

## EQUALITY AND INCLUSION IMPACT ASSESSMENT

1. Policy / activity being assessed	Follow on Fund (FoF) scheme. The twice yearly process for reviewing and decision making for new FoF proposals including application, independent review and panel assessment
2. Summary of aims and objectives of the policy / activity	<p>ollow-on Funding is intended to provide financial support at the very early or pre-seed stage of turning research outputs into a commercial proposition. It will support a range of relevant activities to enable the development and examination of a concept to establish its commercial feasibility and scientific and technical merit.</p> <p>FoF closing dates are every six months.</p> <p>Proposals are assessed by written peer review, followed by an assessment panel (the Innovation Partnership Scheme panel) made up of a combination of academic and industrial experts. STFC makes funding decisions based upon the recommendations of this panel.</p> <p>Awards are made subject to the UKRI research grant terms and conditions.</p>
3. What involvement and consultation has been done in relation to this policy?	<p>STFC is dedicated to ensuring that the peer review process is open and inclusive. Those engaged in the process endeavour to conduct each stage in a fair manner, without prejudice or bias, In line with this we follow the Nolan Principles. Additionally, comments and suggestions received as part of the peer review survey are implemented where possible to improve the process.</p> <p>The Innovation Advisory Board reviewed all Innovation schemes in 2015 but no recommendations regarding the FoF scheme were made. Innovations Board and the IPS panel provide strategic advice and make a wide range of recommendations and have recently proposed an increase to</p>

the maximum project value that can be applied for but there is no final decision on this yet

**For Applicants:**

- The call is advertised widely to reach the largest possible audience
- The call text and guidance provides detailed guidelines to Applicants about the process and links to the Research Grants Handbook, which has clear eligibility and assessment criteria
- STFC will make available hard copies of documents when required
- The STFC website conforms to accessibility requirements for websites
- STFC will support Applicants throughout the process, from pre-submission right through to informing them of the outcome.
- STFC will make all reasonable efforts to accommodate the requirements of any applicant who is selected to attend an interview, considering issues of accessibility, travel restrictions and alternative working patterns. The STFC team will request details of any such requirements when an applicant is invited for interview
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- For Reviewers:
- A wide range of reviewers are approached, and usage and spread is monitored each round
- Written guidance is available and reviewed annually
- Our guidance clearly states our expectations of reviewers
- STFC will provide all reasonable support to our reviewers in order to ensure they understand the aims, objectives, and processes of the FoF call

**For Panel Members:**

- Pre-meeting discussions take place, STFC staff will work closely with the Panel Chair to agree approaches that are designed to minimise opportunities for bias and improve transparency of the decision making process
- A presentation on Objective Decision making will be presented reminding panel members of the roles and responsibilities required for them and office staff and to highlight best practice.
- STFC will ensure that assessment criteria are clear and easily accessible throughout the process, including at the meeting.
- Everyone involved in the decision-making process is aware of Unconscious Bias and encouraged to undertake training. It is planned that going forward such training will be mandatory

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• STFC endeavour to achieve the minimum 30% female participation and will justify if this isn't the case. The gender balance for IPS Panel is 10%</li> <li>• STFC enable participation for people with alternative work patterns, including reduced working hours</li> <li>• Panel members are asked to inform STFC if they have any additional needs to enable attendance or participation</li> <li>• STFC will schedule appropriate breaks and provide refreshments for Panel members</li> </ul> <p><b>For STFC Staff:</b></p> <p>All STFC staff involved in the process will receive training in unconscious bias to raise awareness of conditions that may impact upon their decision making</p> <p>Venue arrangements when required will be selected for ease of accessibility; will not conflict with different cultures, religions or beliefs; and will offer a full range of sensory accessibility relating to visual and hearing impairments.</p> <p>Catering will be arranged with clear labelling and be appropriate to those who have specific cultural, religious, health or disability needs</p>
<p>4. Who is affected by the policy/funding activity/event?</p>	<p>Anyone who is applying for FoF grant, panel members , external and internal stakeholders involved in the assessment process.</p>
<p>5. Arrangements for monitoring and reviewing actual impact of the policy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• STFC will review this equality impact assessment annually to identify any actions or interventions that are required to improve diversity and inclusion.</li> <li>• STFC monitors and analyses data to better understand the diversity of its Community</li> <li>• STFC hold an annual application exercise for Panel membership and when published provides guidance on diversity targets</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Panel membership for each meeting is published on the website</li> </ul>

