SURREY EMBRACING ETHNIC DIVERSITY (SEED) TERMS OF REFERENCE

Surrey Embracing Ethnic Diversity (SEED)

I. Introduction

Surrey **E**mbracing **E**thnic **D**iversity (**SEED**) was formed at the University of Surrey in 2020. The purpose is to offer a space for staff and doctoral students to support each other and discuss pivotal issues experienced across our diverse community. We have grown in strength and in number and are working towards sharing the diverse cultures that make the University of Surrey unique and attractive for a range of staff and students.

II. Purpose

The SEED group is a self-run body which provides a platform for staff and doctoral students (postgraduate research students) at the University of Surrey to discuss and engage through various initiatives. This includes formal meetings and informal (social) gatherings. The formal meeting is aimed at providing an opportunity to come together as a group to discuss on key topics such as but not limited to; (a) ethnicity and related issues, (b) experiences of SEED members/ethnic minority staff from professional services, academic side as well as doctoral students during their employment or registration at the University of Surrey. The formal discussion also leads to the development of SEED priorities and an action plan to advance work through this group. Informal (social) gatherings include book clubs, walking groups, cultural celebration activities, and are intended to offer space for SEED members to socialise.

Following work through SEED in 2020-21, a steering committee was formed in January 2022 to move this initiative further. All SEED members were informed about the opportunity to join the steering committee, and the invitation remains open to provide equal opportunities for all to join in the future. The steering committee conducted a survey to address the following two questions; (1) What activities should be conducted through this group, (2) How SEED members want this initiative to move forward. The survey received response from 19 members, which represented over 1/3rd of the total number of SEED members. Findings from this survey directly informed the SEED objectives and development of this document (Terms of Reference).

III. Objectives

a. To provide opportunities for SEED members to socialise and develop their network during their employment or registration at the University of Surrey.
b. To share information and resources relevant to SEED initiatives, objectives, and scope.
c. To tackle issues of racism faced/experienced by SEED members or ethnic minority staff and doctoral students at the University of Surrey and while living in the United Kingdom.
d. To provide a safe space to discuss race and ethnicity.
e. To provide a platform for SEED members to discuss career development opportunities with other group members.

IV. Membership

SEED is a closed group and membership is open to those who meet the following two key eligibility criteria:

a. Member needs to be employed at the University of Surrey as staff or registered on a research degree programme (doctoral students). Both part-time and full-time staff and doctoral students are eligible. Those who hold honorary contracts are also eligible.
b. Member needs to be from Ethnic Minority Groups, which often includes individuals from Black, Asian, Jewish communities, and also those who identify themselves from mixed ethnic group.

There are no restrictions on nationality or country of birth or country of origin.

Interested members can express their interest to join the group by sending email to one of the steering committee members. Email addresses of the current steering committee members are provided in this document in the section X/10. On receiving email, a steering committee member can share the Terms of Reference document with an interested individual and will ask them to confirm their eligibility. It is expected that a prospective member will read the eligibility section (section IV) prior to confirmation, and will have access to the terms of reference document to ensure that they are informed about group's policy and procedures. Once this process is completed, then the interested member will be included in the SEED group on Microsoft Teams platform, which is the primary method of communication with all group members to inform them about formal and informal activities mentioned earlier. Members are welcome to join activities based on their interest and availability. Those who are interested to contribute on a regular basis can express their interest to join the SEED steering committee. Members can also express interest to manage specific tasks such as managing Microsoft Teams group, blogs, and events (voluntary role). Information about the steering committee's purpose and activities are mentioned in the section VII of this document.

V. SEED Group activities

- **Meetings**: Formal meetings of the SEED group are organised on a regular basis across the academic year. The group aims to conduct a minimum of one meeting in each semester (maximum bi-monthly). Depending on needs such as request from group members, university, and/or by steering committee members. Additional formal meetings may be organised if necessary. All SEED members will receive this information through Microsoft Teams and/or emails with meeting invite. Members are expected to keep themselves updated with developments through the Microsoft Teams communication thread.

- **Responsibilities:** SEED group members are welcome to join all formal meetings and informal/social activities. There is no minimum requirement/participation to maintain their membership. For all formal meetings, we recommend that each meeting has a chair, action notetaker, organiser, and these roles are voluntary and available to all. This will be mentioned in each meeting to plan subsequent meeting(s). Briefly, the three roles cover the following duties.
  a. Chair will contribute to finalise the meeting agenda and will lead and facilitate discussions during formal meeting(s).
  b. Action notetaker will prepare meeting minutes, which will be made available to all SEED group members using Microsoft Teams files folder. Notetaker is required to upload meeting minutes earliest possible following meeting completion (preferably within one week from the date of meeting).

  c. Organiser will set up the meeting using Microsoft Teams and will inform all members by email along with an invitation to the meeting. It is advisable that meetings are planned at least one month in advance and members receive this notification at least two weeks in advance.

