identified with resultant understanding driving revision of prevailing policies, attitudes and practices while assessing implementation effectiveness at HEIs with, for example, differing diversity certifications (e.g., Athena Swan or Race Equality Charters). Findings will test the hypothesis that "there is an erosion of diversity within geochemistry careers." To accelerate widespread change, E-DIAL will engage in diplomacy and action at institutional, funding agency and parliamentary levels. Our approach optimises study effectiveness by ensuring that

project findings and recommendations for reform within UK HEIs reach communities and decision makers at all levels, with the intention of influencing UK system change to improve diversity and inclusion while establishing practice for continued monitoring. As a national-level project linked to society efforts on the global stage, E-DIAL provides a starting model for similar studies to be carried out among other nations. We therefore urge wider funding agencies to engage in and sustain financial support of such collaborative cross-disciplinary research because this work and its impact on STEM governance is critical to advancing justice, diversity, inclusion, equity and excellence in and beyond academia.