EPSRC - 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, workshops, events, 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 safe-guard 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]

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.

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

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.

How to use the EIA template

- This document includes an example of the template which contains additional advice on how to complete the form.
- The blank EIA template is accessible using the shared template function in Microsoft Word.
- Additional information on what you need to consider when completing this form is available in annex 1.
- Previously completed EIA's are also available in annex 2.

Please do not publish the guidance pages 1-3 or the annexes as these are for internal use only.

EPSRC - Equality Impact Assessment

	Question	Response
1.	**Name of policy/funding activity/event being assessed**	Tomorrows Engineering Research Challenges – Teams
2.	**Summary of aims and objectives of the policy/funding activity/event**	Apply for funding to create diverse teams to run challenging Network Plus activities addressing areas identified in the Tomorrow's Engineering Research Challenges Report (TERC) ❑ Bring unique knowledge from scientific principles and mathematics to develop or advance underpinning engineering tools, methods and techniques; ❑ Adapt, evolve and redesign current engineering approaches and processes towards more agile, resilient and sustainable solutions to tomorrow's challenges; ❑ Harness latest discoveries and emerging technologies to enable new disruptive solutions; ❑ Identify, understand and resolve the complexities of the systemic challenges identified throughout the TERC report;

		❑ Exploit the interconnections between the challenges to inform new knowledge, methods and products. ❑ Lay foundations to evolve and expand current engineering domains beyond traditional boundaries, including with social and ethical perspectives. ❑ Identify and fund feasibility studies to address TERC
3.	**What involvement and consultation has been done in relation to this policy?** *(e.g. with relevant groups and stakeholders)*	The idea arose from community workshops and UK wide consultation of the engineering with an expert group leading this within the community. A report has been writtern [Find out more about TERC.](#) Furtner consultation with the engineering SAT, Early Careers Forum and the TERC panel has led to this flagship launch opportunity.
4.	**Who is affected by the policy/funding activity/event?**	The engineering community from discovery to deployment, both academic and industrial.
5.	**What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the actual impact of the policy/funding activity/event?**	The call will be open to all, and applications are welcome from any eligible UK-based researchers with expertise in the area. Contact details will be provided alongside the call document. EPSRC will engage with all grant holders to monitor the projects and learn challenges and successes, with

		an expert guidance panel engaging throughout with regular meetings.

As a funder of research, EPSRC remains committed to attracting the best potential researchers from a diverse population into research careers. For policy changes, funding activities and events EPSRC will aim to:

- Select venues that are accessible and where possible accommodate any specific requirement in our planning and organisation of an initiative to support wider participation. This includes for applicants, reviewers, panel members and staff. Included in the interview invitation letter is a request for any access issues to be notified.
- All participants in the process are asked to inform staff if they have any additional needs to enable attendance or participation.
- Offer support for people with caring responsibilities, further details are available here.
- Clearly communicate the timeline and key milestones for funding activities, advertise these widely to reach the largest possible audience.
- Support and encourage panel members to follow best practice in taking positive steps to safeguard funding decisions. Staff will work closely with the Panel Chair(s) to agree approaches that are designed to minimize opportunities for bias and improve transparency of the decision making process. This includes managing environmental conditions, such as providing appropriate breaks.
- Support flexible working of stakeholders.
- Ensure diversity of peer review assessment and interview panels. Staff will adhere to a mixed panel policy and endeavor to achieve the minimum 30% for the underrepresented gender on the panel.
- Abide by the principles of peer review
- Provide EPSRC staff with tailored unconscious bias training for Peer Review processes and clear guidance for assessors.
- Handle personal sensitive information in compliance with General Data Protection

Protected Characteristic Group	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	None identified		Applicants are not asked to disclose whether they have a disability. Standard EPSRC policies will be followed.
Gender reassignment	None identified		Applicants are not asked to disclose whether they have undergone gender reassignment.
Marriage or civil partnership	None identified		Applicants are not asked to disclose their marital status. Standard EPSRC policies will be followed.
Pregnancy and maternity	Potentially negative	A researcher on parental leave during the open call maybe unable to apply.	Timetable of key dates will be made available to applicants and panellists in advance as early possible. EPSRC policies for offering support to those with caring responsibilities will be followed and panel members and applicants will be made aware of these. Applicants are not asked to disclose pregnancy
Race	Potentially negative	Unconscious bias on the part of panel members may disadvantage individuals of specific race, if this is known to the panel.	Applicants are not asked to disclose their ethnicities
Religion or belief	Potentially negative	Key dates (open call closing, interview) coinciding with specific religious festivals/ events could disadvantage specific religious groups	Ensure religious observances are taken into account when meeting dates are chosen. Applicants are not asked to disclose their religious beliefs

