

# Equality Impact Assessment – UKRI Policy Fellowships 2025

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) is committed to promoting equality and participation in all its 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 a public body, 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 and why does UKRI use it?

When developing a new scheme, or considering changes to an existing one, UKRI will carry out an equality impact assessment to review how it may affect particular groups or individuals and will take the findings into account. We expect that very rarely our actions will create barriers to participation. The assessment may however flag issues that are not of UKRI's making but we will, where it is in our remit to do so, recommend actions and adjustments. Some impacts are not exclusive to the scheme or change that is being evaluated and need to be addressed throughout our organisation. In some cases we may not have enough expertise and we will consult with others.

## Our leadership and building on good practice

It is our ambition to be recognised as a leader in Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and to build on our record of achievements to date, following on from the RCUK, Innovate UK and HEFCE Action Plans. These Plans are updated from time to time and Equality Impact Assessments will help us to prioritise actions.

Current good practice that is relevant to the UKRI Policy Fellowships 2025 includes our:

- Grant terms and conditions, including recognition for sick leave and all forms of parental leave
- EDI in Panel Meetings Guidance for all panel members.
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There are multiple dimensions/aspects to this Equality Impact Assessment:

- 1) Ensuring that the eligibility criteria are clear and objectively justified
- 2) Ensuring that the submission, peer review and awarding processes are free from unintentional bias
- 3) The identification of any potential barriers to attendance and participation in the call and the assessment and awarding process as below
  - a. Meeting duration – Appropriate duration to facilitate good environmental conditions for assessment and inclusion
  - b. Venue location and arrangements to accommodate needs

- c. Broad ranging panel membership
- d. Meeting management/Chair/robust assessment criteria

Question	Response
<b>1. Name of policy/funding activity/event being assessed</b>	UKRI Policy Fellowships 2025
<b>2. Summary of aims and objectives of the policy/funding activity/event</b>	<p>Applicants are invited to apply for funding to undertake a Policy Fellowship for 18 months to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- be embedded in a UK or devolved government host organisation or What Works Network member, affiliate member or associate member</li> <li>- collaborate on research activity to address pressing national and global challenges</li> </ul> <p>The UKRI Policy Fellowship opportunity comprises the core Policy Fellowships, What Work Networks Policy Fellowships and the Natural Hazards and Resilience Policy fellowships.</p> <p>The UKRI Policy Fellowship scheme offers an exciting opportunity to develop your career and enhance your understanding of applying research in government contexts.</p>
<b>3. What involvement and consultation has been done in relation to this policy? (e.g. with relevant groups and stakeholders)</b>	<p>Lessons learned exercise on commissioning processes and structures.</p> <p>Survey and consultation with previous 2021 and 2023 call panel members, government hosts and fellows.</p> <p>Evaluation surveys and one-to-one feedback sessions with current fellows. Consultation has resulted in modifications to fellowship structures, commissioning processes including interview, budget, timeline, co-funding, training requirements and funding call documents for the 2025 funding opportunity.</p>

<p><b>4. Who is affected by the policy/funding activity/event?</b></p>	<p>Applicants to the call: This opportunity will be open to applicants with a PhD or equivalent research experience and there are opportunities for applicants at all career stages.</p> <p>Commissioning Panel Members for the call: Proposals will be assessed by a panel of academic and non-academic experts.</p> <p>UKRI staff involved in the commissioning process and attending the panel meeting(s) for the call.</p> <p>Scheme partners involved in the commissioning and delivery process, and hosting Policy Fellows.</p>
<p><b>5. What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the actual impact of the policy/funding activity/event?</b></p>	<p>Monitoring applicant demographic characteristics via Siebel and The Funding Service reporting where data available</p> <p>Evaluation surveys of impact of cohort of fellows, to influence future commissioning and investment management approaches.</p>

## General Equality and Diversity Considerations

UKRI's research commissioning processes are designed with fairness in mind.

### Eligibility and criteria

- UKRI Policy Fellowships are open to all eligible research organisations (RO). Applicants are eligible for funding whether or not they are established members of a recognised RO, but applicants who are not an established member of a recognised RO must be accommodated by the RO and provided with appropriate facilities to carry out the fellowship.
- Applicants must:
  - be based at an organisation eligible for UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) funding
  - have a PhD or equivalent experience
  - depending on the fellowship, be either a researcher in an eligible discipline in accordance with the specific position applied for or have relevant skills and expertise that meet the criteria for the Fellowship they are applying for
- Through collaboration with funding councils and fellowship hosts, we have expanded the range of eligible disciplinary expertise and career stages for applicants.

