

# Opening up disciplinary conversations about equality and diversity: A learned society perspective

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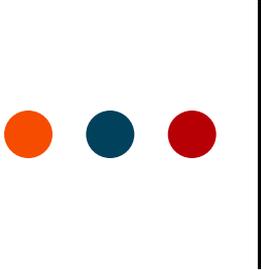
Advancing geography  
and geographical learning

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Project  
Coordinator:  
Learning,  
teaching and  
accreditation

ECU Conference  
30 November  
2016



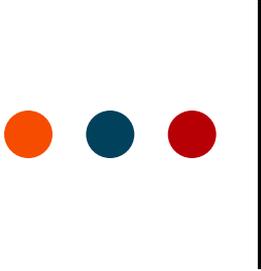
# About the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG)

**Royal  
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- UK learned society and professional body for geography and academic geographers.
- Largest and most active scholarly learned geographical society in the world, founded in 1830
- Exists to advance geography and is actively involved in supporting and promoting geographical research, education, fieldwork and expeditions, policy and public engagement



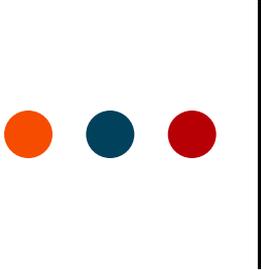
# About geography

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- Geography is the study of Earth's landscapes, peoples, places and environments. It is, quite simply, about the world in which we live.
  - From scientific study of earth surface processes and landforms, to studies of memory, place and emotion
- Within universities, geography 'departments' variously found in/with: science, social science, arts & humanities, business, politics/policy, tourism... sometimes not even called geography. We take an inclusive view.



# Why take a disciplinary view?

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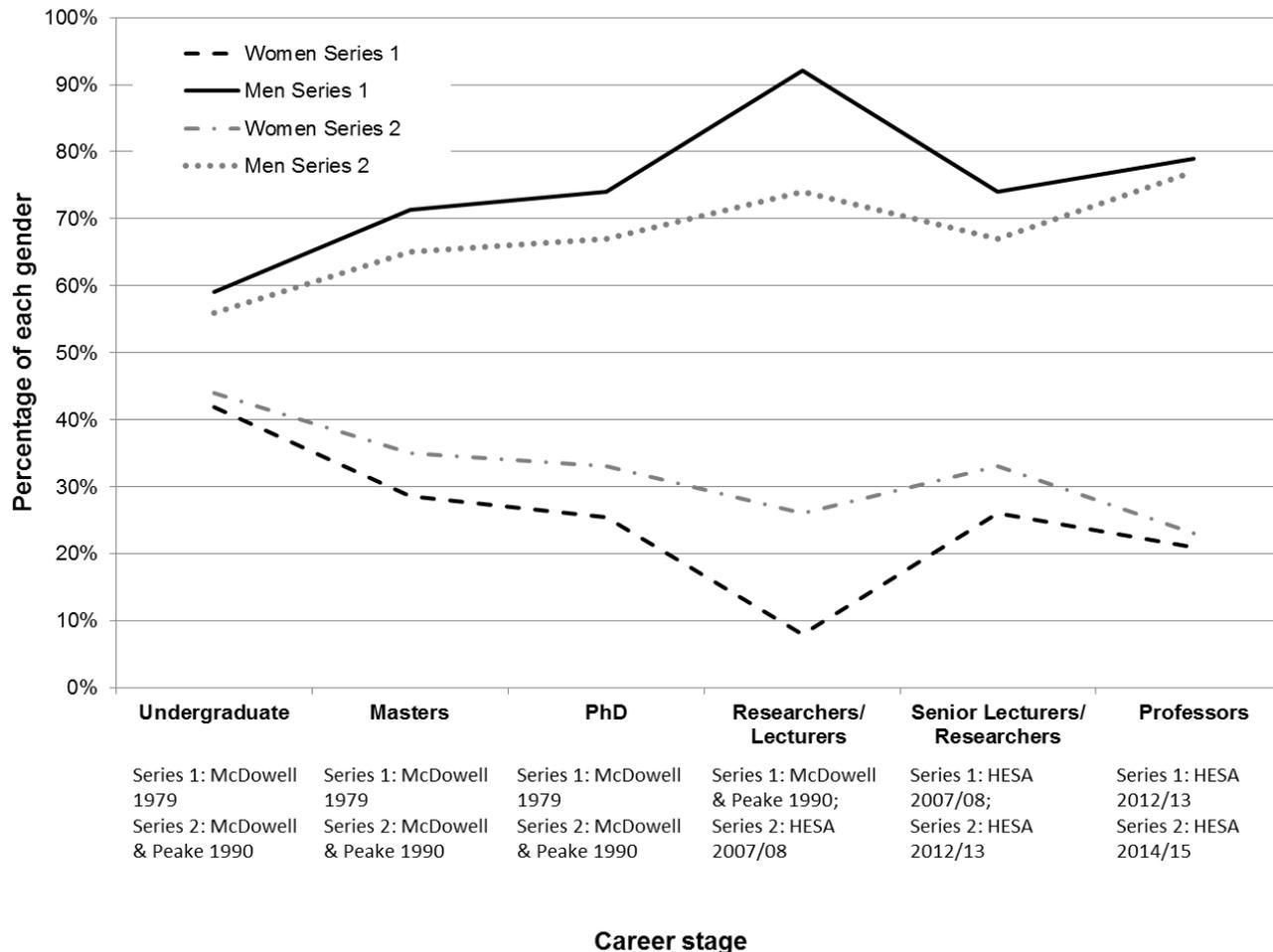
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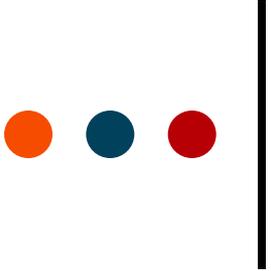
- ‘Split’ nature – human/physical
- (Gendered) career progression
- Signature pedagogies
- Who does the teaching?
- Geography is relatively self-critical – Gender and Feminist Geographies Research Group has long-standing research/interest
- Taking ownership, and valuing what’s important to our discipline