Group	Potential for positive or negative impact?	Examples of any evidence/data used	Action to address negative impact (e.g. adjustment to the policy)
Disability	Yes – negative impact	<p>Applicants and/or reviewers with visual disabilities or impairments may find it difficult to access and review electronic documentation.</p> <p>Applicants or panel members with mobility disabilities may face</p>	<p>STFC will take all reasonable steps to make adjustments to the assessment process in order to enable participation. As examples, this may include the use of video conferencing or equivalent tools, tailored timing of the meeting schedule, or provision of specific facilities to enable an applicant or panel member to be comfortable in the meeting environment.</p> <p>During the Covid-19 pandemic, panel meetings will be held via videoconferencing facilities such as Zoom (the UKRI Primary VC choice). STFC will take all reasonable steps to make adjustments to enable participation in virtual meetings. This can include, for example, use of screen readers, closed captioning, automatic transcripts and keyboard accessibility. More frequent breaks will be scheduled in virtual meetings.</p> <p>Electronic information is accessible and STFC will investigate the ability for the potential use of screen readers for personnel who are visually impaired. For virtual meetings, Zoom follows the latest accessibility standards to ensure it is fully accessible for the latest screen readers. Where other VC programmes are to be used, we will ensure this is also the case. STFC will respond to individual support needs on a case by case basis.</p>

		<p>difficulties in attending the panel meetings.</p> <p>Panel members with hearing difficulties may find it hard to engage in discussions.</p> <p>Attendees with neuro-disabilities may experience difficulties with concentration during panel assessments.</p>	<p>STFC will ensure the meeting venue is compatible with the use of hearing aid loops and will work with individuals to understand what other help can be provided. For virtual meetings, STFC the use of closed captioning and automatic transcripts is available with Zoom. We will make sure this is also the case where other VC Programmes are to be used.</p> <p>STFC will select a room that is light and airy, ensure that plenty of breaks are built in to the agenda and ensure that colours chosen don't trigger migraines, different colours may assist in this if personnel don't bring their own laptops. More frequent breaks will be scheduled into the agenda for virtual meetings to allow adequate time away from the screen.</p> <p>STFC consult with all Panel members to understand any specific requirements for participation and will accommodate where required.</p>
Gender reassignment <sup>1</sup>		<p>Information regarding gender reassignment is not made available throughout the peer review process. However, this may become apparent during the meeting stage or it may be possible that panel members already know this information or could endeavour to seek it out.</p>	<p>Panel members are required to follow best practice in taking positive steps to safeguard funding decisions, and are reminded of the conditions that may lead to unconscious bias during each meeting. STFC staff presence during interview acts as an additional assurance to ensure unbiased peer review</p>
Marriage or civil partnership	Yes – negative impact	<p>Bias may be voiced in relation to new partners starting a family therefore not given as a high a priority</p>	<p>Panel members are required to follow best practice in taking positive steps to safeguard funding decisions, and are reminded of the conditions that may</p>