- Early career applicants are required, and supported, to secure mentorship support within their institution
- UKRI will include the following text in Who Can Apply call text:

Equality, diversity and inclusion

[We are committed to achieving equality of opportunity](#) for all funding applicants. We encourage applications from a diverse range of researchers.

We support people to work in a way that suits their personal circumstances. The scheme supports those returning from a career break or following time in other roles and, during the fellowship, award holders benefit from a flexible scheme that allows part-time working and alternative working patterns and support for people with caring responsibilities.

[UKRI can offer disability and accessibility support](#) for UKRI applicants and grant holders during the application and assessment process.

#### Standard Grant Terms and Conditions

- 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 that ‘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.’ [Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers](#), one of which is to “Ensure that institutional policies and practices relevant to researchers are inclusive, equitable and transparent, and are well-communicated to researchers and their managers.” This should include reasonable adjustments as required to support their award holders.
- In addition to compliance with UKRI standard terms and conditions, applicants will have a secondment agreement with the Host Government department that will be compatible with UKRI terms and conditions. This agreement sets out key support arrangements about working arrangements, induction processes, and line management for fellows. The document has been developed in consultation with UKRI Legal, Cabinet Office Secondments Unit and university partners. The exemplar documents will be published with the funding call for applicants’ information.

#### Panel recruitment

- We will aim to ensure that the composition of the commissioning panel is diverse

- We will ensure (if possible) that the chair and vice chair of the commissioning panel are not of the same gender.
- Whilst panel members are appointed, first and foremost, based on expertise, decisions will aim to balance the panels by gender and geography and seek to ensure a diversity of career stage and institutions. We will only make recruitment decisions which compromise diversity when it is objectively justified by the necessity to ensure the required breadth of subject expertise with high quality candidates.
- UKRI staff can assess the available EDI characteristics of commissioning panels through The Funding Service, and this will be used to monitor diversity within panels.
- We will utilise existing links with academic networks which focus on membership with shared protected characteristics to share opportunities.

#### Process

- All panel members will receive guidance with regard to safeguarding the peer review process, aiming to ensure fairness and objectivity, and mitigate against unconscious bias.
- It is the role of panel members to assess the quality of applications against the scheme assessment criteria. Panel members will be briefed on identifying and managing unconscious bias and empowered to constructively challenge potential bias where they identify it. The Panel Chairs and Panel Convenors play a particularly important role in this respect.
- UKRI have delegated interview stage to fellowship host partners for this call. UKRI provide interview guidance to host partners which includes advice regarding interview panel representation, scheduling and provision of reasonable adjustments.

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)
<b>Disability (both mental and physical)</b>	Potential negative	Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.	<p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p> <p>We will ensure that applicants with a disability (inclusive of physical and neurological) can cost for additional support required that is directly related to the grant within their applications and that this is explicitly stated in call materials in addition to being published centrally by UKRI.</p> <p>The scheme has been designed to be inclusive of part-time and flexible working.</p> <p>UKRI will solicit information from panel meeting participants (in confidence) about any additional requirements they may have to fully participate.</p> <p>The panel meeting will be held virtually with regular breaks scheduled</p>
		<p>Applicants may require additional support within applications.</p> <p>Applicants may require flexible working patterns within their awards.</p> <p>Panel meeting attendees with physical disabilities may have difficulties if in-person meeting venues cannot cater for their needs</p>	<p>Depending on the needs identified, considerations might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Closed captioning and the chat function enabled to support those with hearing impairments;</li> <li>• Alternative document formatting and potential use of screen readers for the visually impaired;</li> <li>• Provision of documents in sans-serif, dyslexia-friendly fonts; and dyslexia-friendly formats;</li> <li>• Avoiding colours, lighting etc that may trigger migraines, epilepsy;</li> <li>• Ensuring that plenty of breaks are built into the agenda;</li> <li>• Hosting and recording virtual applicant guidance</li> </ul>