Formal meetings will be organised and conducted using Microsoft Teams, however, if required occasionally meetings will be planned in-person depending on requirements. If required, formal meetings will be recorded for meeting minutes preparations. Oral consent from participating members will be obtained prior to such recording at the start of a meeting. Once meetings minutes are approved by members, the recording will be deleted by the concerned meeting chair and/or action notetaker.

- **Additional group activities:** These include informal activities such as but not limited to book clubs, group walks, cultural celebration activities, and additional socialising opportunities. All SEED members are welcome to support and lead on these initiatives depending on their interests. The group aims to plan regular informal gatherings, and members will be informed about this through Microsoft Teams and occasionally through emails. Please note, that there is no dedicated budget for such activities, however depending on circumstances, the university may fund such initiatives. Such funding may come from University's Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Team's outreach budget or through university's executive board committee member. If you are interested to lead and conduct an event, then please discuss with group members during formal meetings or approach steering committee members (contact details are provided in the section X/10 of this document). The steering committee will have rights to approve such activities to ensure that they are within the SEED's objectives and scope.

- **SEED Allies:** University staff or doctoral students having ethnic background other than ethnic minorities and who are not member(s) of the SEED group are eligible to undertake SEED allyship. They will be known as 'SEED allies' (the title is selected based on the survey results and received the highest number of votes from SEED members). An interested candidate is required to approach any SEED steering committee member(s) using university email address. They will receive advice from the steering committee about application requirements, and following the steering committee's meeting, a decision will be informed by email. Application involves the following key document: Statement of Purpose to undertake SEED allies role (Maximum of 2 sides of A4, Arial font, Size 11). The document should be submitted by email (PDF preferred). It may take a minimum of 1 month to receive the decision considering steering committee meeting schedule. In exceptional circumstances, a meeting may be scheduled if the timeline is crucial considering candidate's job contract/employment/registration duration with the university. This opportunity is open for doctoral students as well and the process is similar as explained above. There is no end date on SEED allies programme, which means once an interested candidate initiate allyship programme, then will be recognised as 'SEED allies' until the end of their employment/registration at the University of Surrey. This programme will be implemented in accordance with the University's EDI team to access necessary resources, advice, and guidance. This role will offer opportunities to interact with SEED group members, steering committee, and participate in formal/informal activities to know more about SEED initiatives. It is expected that as an ally should attend at least one event in each academic year to maintain

their SEED allyship. Allies may be asked by steering group committee member for evidence of the same, if deemed necessary during annual review process.

- **Relationship to the University of Surrey's Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) team:** The SEED group aims to work closely with the university's EDI team, and whenever necessary SEED steering committee will approach EDI for resources, advice, and strategical inputs to support and implement SEED activities. The SEED allies initiative explained earlier will be implemented in close collaboration with the EDI team.

VI. Code of conduct

There are no set expectations by SEED members in terms of participation in group activities. However, we encourage members to participate in formal meetings and informal/social activities to help advance SEED objectives. It is required that all members receive equal opportunities to participate and contribute to this group, and to achieve this, the following actions have been agreed by the steering committee.

a. The SEED group as well as steering committee do not have any hierarchical structure, although some members may opt to become a key spokesperson or first point of contact for the wider University.
b. The steering committee is created to offer a formal structure to the SEED group, which was necessary to advance work through this initiative. Details of steering committee members are available in this document (section X/10).
c. All members including doctoral students who are engaged in all activities whether formal or informal are required to follow good conduct and professionalism across all stages of their involvement.
a. All members will have opportunities to join the steering committee anytime across their membership duration.

If there are any written grievances/complaints raised by SEED member(s) about an individual/group member, then those will be discussed by the steering committee, and wherever required discussion(s) will be organised with the individual, affected member(s) and relevant staff/department from the University of Surrey. In such situation, SEED steering committee will follow University of Surrey's policies to handle grievances/complaints, and may approach EDI team or other department(s) for further advice and support while handling such issues.

VII. Steering committee

The steering committee is developed to offer a structure to advance the SEED initiative and group. As mentioned earlier, there is no hierarchical model, and all SEED members are welcome to join the steering committee at any point across their employment at the University of Surrey. Those who are interested to join can contact any of the current steering committee members, who will then inform to all steering committee members by email. Once this process is completed, then the new member will be involved in subsequent steering committee meetings and email communication. We recommend one year of commitment to offer opportunities for new member(s) to contribute to the SEED agenda. If any existing member wishes to step down from

their steering committee role, then the same should be informed orally during the steering committee meeting or by email to one of the steering committee members.

