

Equality Impact Assessment Guidance and Template

This document provides guidance when completing an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA). The EIA template can be found at the end of this document.

The Research Councils are committed to promoting equality and participation in all their activities, whether this is related to the work we do with our external stakeholders or whether this is related to our responsibilities as an employer. As public authorities we are also required to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations when making decisions and developing policies. To do this, it is necessary to understand the potential impacts of the range of internal and external activities on different groups of people.

What is an Equality Impact assessment (EIA) and why do we need to complete one?

An equality impact assessment (EIA) is an evidence-based approach designed to help organisations ensure that their policies, practices, events and decision-making processes are fair and do not present barriers to participation or disadvantage any protected groups from participation. This covers both strategic and operational activities.

The term 'policy', as used throughout this document, covers the range of functions, activities and decisions for which your organisation is responsible, including for example, strategic decision-making, arranging strategy & funding panels, conferences, training courses and employment policies.

The EIA will help to ensure that:

- we understand the potential effects of the policy by assessing the impacts on different groups both external and internal
- any adverse impacts are identified and actions identified to remove or mitigate them
- decisions are transparent and based on evidence with clear reasoning.

When might I need to complete an EIA?

Whether an EIA is needed or not will depend on the likely impact that the policy may have and relevance of the activity to equality. The EIA should be done when the need for a new policy or practice is identified, or when an existing one is reviewed. Depending on the type of policy or activity advice can be sought from either your HR team, your Equality, Diversity and Inclusion team, your Peer Review Policy team or their equivalents.

Ideally, an EIA should form part of any new policy, event or funding activity and be factored in as early as one would for other considerations such as risk, budget or health and safety.

Who is responsible for completing and signing off the EIA?

Depending on the nature of the policy, event or funding activity, the responsibility of who should complete the assessment, who should be consulted, and who should sign off the EIA will vary. Ultimate responsibility on whether an EIA is required and the evaluation decision(s) made after completing the EIA lies with the Senior Responsible Officer, budget

holder, project board or the most relevant senior manager. Further advice is available from your Equality, Diversity & Inclusion contact.

What is discrimination?

Discrimination is where someone is treated less favourably or put at a disadvantage because of their protected characteristic. The different groups covered by the Equality Act are referred to as protected characteristics: disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership status, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, sex (gender), and age.

Discrimination is usually unintended and can often remain undetected until there is a complaint. Improving or promoting equality is when you identify ways to remove barriers and improve participation for people or groups with a protected characteristic.

Building the evidence, making a judgement

In cases of new policies or management decisions there may be little evidence of the potential effect on protected characteristic groups. In such cases you should make a judgement that is as reliable as possible. Consultation will strengthen these value judgements by building a consensus that can avoid obvious prejudices or assumptions.

Consultation

Consultation can add evidence to the assessment. Consultation is very important and key to demonstrating that organisations are meeting the equality duties, but it also needs to be proportionate and relevant. Considering the degree and range of consultation will safeguard against 'groupthink' by involving a diverse range of consultees. These are the key considerations, to avoid over-consultation on a small policy or practice and under-consultation on a significant policy or an activity that has the potential to create barriers to participation.

Provisional Assessment

At the initial stages, you may not have all the evidence you need so you can conduct a provisional assessment. Where a provisional assessment has been carried out, there must be plans to gather the required data so that a full assessment can be completed after a reasonable time. The scale of these plans should be proportionate to the activity at hand. When there is enough evidence a full impact assessment should be prepared. Only one EIA should be created for each policy, as more evidence becomes available the provisional assessment should be built upon.

Valuing Differences

EIAs are about making comparisons between groups of employees, service users or stakeholders to identify differences in their needs and/or requirements. If the difference is disproportionate, then the policy may have a detrimental impact on some and not others.

