Role overview

The role of the Geoscientific Skills and Facilities Directorate (GSFD) is to ensure that adequate human and physical resources are available to deliver the scientific programme, and to develop scientific capacity in order to ensure that our capabilities remain in line with both our present and future requirements. Scientific staff are managed and deployed by four Heads of Discipline (HoDs), divided into groupings of: Geology, Geotechnics and Palaeontology; Geophysics and Marine Geoscience; Geochemistry, Mineralogy and Hydrogeology; and Information Systems. A separate HoD is responsible for staff in Administration and Finance. GSFD also manages the full range of BGS’s scientific infrastructure including laboratories, information technology facilities, and publication services: these areas are all headed by a manager responsible for strategy and operational matters. We take staff training and development very seriously and GSFD runs an extremely active training section headed by a training manager responsible for meeting the development needs of all staff.

University collaboration

The GSFD acts as a focal point for collaboration between universities and the BGS. There are currently two collaborative schemes operating: the School of Field Geology (described on pages 58 and 59) and the University Collaboration Advisory Committee (UCAC). UCAC funds research students at M.Sc., B.Sc., and Ph.D. levels as well as post-doctoral research fellows and specific research projects between collaborating scientists at the BGS and a specific university. To date UCAC has supported over 50 Ph.D. projects, 8 M.Sc. projects, 13 specific research topics and a small number of post-doctoral projects. The projects are spread across over 20 universities involving over 60 academic scientists. Project themes are closely linked to the BGS science programme and include research areas such as seismic anisotropy, economic minerals, environmental geochemistry, structural geology, climate change, fluid–rock interaction, volcanology, isotope geoscience, and remote sensing. UCAC cultivates a strong sense of mutual support with research students benefiting from the range of scientific expertise, laboratory facilities and work culture present within the BGS and university departments.

Optimising BGS resources and encouraging staff development

The GSFD’s key function is to ensure that staff and physical resources are directed in the most appropriate manner for the benefit of the BGS programme. This is done largely through a ‘best team’ approach: multidisciplinary teams are brought together to focus on a specific task or project. Any skill shortage is identified at an early stage and addressed through retraining and/or recruitment. Laboratory and IT infrastructure requirements, equipment purchases and technical specifications of individual equipment items are regularly reviewed and updated to ensure they keep pace with the demands of the diverse and changing BGS mission. Staff are encouraged and funded to take up scientific opportunities to broaden their experience and thus strengthen our capabilities. The GSFD coordinates a wide range of activities such as conference attendance, secondments, publication of key Commissioned Research data and results; involvement in learned societies and professional bodies and taking up a range of leadership positions within the wider community.