The primary objective of the steering committee is to drive the SEED group through various formal and informal initiatives and create a platform for all SEED members to engage effectively. The steering committee may conduct surveys aimed at SEED members to collect their suggestions, views, opinions, which will inform future developments of this group as well as activities. The steering committee intends to meet every three months (4 times a year), and if needed additional meetings will be conducted. Similar to the formal SEED group meeting management, the steering committee will have a chair, action notetaker, and an organiser. Their duties are same as mentioned earlier for the SEED group formal meeting in the section V. As this is a voluntary role, workload of steering group members must be considered. Steering group members must not be pressured to take on duties that they do not have willingness and capacity to work on. We recommend that steering group members make their line managers aware of their responsibilities, so that line managers can support them in securing essential time for this work.

VIII. Operations and management

Overall, the SEED group will be driven by the steering committee, and the process will be informed by wider SEED group members. Group members are welcome to share their suggestions to improve work/function of this initiative through formal meetings. Such suggestions will be discussed openly during formal SEED group meetings and decision(s) will be taken collectively. All group documents such as Terms of Reference, meeting minutes, survey results, and future documents generated through initiatives will be stored on Microsoft Teams and will be accessible to all relevant members. There is no separate admin or support staff involved to work and support SEED initiatives, and all group activities and progress depend on voluntary roles undertaken predominately by staff in addition to their university duties. All members are expected to be aware about this while engaging during formal and informal activities. Steering group members will work to ensure that communication over MS Teams is active, and all SEED members are welcome to contribute/post on communication thread(s) to participate in discussions.

Once a member finishes employment or doctoral registration with the university and their contract is ended, such as fixed-term appointment or following resignation, then their membership with the SEED group and/or with the steering committee will be automatically closed. Those who maintain their affiliation(s) with the University of Surrey, such as through honorary appointments can continue their membership, if they have a University of Surrey allocated email address. On completion of their honorary contract, the membership will be automatically closed. Following this, the concerned member/individual will be removed from the Microsoft Teams to ensure the group members list is updated with current/active members.

If you have any questions about the SEED group, steering committee or about the Terms of Reference, you need to contact any steering committee member known to you. If you are not familiar with any of the current steering committee members, then you can contact any steering committee member to discuss further. Contact details are provided in this document.

The presence of SEED group will be mentioned on university resources such as website, newsletters, blogs, Microsoft Teams, email updates, and further initiatives will be undertaken to

align this with the HR department and doctoral college. This will help create awareness among new staff member(s) and doctoral students.

IX. **Periodic review**

This document, known as Terms of Reference, is made available to all SEED members through Microsoft Teams software. The first full draft of this document was prepared by Dr Anand Ahankari (SEED and steering committee member), and other steering committee members reviewed and contributed to finalise this document. All feedback was reviewed by steering committee members, a decision was taken collectively to undertake necessary changes, and then the final version of the document was agreed. The complete draft of the Terms of Reference was shared with all SEED members through Microsoft Teams. SEED members can share their feedback about this document by email to steering group member(s). The final version is titled as Version 1.0 (dated 01/10/2022). The Terms of Reference will be reviewed annually at the start of each academic year to make changes such as but not limited to updating a list of steering committee members, changes in formal/informal activities, results from future surveys to inform SEED objectives, and to incorporate changes in meeting structure/plans. Such revision(s) will be tracked through version control, and details of those changes will be mentioned in the section XI. Information about the updated document will be shared with SEED members using Microsoft Teams, where members can provide feedback. If no feedback is received, then it is anticipated that the revised Terms of References are satisfactory and acceptable to all SEED members.

X. **Current members**

- Steering committee members

Title and Name	Job title at the University of Surrey	School/faculty/department at the University of Surrey	Email address
Dr Anand Ahankari	Lecturer in Maternal, Child, and Family Health	School of Health Sciences, Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences	a.ahankari@surrey.ac.uk
Sharna Piercy	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Intern	Human Resources, Equality Diversity and Inclusion Team	s.piercy@surrey.ac.uk
Ms Namy Yu	International Student Support Adviser	Student Experience	n.yu@surrey.ac.uk
Ms Aqila Kaleem	Global Mobility Officer	Summer School and International Engagement	a.kaleem@surrey.ac.uk
Dr Femi Adeyemi-Ejeye	Senior Lecturer	Music and Media	femi.ae@surrey.ac.uk
Ms Kaya Holder	Product Owner (OneSurrey)	ITS	k.holder@surrey.ac.uk
Mr Pranay Shakya	Student Success Advisor	Student Experience	p.shakya@surrey.ac.uk

Dr Younchan Kim	Lecturer in Quantum Biology	Faculty of Engineering and Physical Sciences	youngchan.kim@surrey.ac.uk

XI.   Version details

Version	Date	Amendments	Amendments made by
1.0	1st October 2022	Not applicable. Version 1.0	Not applicable. Version 1.0
1.1	3rd January 2023	Steering group members	Neelam Wright