			lead to unconscious bias during each meeting. STFC staff presence during meetings acts as an additional assurance to ensure unbiased peer review.
Pregnancy, Maternity, Paternity, Nursing mothers, Caring responsibilities?	Yes – negative impact	<p>Panel members who are pregnant or on parental leave may find it difficult to access the venue and /or participate in meetings.</p> <p>Nursing mothers may need additional support in terms of suitable accommodation or childcare</p> <p>An applicant’s career path and track record may be criticised due to the existence of a number of career breaks due to maternity/paternity.</p>	<p>Panel members are required to follow best practice in taking positive steps to safeguard funding decisions, and are reminded of the conditions that may lead to unconscious bias during each meeting. STFC staff presence during meetings acts as an additional assurance to ensure unbiased peer review.</p> <p>For virtual meetings during the Covid-19 pandemic, STFC will make all reasonable efforts to ensure the timing of the meeting is convenient for any requirements relating to the current homeworking environment, for example, adjusted working hours, caring and childcare responsibilities.</p> <p>STFC consult with all Panel members to understand and cater for their requirements for participation. As a general principle, venues are easily accessible to main rail links.Meetings are timetabled to allow for adequate breaks.</p> <p>Ensure suitable accommodation provided for nursing mothers and additional childcare.</p> <p>STFC recognise this issue and the potential impact and will consider as part of the review. The Chair will appropriately moderate discussions and ensure the objective application of the assessment criteria.</p>

		<p>Panel members may face additional childcare costs if having to work outside of their normal hours.</p> <p><i>Specific to CGs - Females may miss the opportunity to submit a proposal if they happen to be on maternity leave at the point of expected submission.</i></p> <p><i>(Renewal proposals for CGs are expected in specific years and are "locked out" from submission at any other time)</i></p>	<p>STFC will reimburse additional childcare costs, above any beyond that required during normal working hours.</p> <p>STFC recognise this issue and the potential impact and will consider as part of the review that is planned for the CG mechanism.</p>
Race	Yes – negative impact	Information regarding race is not made available throughout the peer review process. However, it may be possible that panel members already know this information or could endeavour to seek it out.	Panel members are required to follow best practice in taking positive steps to safeguard funding decisions, and are reminded of the conditions that may lead to unconscious bias during each meeting. STFC staff presence during meetings acts as an additional assurance to ensure unbiased peer review.
Religion or belief	Yes – negative impact		Panel members are required to follow best practice in taking positive steps to safeguard funding decisions, and are reminded of the conditions that may lead to unconscious bias during each meeting. STFC staff presence during meetings acts as an additional assurance to ensure unbiased peer review.

		<p>Panel members may be unable to participate in meetings due to religious observances</p> <p>Panel members or attendees may have specific dietary requirements due to religious belief.</p>	<p>Consideration will be given to the timing of interviews/panel meetings so that Panel members (and applicants) from different religious communities can attend if requested.</p> <p>STFC consult with all Panel members to understand and cater for their requirements for participation. Ensure the venue caters for all dietary requirements.</p>
Sexual orientation	Yes – negative impact	<p>Information regarding sexual orientation is not made available throughout the peer review process. However, it may be possible that panel members already know this information or could endeavour to seek it out. It may also become apparent during the interview stage.</p>	<p>Panel members are required to follow best practice in taking positive steps to safeguard funding decisions, and are reminded of the conditions that may lead to unconscious bias during each meeting. STFC staff presence during meetings acts as an additional assurance to ensure unbiased peer review.</p>
Sex (gender) <sup>2</sup>	Yes – negative impact	<p>Panel members, reviewers may criticise track record, publication history which could be as a result of extended maternity, paternity leave.</p> <p>Negative perceptions of an applicant’s gender may be expressed by a peer reviewer or a panel member.</p>	<p>STFC are committed to ensuring that Panel Chairs are briefed on how to handle such situations.</p> <p>Panel members are required to follow best practice in taking positive steps to safeguard funding decisions, and are reminded of the conditions that may</p>

			lead to unconscious bias during each meeting. STFC staff presence during meetings acts as an additional assurance to ensure unbiased peer review.
Age	Yes – negative impact	Panel members, reviewers may cite age in terms of lack of experience or in terms of near retirement	Panel members are required to follow best practice in taking positive steps to safeguard funding decisions, and are reminded of the conditions that may lead to unconscious bias during each meeting. STFC staff presence during meetings acts as an additional assurance to ensure unbiased peer review.  The Assessment criteria for FoF call are not linked to age

<sup>1</sup> '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.**'

<sup>2</sup> Although the definitions of the Equality Act 2010\* are set out as per above comment, at UK Research and Innovation 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.