		<p>Panel meeting attendees with neuro- disabilities may experience difficulties with concentration and focus during panel assessments</p>	<p>webinars with above considerations to increase access to support</p>
<p><b>Gender reassignment</b></p>	<p>Potential negative</p>	<p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p> <p>Applicants who have had/are in the process of gender reassignment may feel disinclined to apply if our language isn't sensitive. Therefore, gender neutral language is important to support inclusivity, equality and representation.</p> <p>Using government guidance for employers, we need to consider:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Absence as a result of medical treatment or other absence related to transition.</li> <li>2. Adjustment of UKRI records (including Gateway to Research) and any communication materials (case studies etc).</li> </ol>	<p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p> <p>We will ensure to use gender neutral language in all call materials and engagement with the community and encourage participants in guidance documents to note and respect pronouns during meetings.</p> <p>UKRI terms and conditions are flexible in nature. All UKRI fellowships allow extensions to the award to take account of absences due to medical/compassionate leave as a result of reassignment. As the main UKRI terms and conditions are currently written this would be done under the 'exceptional circumstances' clause at the discretion of the Research Council. The UKRI Talent team will be advised to automatically consider this an exceptional circumstance.</p> <p>UKRI has a legal obligation under the UK GDPR and DPA 2018 to process accurate personal data; the obligation is on the account holder to provide any updates to personal data to us for this purpose.</p>



<b>Marriage or civil partnership</b>	No known positive or negative impact currently		
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<p><b>Pregnancy and maternity</b></p>	<p>Potential negative</p>	<p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p> <p>Pregnancy and maternity may impact on an applicant's ability to attend a panel interview.</p> <p>Career breaks associated with pregnancy and maternity may impact on an applicant's perceived track record.</p> <p>There are structural and financial impediments to taking parental leave: UK law requires employees to serve a minimum term before they become eligible for paid parental leave (over and above statutory benefits). New starters or their partners who fall pregnant or are pregnant at the time of application would thus receive little pay during their parental leave. Some employers have moved to a nil qualifying period for maternity or parental leave in recognition of this detriment.</p>	<p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p> <p>Hosts will be advised to manage interviews to take into consideration pregnancy and parental leave on a case-by-case basis.</p> <p>Guidance will be provided to panel members with regard to assessment of career breaks within applications.</p> <p>We will ensure the use of gender-neutral language such as parental leave.</p> <p>Provision for parental leave (including maternity leave, paternity leave and leave related to surrogacy and adoption) are covered in the UKRI terms and conditions.</p> <p>The costs of additional childcare for grant-holders, beyond that required to meet the normal contracted requirements of the job, and that are directly related to the project, may be requested as a directly incurred cost if the institutional policy is to reimburse them. However, childcare costs associated with normal working patterns may not be sought. Reimbursement of additional childcare costs 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).</p> <p>Applicant webinars and panel meetings will be held virtually with regular breaks to allow participants to manage caring responsibilities.</p>
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			<p>Fellowships will be offered on both full and part time arrangements to increase flexibility for applicants</p> <p>The call closing date is during the Scotland and Northern Ireland summer holidays. This is mitigated somewhat but not wholly by the 12 week opening window maximising applicant preparation time.</p>
<p><b>Race (including ethnicity)</b></p>	<p>Potential negative</p>	<p>See above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p>	<p>See above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations</p> <p>UKRI will encourage applicants and panel participants to share names and pronunciation during introductions</p>

<b>Religion or belief</b>	Potential negative	<p>See above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p> <p>Call and assessment timelines could fall over religious holidays with applicants and / or panellists requiring reasonable adjustments to fully participate.</p>	<p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations</p> <p>Call timelines will ensure that, where possible, the preparation of applications, closing dates and panel meetings / panel interviews take into consideration religious holidays.</p> <p>Considerations might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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 can get home to break their fast, awareness of the sensitivities around offering Muslims meals during periods of fasting);</li> <li>• Accommodating dietary restrictions (ensuring that there is sufficient choice to allow all participants to eat – recognising that some groups cannot eat pork or beef or shellfish, that others avoid caffeine, ensuring that vegetarian food is available if Kosher or Halal food is not provided) etc.;</li> <li>• Not scheduling meetings such that they would require travel late on Friday evenings (Jewish Sabbath) or on Fridays (Friday prayer, Islam)</li> <li>• Allowing prayer breaks if requested</li> </ul>
<b>Sexual orientation</b>	Potential negative	<p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p>	<p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p>