'You are looking for bias that can occur when there are significant differences (disproportionate difference) between groups of people in the way a policy or practice has impacted on them, asking the question "Why?" and investigating further'.¹

¹ http://www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/s/n/Acas_managers_guide_to_equality_assessments.pdf

Evaluation Decision

There are four options open to you:

1. No barriers or impact identified, therefore activity will **proceed**.
2. You can decide to **stop** the policy or practice at some point because the evidence shows bias towards one or more groups
3. You can **adapt or change** the policy in a way which you think will eliminate the bias, or
4. Barriers and impact identified, however having considered all available options carefully, there appear to be no other proportionate ways to achieve the aim of the policy or practice (e.g. in **extreme cases** or where **positive action** is taken). Therefore you are going to **proceed with caution** with this policy or practice knowing that it may favour some people less than others, providing justification for this decision.

In most cases, where disproportionate disadvantage is found by carrying out EIAs, policies **and practices are usually changed or adapted. In these cases, or when a change has been justified** you should consider making a record on the project risk register.

Examples of recently completed EIA templates can be found in annex 1.

Please send completed EIAs to EDI@esrc.ukri.org

Equality Impact Assessment

Question	Response
1. Name of policy/funding activity/event being assessed	<p>ESRC Inclusive Ageing call</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A call pre-announcement will be published on the UKRI website and a mailshot sent out to draw attention to it, to attract a wide and diverse pool of potential applicants at an early stage. • An open call invitation will then be issued in late March 2021 (closing June 2021) for outline proposals, which will be subjected to assessment at a sift panel. • Successful applicants to the outline call will be invited to submit full proposals between September and December 2021. The full proposals will be independently peer-reviewed and an assessment panel will provide recommendations for funding based on this. Grants are likely to start in mid-late 2022.
2. Summary of aims and objectives of the policy/funding activity/event	<p>To provide research grants for innovative, collaborative social science-led projects that focus on improving inclusivity in later life, by identifying lifecourse inequalities that have an adverse effect on certain groups of older people. The following groups/communities have been identified as being particularly under-represented in ageing research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adults with lifelong physical and/or learning disabilities • Ethnic minority adults • LGBT+ adults <p>Cross-cutting themes include: education, place, employment, contemporary ageing risks and social networks. A cross-sector, interdisciplinary approach is encouraged from applicants.</p> <p>Activities include a webinar and a sift panel for outline proposals and, for the full call proposals invited, a peer review stage and assessment panel.</p>
3. What involvement and consultation has been done in relation to this policy? (e.g. with relevant groups and stakeholders)	<p>Scoping before the pre-announcement included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convening an Ageing and Demography Thematic Advisory Group, primarily made up of academics, to shape the initiative by helping to identify research gaps and groups/communities underrepresented in research in this area. • Holding consultation conversations cross-sector, cross-Research Council and cross-

Question	Response
	<p>ESRC teams, to help further shape the initiative.</p>
<p>4. Who is affected by the policy/funding activity/event?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members of specific groups/communities (set out above) particularly under-represented in research on ageing • Potential applicants (social scientists at all stages of their careers) and users of research in academia, public, private and third sector organisations. • Reviewers and commissioning panel members, including people with lived experience of relevant factors across the lifecourse. • ESRC staff attending the panel meetings. • There is an ESRC mailbox dedicated to the call, via which staff will respond to specific external queries. This mailbox address will be cited on all call documentation.
<p>5. What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the actual impact of the policy/funding activity/event?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likely impact of each proposal's planned activities will be scrutinised during specialist peer review and panel assessment, as part of the assessment process. • An analysis will be undertaken of applications received and grants funded, in order to assess who applied to the call and the impact of the assessment process in terms of those ultimately funded. • An investment manager will be assigned to the portfolio of awards and the usual oversight and monitoring activities undertaken. The standard end-of-grant reporting will be required. • It will be a condition of each successful grant, that throughout its lifetime, the award holder will be required to collaborate with researchers on other projects where appropriate e.g. the ESRC SPF Healthy Ageing projects, to maximise impact.

Summary: ESRC's research commissioning processes are designed with fairness in mind:

- The call is open to all eligible research organisations (RO); applicants are eligible for funding whether or not they are established members of a recognised RO (applicants who are not an established member of a recognised RO must be accommodated by a recognised RO and provided with appropriate facilities to carry out the research).