Sexual orientation	Potentially negative	Unconscious bias on the part of panel members may disadvantage individuals of specific sexual orientations, if this is known to the panel.	Applicants are not asked to disclose their sexual orientation. Standard EPSRC policies will be followed.
Sex (gender)	Potentially negative	Unconscious bias on the part of panel members may disadvantage applicants on the basis of gender.	Applicants are not asked to disclose their gender. Standard EPSRC policies will be followed. In line with EPSRC policies, the assessment panel will be mixed gender.
Age	Potentially negative	Unconscious bias on the part of panel members may disadvantage applicants from specific age groups.	Applicants are not asked to disclose their age. Standard EPSRC policies will be followed. Unconscious bias briefing will be given as part of the panel guidance and panel presentation. EPSRC presence at assessment meetings and as an additional assurance to help ensure unbiased assessment.
Additional aspects (not covered by a protected characteristic)			

Evaluation:

Question	Explanation / justification		
Is it possible the new/proposed change in policy, funding activity or event could discriminate against or unfairly disadvantage people?	**This process is standardised, however within this process there are potential opportunities for discrimination as mentioned above, most likely coming from the windows in which the call is open and the shorter window asking for the PI response.**		
Final Decision:	**Tick the relevant box**	**Include any explanation / justification required**	
1. No barriers identified, therefore activity will **proceed**.		**Ensure religious observances are taken into account when meeting dates are chosen.**	
2. You can decide to **stop** the policy or practice at some point because the data shows bias towards/against 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* Yes/Not required (*EIA's should be published alongside relevant funding activities e.g. calls and events:	Yes
Date completed:	
Review date (if applicable):	

Change log

Name	Date	Version	Change
	(When published)		

When completing the form use the change log so that there is clear document history management should there be future versions of the EIA.

Annex 1: Definitions of each protected characteristics and points to consider when undertaking your EIA with regard to each Protected Characteristic[i]

Although the definitions of the Equality Act 2010* are set out in the table bellow, at UKRI we recognise all gender identities and sexualities including asexual and intersex people.

*The definition of gender reassignment was extended in September 2020 to include people who identify as non-binary or gender fluid – recognising that gender is a spectrum.

Disability

A person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

The aim is for equality in access and opportunities for applicants, panel members, advisory body members, event attendees and staff.

Points to consider:
- Reasonable steps can be taken to accommodate the disabled persons requirements, these may include:
    - Physical access- e.g. lifts, ramps, location, seating arrangements, level of physical activity required in a session, accessibility of toilets, induction loop system
    - Format of information (both written and spoken) e.g. handouts, call documents, posters, slides. Consider readability, use of colour (colour blind), flashing images and the use of language
    - Time of interview or event, for potentially extended travel times and avoiding peak times
    - Personal assistance e.g. carer, interpreter or note taker
    - Sharing content of interview or course content etc. on request
    - Highlight the T&S policy
- The level of physical activity required in a workshop or event

Gender reassignment

A person has the protected characteristic of gender reassignment if the person is proposing to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning the person's sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex. Gender reassignment also includes a person who identifies as non-binary or gender fluid.

The aim is for equality in access and opportunities for applicants, panel members, advisory body members, event attendees and staff irrespective of whether they are male or female, Trans or 'cis' or 'whether they identify with the gender they were assigned at birth'.

Points to consider:
- Facilities that may be gendered e.g. toilets
- The use of gender neutral language both written and spoken
- For further information please see the resources at https://www.stonewall.org.uk/our-work/workplace-resources
- If you are running an international call there maybe travel restrictions for transgender travellers. Further information can be found here: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/lesbian-gay-bisexual-and-transgender-foreign-travel-advice and Stonewall also provides further guidance and items to consider here: https://www.stonewall.org.uk/sites/default/files/safe_travels_guide_2017.pdf

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Marriage or civil partnership

A person who is married or in a civil partnership.

The aim is for equality in access and opportunities for applicants, panel members, advisory body members, event attendees and staff irrespective of whether they are single, divorced, separated, living together, married or in a civil partnership.