<p><b>Sex (gender)</b></p>	<p>Potential negative</p>	<p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p> <p>Use of language can present a barrier to participation and it may be perceived that those with caring responsibilities are disadvantaged.</p> <p>Panel members may be disadvantaged and unable to attend meetings if they have caring responsibilities.</p>	<p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p> <p>Ensure use of gender-neutral language in call specification, guidance, etc.</p> <p>Ensure that the panel has balanced gender representation.</p> <p>Reimbursement of additional childcare costs of the meeting if participant is otherwise unable to attend.</p>
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<p><b>Age</b></p>	<p>Potential negative or positive depending on scheme eligibility requirements</p>	<p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p> <p>Early career researchers * may be disadvantaged as they do not have the same track record to draw on as a more experienced researcher.</p> <p>(*It is assumed that early career researchers are generally younger than their more experienced peers, although this is by no means always the case. This is why this point has been included under 'age').</p>	<p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p> <p>Track record is not an explicit criterion, given likely relationship to career stage and hence (indirectly) age. Panels are briefed to ensure that experience is assessed relevant to career stage and that assessments are evidence-based, assessing an individual's capability to deliver the proposed fellowship.</p> <p>UKRI specify in call guidance that ECR status is not timebound. UKRI offer a range of fellowships open to applicants at early, mid and senior career stages to maximise eligibility.</p> <p>Applicants are supported by an institutional mentor if they are early career and aim to recruit fellowship cohort alumni to act as induction buddies to ease transition where available.</p> <p>Use of a variety of different communication strategies including social media to ensure that our messages reach the widest possible target audience.</p>
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<p><b>Other characteristics not protected under the Equality Act</b></p>	<p>Potential negative.</p> <p>UKRI is committed to go above and beyond bare compliance with Equalities legislation to ensure that our processes are as fair and equitable as they can be. For instance, we wish to ensure that potential applicants and stakeholders are not disadvantaged by geography, institutional status etc.</p>		<p>ROs need to be clear of their responsibilities. The Research funding guide states:</p> <p>‘The Research Organisation is responsible for compliance with the terms of the Equality Act 2010 including any subsequent amendments introduced while work is in progress; and for ensuring that the expectations set out in the RCUK statement of expectations for equality and diversity are met’. Call specifications should draw attention to UKRI’s aspirations around ED&amp;I. Applicants should be alerted to the fact that if they wish to participate in a UKRI-led activity but find that they are barred from doing so as a consequence of ED&amp;I considerations they should contact the office for advice.</p> <p>We work to ensure that panels are balanced as far as possible (within the constraints of quality and appropriateness) across the range of protected characteristics, and across broader characteristics including participation from post- 1992 and Russell Group institutions, ensuring that we have a good geographical spread of panel members across the four nations of the UK, and across a diversity of career stages and paths.</p> <p>Virtual participation will be encouraged to minimise barriers due to geographic location Fellowship budgets includes flexible allocations to support additional travel &amp; subsistence, training, research-related costs etc to support fellows to maximise potential and impact of their placement.</p> <p>Applicant eligibility is defined as ‘PhD or equivalent experience’ and encourages applicants from non- standard career trajectories to apply.</p> <p>Applicants are permitted to cost for caring responsibilities within their application. Please also see mitigations outlined under Pregnancy and Maternity above.</p>
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## Evaluation

Question	Explanation / justification	
Is it possible the proposed policy or activity or change in policy or activity could discriminate or unfairly disadvantage people?	See the potential negative impacts outlined above.	
Final Decision:	Tick the relevant box	Include any explanation / justification required
1. No barriers identified, therefore activity will <b>proceed</b> .		
2. You can decide to <b>stop</b> the policy or practice at some point because the data shows bias towards one or more groups		
3. You can <b>adapt or change</b> the policy in a way which you think will eliminate the bias	x	See the mitigations outlined above.
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 <b>proceed with caution</b> with this policy or practice knowing that it may favour some people less than others, providing justification for this decision.		



<b>Will this EIA be published* Yes/Not required</b> (*EIA's should be published alongside relevant funding activities e.g. calls and events:	Yes
<b>Date completed:</b>	14/03/2025
<b>Review date</b> (if applicable):	Annually, or if any significant changes are made to the scheme.