- UKRI standard Grant Terms and Conditions comply with UK equality legislation and include provisions designed to mitigate against potential negative impacts (e.g. sick pay, parental and adoption leave, the possibility of part-time and flexible working, and grant extensions).
- Research Organisations are subject to equality legislation and have a duty to comply with it. RGC 8 states: “The Research Organisation must assume full responsibility for staff funded from the grant and, in consequence, accept all duties owed to and responsibilities for these staff, including, without limitation, their terms and conditions of employment and their training and supervision, arising from the employer/employee relationship.” Universities are therefore obliged to make reasonable adjustments as required to support their staff.
- This call has been shaped with consideration given to inclusion of all. For example the call submission dates avoid the main religious holidays and standard school holidays. The longer call timescale (i.e. including a published pre-announcement, an outline stage and a full stage) should help to reduce barriers to application for those with caring responsibilities. Consideration has been given not only to standard school holidays but also to childcare responsibilities during other periods; this is of particular importance during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic which has had a disproportionate impact on those with caring responsibilities.
- All members of the ESRC community are encouraged to complete the ESRC peer review training tool, which outlines the ESRC’s standard peer review process and emphasises the importance of timely, objective, fair and informed peer review. Peer reviewers are required to evidence their views and scores. ESRC staff conduct usability checks on all peer review comments and where there is evidence of bias or a reviewer has failed to provide evidence for their scores, the review will be excluded from the assessment process.
- Whilst panel members are appointed based primarily on expertise, within those parameters we will make our best endeavours to ensure diversity as far as possible, for example in terms of gender, geography/region, institution, career stage, disability, sexual orientation, ethnic background. A tool has been developed which allows ESRC staff to assess the EDI characteristics of commissioning panels and this will be used when appointing panels. We will only make panel composition decisions which compromise diversity when it is objectively justified by the necessity to ensure the required breadth of subject expertise.
- All panel members will receive guidance which covers issues including fairness, objectivity and unconscious bias. Panel Chairs and ESRC staff supporting the panel play a particularly important role in this.

Protected Characteristic	Is there a potential for positive or negative impact?	Please explain and give examples of any evidence/data used	Action to address negative impact (e.g. adjustment to the policy)
Disability	Yes – positive	Greater understanding of this group’s members’ experiences in the ageing process	n/a
	Yes - negative	There could be potential discrimination against a panel member, a research applicant or a research participant due to their perceived or actual disability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where there are particular constraints consider opportunities for participant. • Ensure that staff have had sufficient EDI/unconscious

Protected Characteristic	Is there a potential for positive or negative impact?	Please explain and give examples of any evidence/data used	Action to address negative impact (e.g. adjustment to the policy)
		<p>Je-S does not currently comply with disability accessibility schemes. This is currently being addressed by a UKRI funding services group.</p> <p>Applicants should seek support from their own institution's research support office. Panel meeting attendees with physical disabilities may have difficulties if there are physical meetings and meeting venues cannot cater for their needs.</p> <p>Panel members with neuro-disabilities may experience difficulties with concentration and focus during panel assessments.</p>	<p>bias/diversity awareness training so they can respond effectively to the requirements of all participants.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If we promote the event on a web site, we will need to check it is accessible and compatible with the range of specialist hardware and software that people with disabilities use to access electronic information. • All web pages should comply with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines. Generally, PDF documents are not considered to be accessible and should not be the only available format on a web site. • Recorded Zoom meetings for those who have vision/hearing impairment. • Zoom meeting length taken into account and shortened if needed. • Closed captions will be utilised in Zoom meetings for those with hearing impairments. • Particular attention will be paid to the construction of the assessment panel ensuring it is representative and adequately reflects under-researched groups (a particular focus of the call). • A webinar detailing the aims and objectives of the call will be made accessible via captioning