# Changing pipeline?

## Gender ratios of university geography students and teachers, 1978 to 2014/15



**Courtesy of RGS-IBG  
Gender and Feminist  
Geography Research Group**



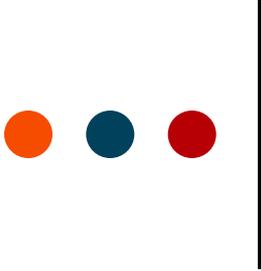
# Take-up of Athena SWAN

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- Pre-2015, some geography departments within science faculties, or those with strong institutional support
- One geography department in GEM pilot
- Post-2015, more rapid take-up and early-adopters going for Silver
- As of October 2016:
  - 22 geography departments/schools: 19 Bronze and 3 Silver -- *about 25% of all geography depts*
  - 16 other departments/schools in earth sciences, environmental sciences



# A geography network for equality & diversity

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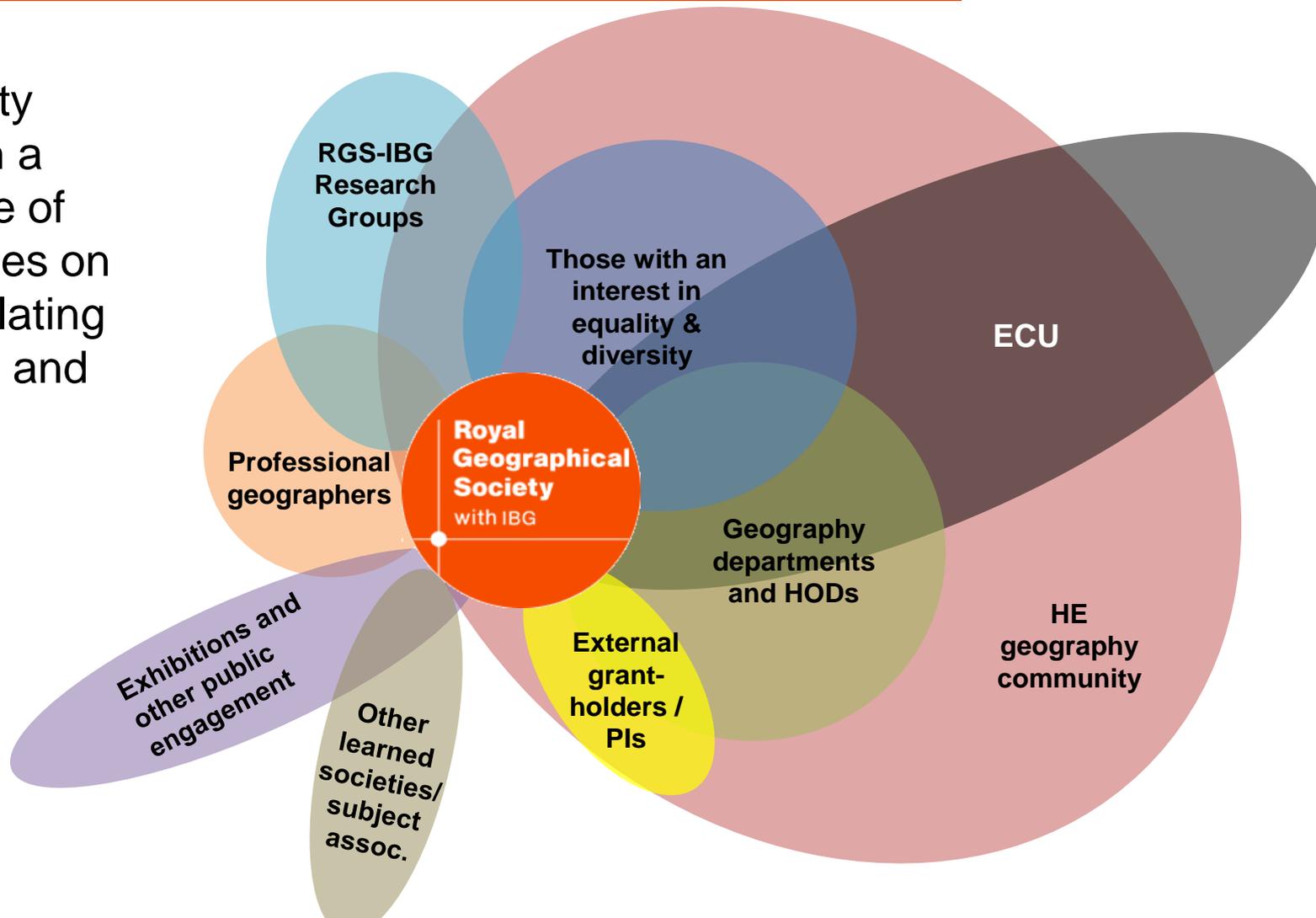
- Once or twice-yearly meeting of self-assessment team representatives from geography departments, plus others supporting discipline
- Mailing list
- 1:1 support and information sharing; critical friends
- Keep a web page [www.rgs.org/equalitydiversity](http://www.rgs.org/equalitydiversity) with resources and ideas; links to published plans
- Offer disciplinary benchmark data
- Complementary and sympathetic to other support (institutional, regional, ECU...)
- ECU presence at meetings, when possible

