

UK Research and Innovation

Equality Impact Assessment

Question	Response
<p>1. Name of policy/funding activity/event being assessed</p>	<p>Methodology for the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) Special Considerations panel, held on 28 April 2021.</p> <p>This panel is responsible for providing recommendations on whether requests to Research Councils, Innovate UK and UKRI International Development Team (IDT), for special consideration should be funded and to what level. The panel is also responsible for reviewing recommendations for reprofiling/reduction/termination of grants from Councils /IDT and agreeing a final list of recommendations to the UKRI Accounting Officer.</p> <p>On 23 March 2021, relevant grant holding organisations were sent a letter and template which detailed the grants affected by the ODA budget reduction. Letters were sent to Hubs and overseas organisations on 31 March. These letters set out how UKRI, in partnership with the organisations, intended to manage the reduction in spend that UKRI have been asked to deliver. Grantholding institutions were invited, on an exceptional basis for a small amount of additional funding for a particular grant where a case for special consideration could be made. The requirements for special consideration are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clinical trials or animal research currently underway – where there is a need to comply with specific ethical or legal frameworks or obligations which would not be possible in the event of termination/reprofiling; • Interventions where curtailment/termination of funding could result in risk of serious harm to vulnerable individuals or groups. <p>The panel was convened as part of the process to implement the cut in funding to United Kingdom Research and Innovation (UKRI) by the Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) for the Official Development Assistance (ODA) for the Financial Year 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022.</p>
<p>2. Summary of aims and objectives of the policy/funding activity/event</p>	<p>UKRI must deliver the required reduction in ODA commitments in FY 2021/22, in order to meet the revised UKRI ODA allocation.</p> <p>This Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) assesses the methodology UKRI will use to implement the required cuts, focusing on its processes and decisions at the GCRF Special Considerations panel.</p>

	<p>The aims and objectives of this methodology are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure UKRI uses a fair and transparent decision-making process for achieving the required reduction in ODA expenditure; • To ensure that the methodology adheres to the spirit of the UKRI process while taking into account the different needs and structure of the UKRI's community. • To assess whether the funding requested for special consideration cases is reasonable and represents value for money and • To recommend to the Accounting Officer which cases for special consideration should be supported. <p>The need for this methodology is a direct result of the communication by BEIS on 10th February 2021 that UKRI would be receiving £125 million in ODA funding for the FY 2021/22 compared to its legal commitments of £230 million. ODA funding is capped and so non-ODA funds cannot be used to fund ODA projects.</p>
<p>3. What involvement and consultation has been done in relation to this policy? <i>(e.g. with relevant groups and stakeholders)</i></p>	<p>UKRI has given consideration as to how its application of the government's decision on funding cuts will impact on its ability to comply with the PSED.</p> <p>Further details of the programmes affected and their intended impacts are outlined below:</p> <p><u>Global Challenges Research (GCRF) and Newton Funds</u></p> <p>Through GCRF and the Newton Fund, UKRI is committed to both the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion and to equitable partnerships. UKRI has asked partners to be mindful of these principles when developing their proposals. On the template, UKRI has required partners to confirm that they have given these principles appropriate consideration and noted that they may be required to provide written evidence to support its proposals. In particular, partners were asked to review Gender Equality Statements to ensure their continued validity and consider policies and guidance relating to safeguarding, preventing harm and bullying and harassment.</p> <p>Given that all of these projects are funded through ODA, this means that they are 'administered with the promotion of the economic development and welfare of developing countries as the main objective'. Necessarily therefore, they must benefit disadvantaged communities. Moreover, in</p>

accordance with section 1(1A) International Development Act 2002 due regard must be given to gender equality.

Higher education institutes

In respect of grants made to HEIs, the duty to comply with PSED falls mainly on the institution.

Special consideration

In order to minimise and mitigate harm, all cases for special consideration will be assessed on the basis of their fit against the key categories which UKRI has prioritised for the small amount of exceptional funding available. Cases will then be evaluated on the basis of the evidence provided and ranked according to the strength of the case for funding.

The categories which have been prioritised for exceptional funding are:

- Clinical trials or animal research currently underway - where there is a need to comply with specific ethical or legal frameworks or obligations which would not be possible in the event of termination/reprofiling;
- Interventions where curtailment/termination of funding could result in risk of serious harm to vulnerable individuals or groups.

Each Council, Innovate UK and the UKRI ID team for centrally managed programmes, set up a team to assess and rank the cases for special consideration for grants administered/led by their organisation. Each special consideration request was assessed and scored by two separate reviewers. For each grant confirmation of the following was required:

- That the case aligns to one or both of the categories outlined (Y/N)
- Two independent review scores (0-3), using the scoring definitions in the methodology paper
- An average review score (based on the above)
- An agreed score (0-3)
- A relative ranking (1-n)
- Brief comments on the recommendation

The Special Consideration panel was convened to review the cases recommended for special consideration by the Councils/IUK/IDT; consider their input and develop one overall ranked list of recommendations.