Protected Characteristic	Is there a potential for positive or negative impact?	Please explain and give examples of any evidence/data used	Action to address negative impact (e.g. adjustment to the policy)
			<p>and recording, and will be made available online.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Panel documents will be in sans-serif, dyslexia-friendly fonts; and dyslexia-friendly formats provided. Consider (on a case by case basis) paying costs towards carers or support workers to attend alongside the participant, where this is required and not covered by the Individual's own employment contract. Current COVID-19 restrictions mean that that panel meetings are likely to take place online rather than in person. This document will be updated accordingly if this is likely to change.
Gender reassignment	Yes - positive	Greater understanding of this group's members' experiences in the ageing process	n/a
	Yes - negative	<p>There could be potential discrimination against a panel member, a research applicant or a research participant due to their perceived or actual experience of gender reassignment.</p> <p>Trans people may be absent from work as a consequence of transition and UKRI records may show incorrect gender. UKRI terms and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will work to ensure the use of gender neutral language where possible in our documents. Reflect in unconscious bias briefing for panel.

Protected Characteristic	Is there a potential for positive or negative impact?	Please explain and give examples of any evidence/data used	Action to address negative impact (e.g. adjustment to the policy)
		<p>conditions are flexible with regard to the nature of medical treatment. We would expect that absence related to transition would be covered by the Research Organisation's sickness policy and strongly encourage ROs to treat absence relating to transition in the same way they would treat sickness absence.</p>	
Marriage or civil partnership	Yes - positive	Greater understanding of the role this factor plays in the ageing process	n/a
Pregnancy and maternity/paternity	Yes - negative	<p>Childcare responsibilities may be a barrier to attending events, meetings and interviews,</p> <p>Completion of grant may be affected by maternity and parental leave and leave related to surrogacy and adoption.</p> <p>The current situation may present additional challenges for those intending to apply. We recognise that the shift to homeworking during the enforced lockdown, and the need to balance caring responsibilities for children may generate unequal burdens.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple dates will be offered for meetings to accommodate caring responsibilities. • Dates will be agreed and publicised in advance to allow potential attendees to make arrangements to attend. • Provision for parental leave (including maternity leave, paternity leave and leave related to surrogacy and adoption) are covered in the UKRI terms and conditions. • Outline call closing date falls outside UK school summer holidays. • Reflect in unconscious bias briefing for panel.

Protected Characteristic	Is there a potential for positive or negative impact?	Please explain and give examples of any evidence/data used	Action to address negative impact (e.g. adjustment to the policy)
Race including ethnicity	Yes - positive	Greater understanding of the role this factor plays in the ageing process	n/a
	Yes - negative	There could be potential discrimination against a panel member, a research applicant or a research participant due to their perceived or actual race/ethnicity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect in unconscious bias briefing for panel.
Religion or belief	Yes - positive	Greater understanding of the role this factor plays in the ageing process	n/a
	Yes - negative	There could be potential discrimination against a panel member, a research applicant or a research participant due to their perceived or actual faith or belief.	<p>Considerations might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scheduling meetings to avoid major religious festivals; (if impossible to avoid then consider mitigations – ie. during Ramadan ensuring that meetings finish early so that participants are able to get home to break their fast, awareness of the sensitivities around offering Muslims meals during periods of fasting). • Ensure that religious observances are taken into account when planning panel meetings. • All key call submission dates have been reviewed for clashes with any major religious festivals. • We will make any reasonable adjustments

Protected Characteristic	Is there a potential for positive or negative impact?	Please explain and give examples of any evidence/data used	Action to address negative impact (e.g. adjustment to the policy)
			to future confirmed date/times accordingly, taking into account any religious observances.
Sexual orientation	Yes – positive	Greater understanding of the role this factor plays in the ageing process	n/a
	Yes - negative	There could be potential discrimination against a panel member, research applicant or research participant based on their perceived or actual sexual orientation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect in unconscious bias briefing for panel.
Gender and/or sex	Yes - positive	Greater understanding of the role this factor plays in the ageing process	n/a
	Yes - negative	There could be potential discrimination against a panel member, research applicant or research participant based on their perceived gender and/or sex. Panel members may be disadvantaged and unable to attend meetings if they have caring responsibilities, which might fall disproportionately across genders. Use of language can present a barrier to participation and it may be perceived that those with caring responsibilities are disadvantaged.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple dates will be offered to attend meetings to accommodate caring responsibilities. • Dates for events will be agreed and publicised in advance to allow potential attendees to make arrangements to attend. • We will work to ensure the use of gender neutral language where possible in our documents and at events. • Reflect in unconscious bias briefing for panel. • Gender-neutral language will be used in call specification, guidance. We will make sure the

