

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

### **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.**

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/s/n/Acas\\_managers\\_guide\\_to\\_equality\\_assessments.pdf](http://www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/s/n/Acas_managers_guide_to_equality_assessments.pdf)

## Equality Impact Assessment

Question	Response
1. Name of policy/funding activity/event being assessed	BBSRC International Partnering Awards Plus
2. Summary of aims and objectives of the policy/funding activity/event	<p>This is a new international pilot scheme that will spark collaborations with priority countries (Japan and Canada) in two areas of strategic importance (Synthetic Biology and AMR). The objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pump-prime and diversify BBSRC’s existing international portfolio.</li> <li>• Open-up and amplify BBSRC’s success of current mechanisms.</li> <li>• Build on UK and international research excellence/enabling best with best collaborations.</li> <li>• Invest in future joint collaborative activities.</li> <li>• Align to UK Government, wider UKRI and BBSRC priorities.</li> </ul>
3. What involvement and consultation has been done in relation to this policy? (e.g. with relevant groups and stakeholders)	<p>Liaise with BBSRC Delivery to note any potential barriers to participation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultation with the BBSRC Delivery team to ensure that the Panel meeting setup does not create barriers for attendance and participation from a diverse range of people.</li> <li>• Consultation with members of BBSRC’s Equality and Inclusion Policy Group on barriers to inclusion and potential bias from their perspective.</li> </ul> <p>BBSRC is committed to equality and inclusion and to enable participation for <b>everyone</b> who applies to our schemes and those who are involved in reviewing and panel meetings. To facilitate this, we adopt the following principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will ensure that the call is advertised widely to reach the widest possible audience</li> <li>• The advert will clearly state the scope and assessment criteria for award. Awards will be made against these pre-published assessment criteria.</li> <li>• The BBSRC website conforms to accessibility requirements for websites, including the ability to adjust the text size or use a text reader on the page.</li> <li>• The panel is composed of BBSRC staff members who have been trained in Unconscious Bias and have been briefed about the importance of objective decision making.</li> <li>• BBSRC is committed to enabling panel participation for people with alternative work</li> </ul>

	patterns, including reduced working hours. The panel meeting will avoid school holidays.
<b>4. Who is affected by the policy/funding activity/event?</b>	Applicants to the International Partnering Award Plus Scheme. Members of the panel who are assessing applications for the International Partnering Award Plus scheme.
<b>5. What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the actual impact of the policy/funding activity/event?</b>	This equality impact assessment will be reviewed annually to determine if BBSRC can improve the diversity and inclusion of the Partnering Award Plus applications and panel. The language of all documentation is reviewed annually and changes will be made where it would improve inclusivity of the document.

<b>Protected Characteristic Group</b>	<b>Is there a potential for positive or negative impact?</b>	<b>Please explain and give examples of any evidence/data used</b>	<b>Action to address negative impact (e.g. adjustment to the policy)</b>
<b>Disability</b>	Negative	People with visual disabilities may find it difficult to access and view the guidance notes or application form.	The BBSRC website conforms to accessibility requirements for websites, including the ability to adjust the text size or use a text reader on the page.
	Negative	People with physical disabilities may find it difficult to access the venue for the Panel meeting.	The panel meeting will be held virtually.
<b>Gender reassignment</b>	Neutral		
<b>Marriage or civil partnership</b>	Neutral		

<b>Pregnancy and maternity</b>	Negative		We will take into account any maternity/paternity dates provided by the applicant if these are included in the proposal. Award extensions due to maternity / paternity /adoption leave will be considered according to conditions set out in conjunction with the research councils' grant terms and conditions (T&C).
<b>Race</b>	Neutral		
<b>Religion or belief</b>	Negative		
<b>Sexual orientation</b>	Neutral		
<b>Sex (gender)</b>	Negative	Potential Panel members may be disadvantaged and unable to attend if they have caring responsibilities	Expectations and dates for all aspects of the process are set out as far in advance as possible, allowing preparation for participants to cover caring and other responsibilities. School holiday dates will be taken into account. Holding the panel meeting virtually will eliminate the need for travel for panelist with family/caring responsibilities.
<b>Age</b>	Neutral		

**Evaluation:**

Question	Explanation / justification	
Is it possible the proposed policy or activity or change in policy or activity could discriminate or unfairly disadvantage people?	Potential for negative impact has been evaluated. Actions to address negative impacts identified are being applied.	
Final Decision:	Tick the relevant box	Include any explanation / justification required
1. No barriers identified, therefore activity will <b>proceed</b> .	X	
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		
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>	12/04/2022
<b>Review date</b> (if applicable):	

**Change log**

Name	Date	Version	Change
	When published	1	

## Annex 1: Examples of recently completed EIA templates

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