Points to consider:
- Potential conflicts of interest due to undisclosed personal relationships

Pregnancy and maternity

A woman protected against discrimination on the grounds of pregnancy and maternity. With regard to employment, the woman is protected during the period of her pregnancy and any statutory maternity leave to which she is entitled. Also, it is unlawful to discriminate against women breastfeeding in a public place.

These considerations can be extended to parental leave (paternal, shared parental and adoption leave)

The aim is for equality in access and opportunities for applicants, panel members, advisory body members, event attendees and staff for those who are pregnant, on maternity leave or breast feeding.

Points to consider:
- The level of physical activity required in a workshop or event
- Accommodating requests to nominate a representative to send in their place, or provide support (accommodation, T&S of carer) when individuals need to be accompanied, more information can be found here https://epsrc.ukri.org/funding/applicationprocess/basics/caringresponsibilities/
- The implication of international travel on those who are pregnant such as travel limitations and risk of disease, eg Zika, further information can be found in the FCO travel guidance https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice

Race

A group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ,ethnic or national origins.

The aim is for equality in access and opportunities for applicants, panel members, advisory body members, event attendees and staff, irrespective of their race, colour, nationality or ethnic origins.

Points to consider:
- Format of information (both written and spoken) and the use of language particularly jargon or colloquialisms etc.
- The diversity of the ethnicity and race of panels/speakers at conferences/workshops
- The terminology used to describe race, there is further information found here http://www.ecu.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/race-and-ethnicity-terminology-002.docx

Religion or belief

A group of people defined by their religious and philosophical beliefs including lack of belief (e.g. atheism). Generally a belief should affect an individual's life choices or the way in which they live.

The aim is for equality in access and opportunities for applicants, panel members, advisory body members, event attendees and staff, irrespective of their religious or philosophical beliefs.

Points to consider:
- Access to prayer facilities
- Dietary requirements and the opportunity to raise them in advance
- The dates of major religious events in the planning of calls and events

Sexual orientation

Whether a person's sexual attraction is towards to people of the same gender, people of a different gender, or to more than one gender (whether someone is heterosexual, lesbian, gay or bisexual).

The aim is for equality in access and opportunities for applicants, panel members, advisory body members, event attendees and staff, regardless of their sexual orientation.

Points to consider:
- For further information please see the resources at https://www.stonewall.org.uk/our-work/workplace-resources
- If you are running an international call or there is international travel required in projects by LGBTQ+ people there may be travel restrictions, further information can be found here: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/lesbian-gay-bisexual-and-transgender-foreign-travel-advice and Stonewall also provides further guidance and items to consider here: https://www.stonewall.org.uk/sites/default/files/safe_travels_guide_2017.pdf

Sex (gender)

A man or a woman

The aim is for equality in access and opportunities for applicants, panel members, advisory body members, event attendees and staff, regardless of their gender.

Points to consider:
- The use of gender neutral language
- The of gender diversity of panels and advisory board membership, speakers/attendees at conferences/workshops
- For international calls further information can be found in the FCO travel guidance https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice

Age

A person belonging to a particular age (e.g. 32 year olds) or a range of ages (e.g., 18-30 year olds)

The aim is for equality in access and opportunities for applicants, panel members, advisory body members, event attendees and staff, irrespective of their age.

Points to consider:
- Opportunities should be provided, regardless of age, on the basis of eligibility, position or experience
- Avoid equating age and experience, focus on required competencies

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Additional aspects (not covered by a protected characteristic)

e.g. People with caring responsibilities

The aim is for equality in access and opportunities for applicants, panel members, advisory body members, event attendees and staff.

Points to consider:
- Reasonable steps that can be taken to accommodate a carer's requirements, such as time of meetings or interviews, flexible working on grants
- Cognitive load of information, the amount of work and allowed time to complete
- The method providing information such as different formats to suit a diverse audience

Annex 2: Examples of recently completed EIA templates

Council	Activity
EPSRC	Inclusion Matters Call
EPSRC	New Investigator Awards
EPSRC	Policy change: Limit to the number of applications at a standard panel
BBSRC	BBSRC Future Leader Fellowships (FLF) Scheme
BBSRC	BBSRC/STFC/Innovate UK Biofilms programme
EPSRC	CDT Call

EPSRC	Connected Nation Pioneers
EPSRC	Manufacturing the Future Retreat 2018
EPSRC	Manufacturing Fellows Event
EPSRC	Global Grand Challenges Retreat 2020
EPSRC	Hardware for Efficient Computing

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[i] https://www.wwl.nhs.uk/Library/Equality_diversity/2015/Equality_impact_assessment_toolkit.pdf