Protected Characteristic	Is there a potential for positive or negative impact?	Please explain and give examples of any evidence/data used	Action to address negative impact (e.g. adjustment to the policy)
			<p>panel has balanced gender representation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reimbursement of additional childcare costs (on a case by case basis) if the meeting participant is otherwise unable to attend (this could include childcare at the venue, additional hours of childcare in the child's usual setting or paying for a relative to travel to care for school age children).
Age	Yes - positive	Greater understanding of the ageing process experienced by those in specific groups	n/a
	Yes - negative	<p>Those at early stages in their careers may be disadvantaged as applicants are expected to draw upon strong connections and deep understanding of relevant policy stakeholders in the UK and beyond</p> <p>The voices of less experienced panel members may not be heard to the extent of the voices of more experienced colleagues.</p> <p>(*It is assumed that early career researchers are generally younger than their more experienced peers, although this by no</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant 'track record' length is not a criterion in this call and early career researcher participation is explicitly encouraged in call specification. • Panel members and reviewers are briefed to assess proposals against the selection criteria and provide justification for their assessments. • Applications should be judged on their own merits without inferences being drawn regarding the applicants' abilities due to their apparent or actual age. • Ensure use of a variety of different communication strategies, including social media, to ensure that our messages reach the widest possible target audience.

Protected Characteristic	Is there a potential for positive or negative impact?	Please explain and give examples of any evidence/data used	Action to address negative impact (e.g. adjustment to the policy)
		means always the case. This is why this point has been included under 'age').	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ESRC staff and any facilitators should seek to ensure that all participants have the opportunity to speak. Reflect in unconscious bias briefing for panel.
Other characteristics not protected under the Equality Act	Potential negative	Geography/location: Potential for grant holders, collaborators and beneficiaries to be focused in one region or country rather than across the UK.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The panels will be balanced as far as possible (within the constraints of quality and appropriateness) across the range of protected characteristics, and across broader characteristics, ensuring that we have a good geographical spread of panel members across the four nations of the UK, and across a diversity of backgrounds, career stages and paths. Reflect in unconscious bias briefing for panel.

Note: Excessive use of repeated line breaks can make a document inaccessible for users of assistive technologies. To ensure inclusion, please ensure a new table row is inserted for each point if there is more than one consideration or impact for each group (please ensure you populate the "protected characteristic group" column e.g. "disability continued"); rather than using the same row for multiple points with repeated line breaks to separate points.

Evaluation:

Question	Explanation / justification	
Is it possible the proposed policy or activity or change in policy or activity could discriminate or unfairly disadvantage people?	Yes, but mitigation in place.	
Final Decision:	Tick the relevant box	Include any explanation / justification required
1. No barriers identified, therefore activity will proceed .		

Question	Explanation / justification	
2. You can decide to stop the policy or practice at some point because the data shows bias towards one or more groups		
3. You can adapt or change the policy in a way which you think will eliminate the bias	√	
4. Barriers and impact identified, however having considered all available options carefully, there appear to be no other proportionate ways to achieve the aim of the policy or practice (e.g. in extreme cases or where positive action is taken). Therefore you are going to proceed with caution with this policy or practice knowing that it may favour some people less than others, providing justification for this decision.		

Will this EIA be published* *EIAs should be published alongside relevant funding activities e.g. calls and events.	Yes
Date completed:	March 2021
End date of activity: (if applicable)	June 2022
Review date (if applicable):	