The role of the Council/IUK/IDT Representatives in the panel meeting was to:

- summarise the pre-meeting discussions as appropriate;
- contribute Council/IDT specific context to the overall discussion;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assess whether the funding requested for special consideration cases is reasonable and represents value for money and • contribute towards the consensus view on the final recommendation of which cases for special consideration should be recommended for support. <p>Each representative was asked to confirm that they had taken EDI into account in their assessments.</p> <p>The meeting was attended by two observers, who observed the decision making process complied with ED&I and PSED requirements.</p>
<p>4. Who is affected by the policy/funding activity/event?</p>	<p>UKRI has given consideration as to how its application of the government’s decision on funding cuts will impact on its ability to comply with the PSED.</p> <p>Further details of the programmes affected and their intended impacts are outlined below:</p> <p><u>Global Challenges Research (GCRF) and Newton Funds</u></p> <p>Through GCRF and the Newton Fund, UKRI is committed to both the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion and to equitable partnerships. UKRI has asked partners to be mindful of these principles when developing their proposals. On the template, UKRI has required partners to confirm that they have given these principles appropriate consideration and noted that they may be required to provide written evidence to support its proposals. In particular, partners were asked to review Gender Equality Statements to ensure their continued validity and consider policies and guidance relating to safeguarding, preventing harm and bullying and harassment.</p> <p>Given that all of these projects are funded through ODA, this means that they are ‘administered with the promotion of the economic development and welfare of developing countries as the main objective’. Necessarily therefore, they must benefit disadvantaged communities. Moreover, in accordance with section 1(1A) International Development Act 2002 due regard must be given to gender equality.</p> <p>Higher education institutes In respect of grants made to HEIs, the duty to comply with PSED falls mainly on the institution.</p> <p>Special consideration In order to minimise and mitigate harm, all cases for special consideration will be assessed on the basis of their fit against</p>

	<p>the key categories which UKRI has prioritised for the small amount of exceptional funding available. Cases were evaluated on the basis of the evidence provided and ranked according to the strength of the case for funding at the special considerations panel.</p> <p>The purpose of the special considerations process was to mitigate the impact of curtailment/termination of funding on vulnerable individuals or groups, and on clinical trials or animal research.</p>
<p>5. What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the actual impact of the policy/funding activity/event?</p>	<p>Each of the assessors was asked to confirm that they had taken the impact of the policy into account in their assessment.</p> <p>The panel meeting was observed by two observers to ensure that the decision making was carried out in accordance with the criteria.</p> <p>UKRI will do a before and after data check. We plan to do continuous checks through the process that will add to this live and evolving document.</p>

All these grants are ODA funded and therefore it should be expected that *all* of the projects will not negatively impact on the following groups with protected characteristics: gender, race and ethnicity (given that they must have their primary impact in a developing country). Therefore, the reduction or cessation of funding to *any* of these projects will have an EDI impact. This is unavoidable given the level of funding cuts; however, UKRI is trying to minimise the impact of these changes, reduce any possible harm and support future learning. Below we have shown further analysis of projects that have an additional specific focus on targeting groups with protected characteristics.

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			
Gender reassignment			
Pregnancy and maternity			
Race			
Religion or belief			
Sexual orientation			
Sex (gender)	Negative	The International Development Act 2002 (as amended) requires that all ODA spend has regard to gender equality.	Given the limited timeline in which the decisions must be made and for the reasons set out above, consultation was limited to requesting that grant

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)
		<p>Competition applicants are required to take gender equality into account (exemplified through their gender equality statements) when applying to UKRI competitions funded through ODA. Therefore, we would expect all projects to be sensitive and inclusive to gender throughout the project lifecycle where gender equality is applicable. The implication is therefore that reducing or terminating funding <i>could</i> have an impact on this group.</p>	<p>holders identify any specific EDI issues related to reducing or terminating their grant that we did not already know about through their initial gender equality statements.</p> <p>Given the very considerable savings that need to be made, the special consideration process was designed to give grantholders the opportunity to highlight and demonstrate any cases for exceptional funding where there was risk of harm. The special consideration process was designed to help mitigate for the impact of budget reduction or termination on gender inequalities for the rest of the financial year.</p>
Age			

Evaluation:

Question	Explanation / justification
<p>Is it possible the proposed policy or activity or change in policy or activity could discriminate or unfairly disadvantage people?</p>	<p>As outlined above, it is possible that the proposed methodology for cutting ODA funding will have a considerable impact on those with a number of protected characteristics: most notably sex, race disability and age.</p> <p>The best way to mitigate against this would be to identify the projects affected, and to monitor the impact of the policy on those with a protected characteristic to minimise any disproportionate impact on a particular group.</p> <p>The methodology assessed in this paper is for the assessment of projects where</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clinical trials or animal research is currently underway – where there is a need to comply with specific ethical or legal frameworks or obligations which would not be possible in the event of termination/reprofiling; • Interventions where curtailment/termination of funding could result in risk of serious harm to vulnerable individuals or groups. <p>The purpose of this panel is to mitigate for the impact on groups of beneficiaries that may be at risk of harm and to protect the delivery of benefits, including to those with protected characteristics.</p>	
Final Decision:	Tick the relevant box	Include any explanation / justification required
1. No barriers identified, therefore activity will proceed .		
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.	X	<p>As outlined above, it is likely that the cuts to ODA funding will have significant negative impacts of groups of people with protected characteristics.</p> <p>However, given: the significant number of projects which are delivering benefits to groups with protected characteristics; the very short timeline in which to make decisions (as dictated by the overall level of funding and necessary notice periods); and the very significant size of the total savings that must be found; there appear to be no other proportionate ways to make the required level of cuts.</p> <p>The special consideration process assessed here aims to mitigate for the risk of harm to vulnerable groups and for projects where compliance specific ethical or legal frameworks or obligations is required.</p>

		As such, we will proceed to use the proposed methodology with caution.
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Will this EIA be published* Yes/Not required (*EIA's should be published alongside relevant funding activities e.g. calls and events:	
Date completed:	
Review date (if applicable):	

Change log

Name	Date	Version	Change
	When published	1	