

Fairness and Diversity in Statistical Science workshop
6th July 2021
UCL-LMS

Notes from breakout group discussions

Instructions for the groups:

- Pick a specific topic from the panel.
- What could be done at the level of institution/department policy where you are?
- Who would need to be on board? Where can pressure be applied?
- Are they already doing anything? On what timescale?

Topic: Hiring and admissions

- Recognise that a lot of ranking of applications is uninformative and not predictive of how good an applicant is.
- Find people with similar qualifications and then use diversity criteria.
- Do not put over requirements - try to leave only those requirements that are the most important, as excessive requirements put off candidates who are less confident or privileged.
- Explicitly account for career trajectory, not just the final outcome.
- Ensure students are aware of opportunities and resources available to them.
- Ensure candidates with disabilities are accommodated and their circumstances accounted for.

Topic: General strategies for improving EDI within universities

- Change needs to happen at the institutional level, but starts at the individual level.
- Unconscious and explicit bias training at Board level.
- Some training providers: <https://racereflections.co.uk/elearning/>
<https://racereflections.co.uk/events/antiracism-training/>
- Professional support at hiring is crucial (e.g. fair recruitment specialists at UCL).
- Disability needs to be taken into account at recruitment (and panels may need to know)
- Reminding institutions and people that a DEI Consultant may not always have the competency to investigate, remedy, design and deliver anti-discriminatory programmes.
- Nurture a culture of trust to have effective co-produced training
- Ensure complaints are taken seriously.

Topic: Teaching students about fairness in statistical practice

- Teach basics of algorithmic bias, data bias, and metrics for evaluating them. Interesting underlying mathematical and statistical theory.
- Create an interdisciplinary environment for students interested in applied maths/stats. Collaborative experience is important for students wanting to go into industry.
- There is a long path with potential bias at each step, and in industry often it is broken into teams and everyone just does 'their bit'. Data imbalance, sampling bias, data processing, modelling, algorithms, communication, decisions. Teach students to think about this before starting, document potential sources of bias at each step, show them the whole path at least once, think about the feedback loops.
- Teach communication with a broad range of people.