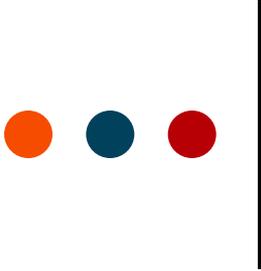
# Who we speak with

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The Society works with a wide range of communities on matters relating to equality and diversity





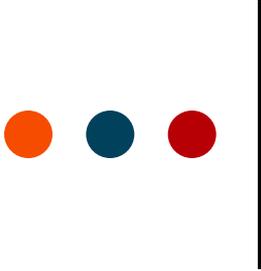
# How does the network help?

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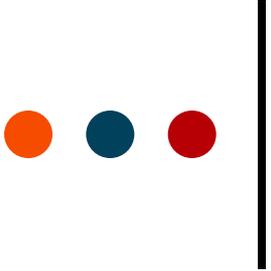
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- Shows Society support for equality & diversity, and for departmental initiatives
- Allows departments to share expertise, show leadership and demonstrate impact
- Helps secure disciplinary and institutional buy-in
- Helps to even out variation in size and resourcing of departments, and their ability to engage with bigger themes and issues
- Supports career progression and development of those who participate
- Information fed back through other Society networks: Heads of Departments; Research Committees



# Making progress

- Continued attention to gender, especially pipeline and mid-career step
- Renewed/continued focus on departmental ethos, and broader attitudes within discipline; undercurrent of bullying/discrimination?
- More attention to status of teaching-focused staff, those on fixed-term contracts, and professional (especially technical) staff
- Emerging attention to BME staff and students, and other intersectional groups (Society has working/research groups on race/culture and sexualities/space)



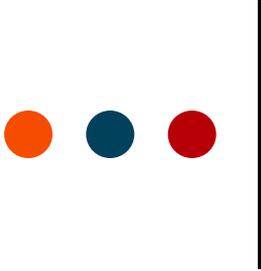
# Making progress

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- Professional development opportunities:
  - Career progression (mid-career; early-career)
  - Targeted workshops for professional development (teaching-focused; early-career)
- Mentoring and peer support within sub-disciplinary specialisms
- Increased engagement by departments with each other, E&D professionals, and other sources of support and information
- Increased sharing of ideas and resources



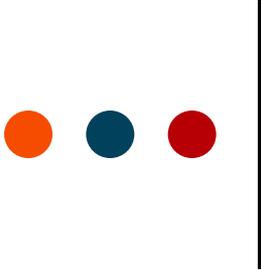
# A disciplinary ethos of equality?

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“I could name several [role models], both male and female, but the common characteristic was their critical and reflexive approach to understanding things, refusing to take things for granted and always looking for difference or another perspective, and the way they tried, always generously and patiently, to instil a similar approach in me.”

Male 67, 26-34yrs  
Response to “*Careers in UK HE Geography survey:  
choices, status and experience*”, 2010



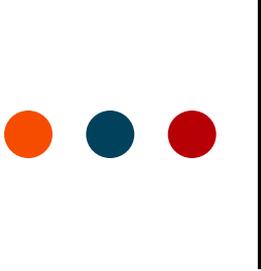
# Find out more

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