

## **Equality Impact Assessment – Call for ESRC Doctoral Training Partnerships (DTPs) 2024**

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 **Call for ESRC Doctoral Training Partnerships (DTPs) 2024** includes our:

- Postgraduate Funding Guide
- Training Grant terms and conditions, including recognition for sick leave and all forms of parental leave
- EDI in Panel Meetings Guidance for all panel members.

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>	The assessment process for the Call for ESRC Doctoral Training Partnerships (DTPs) 2024
<b>2. Summary of aims and objectives of the policy/funding activity/event</b>	<p>This assessment relates to those applying to receive funding to support doctoral training.</p> <p>Individual and Consortia teams from UK-based research organisations can apply for accreditation as an ESRC Doctoral Training Partnership to provide training for students across the full disciplinary range of the social sciences.</p> <p>We support a competitive commissioning activity that will allow new institutions to be part of an application.</p> <p>We intend to support approximately 16 DTPs, each in turn supporting five cohorts of students, from October 2024.</p> <p>Applications will be assessed against the following key criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working in Partnership</li> <li>• Content and Delivery of training:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Conceptual, General and Specialist Research Training</li> <li>○ Research in Practice</li> <li>○ Capacity building in priority areas</li> <li>○ Development Needs Analysis</li> <li>○ Supervision</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Equality, Diversity and Inclusion</li> <li>• Delivery, management and Governance</li> <li>• Allocation of studentships</li> </ul>
<b>3. What involvement and consultation has been done in relation to this policy? (e.g. with relevant groups and stakeholders)</b>	<p>Changes are being introduced following the completion of the Review of the PhD in Social Sciences.</p> <p>The review involved extensive consultation with key stakeholders including institutions,</p>

	<p>academics, supervisors and students, stakeholders and employers.</p> <p>The Review was also overseen by a steering Group that included representation from across the breadth of our stakeholders.</p> <p>Internal Consultation has taken place within the Skills and Methods Team and with relevant ESRC Deputy Directors as well as with the ESRC Strategic Advisory Network and ESRC Council.</p>
<p><b>4. Who is affected by the policy/funding activity/event?</b></p>	<p>Applicants to the DTP call 2024 and students funded from October 2024 onwards.</p> <p>Internal and external stakeholders involved in the consultation process</p> <p>Peer Review college and Commissioning Panel members reviewing the applications for the DTP call 2024</p> <p>ESRC staff working on the DTP call 2024</p>
<p><b>5. What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the actual impact of the policy/funding activity/event?</b></p>	<p>An investment management approach will be taken with the DTPs. Annual reports will be requested.</p> <p>Annual meetings with the investments will be held as well as network-wide Directors' meetings.</p> <p>Student surveys will be run every 2 years.</p> <p>A mid-term review will also be held after two years to review progress and development against the original bid.</p>

## GENERAL EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS

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

### Eligibility and criteria

- *Call for ESRC Doctoral Training Partnerships (DTPs) 2024* is open to all UK-based Research Organisations (ROs) that are eligible to receive research council funding for research and have the infrastructure in place to deliver postgraduate training.

- Panels are instructed to assess the application in front of them and not to 'read between the lines' or give the benefit of the doubt based on the reputation of the individual applicant or team, as this would be a form of confirmation bias.

### **Standard Grant Terms and Conditions:**

- UKRI Training 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 studentship extensions).
- Research Organisations are subject to equality legislation and have a duty to comply with it. TGC 3.4 states that the Research Organisation in receipt of the training grant must ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion is considered and supported at all stages throughout the performance of the Training Grant.

### **Panel recruitment:**

- We will aim to ensure that the composition of the two commissioning panels is diverse, with at least a 60:40 gender balance.
- We will ensure (if possible) that the chair and vice chair of the commissioning panel are not the same gender.
- Whilst panel members are appointed first and foremost based on expertise, we will aim to appoint a diverse panel membership. The intention is that these panels will also include student representatives. Final decisions will take into account trying to balance the panels by gender, ethnicity and geography and seek to ensure a diversity of institutions.
- A tool has been developed which allows ESRC staff to assess the EDI characteristics of commissioning panels, and this will be used when appointing panels.

### **Process**

- A bespoke peer review college will be used for this commissioning process. Nominations will be invited from Research Organisations.
- The membership of the Peer Review College aims to reflect the community it represents and we will be seeking members with expertise in the delivery doctoral training
- Efforts will be made to achieve an appropriately balanced membership in terms of gender, age, ethnic origin etc.
- All members of the bespoke panel will be encouraged to complete the ESRC peer review training tool which is mandatory for Peer Review College members. The training tool outlines the ESRC's standard peer review process and emphasises the importance of timely, objective, fair and informed peer review.
- Workshops will also be held for the reviewers, where full guidance will be provided.
- Peer reviewers are required to evidence their views and scores. ESRC staff conduct usability checks on all peer review comments and where there is evidence of bias or a reviewer has failed to provide evidence for their scores the review will be marked as 'unusable'.
- All panel members will receive guidance which covers issues including fairness, objectivity and unconscious bias.
- It is the role of panel members to moderate and assess the quality of peer review and to agree final scores for each proposal. Panel members will be briefed on unconscious bias and encouraged to feel empowered to constructively challenge

potential bias where they identify it. The Panel Chairs and Panel Secretaries play a particularly important role in this respect. An implementation intention statement will be read out at the beginning of the commissioning panel meeting which sets the tone for discussions and requires that panel members pay close attention to the scoring criteria and definitions.

- For each proposal we appoint two academic panel introducers who formally assess and score the proposal, with all panel members then asked to participate in discussions in order to ensure that an open and transparent assessment process is undertaken and a diverse range of views are represented.
- To ensure consistency across the commissioning panels, moderators will be asked to join each panel. The panel chairs will then be brought together at the end of each day along with the moderators to discuss the process.
- Interviews will be held with members of the panel, the applicant team and the moderators. Advance notice of interview dates will be provided.

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	<p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p> <p>Je-S does not currently comply with disability accessibility schemes. This will be picked up by The Funding Service.</p> <p>Applicants should seek support from their own institution's research support office.</p> <p>Panel meeting attendees with physical disabilities may have difficulties if meeting venues cannot cater for their needs</p> <p>Panel meeting attendees with neuro-disabilities may experience difficulties with concentration and focus during panel assessments</p>	<p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p> <p>Solicit information from panel meeting participants (in confidence) about any additional requirements they may have in order to fully participate (accessibility; dietary requirements etc).</p> <p>Ensure that meeting rooms in Polaris House offer an accessible and inclusive environment for participants.</p> <p>Depending on the needs identified, considerations might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessibility for wheelchair users and people with impaired mobility;</li> <li>• Induction loops for the hearing impaired;</li> <li>• Ensuring that plenty of breaks are built into the agenda;</li> </ul> <p>Where there are particular constraints consider opportunities for participants to engage in a different way (via video-link, tele-conference for instance).</p>
<b>Gender reassignment</b>	Probably not		

<b>Marriage or civil partnership</b>	Probably not.		
<b>Pregnancy and maternity</b>	Potential negative	<p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p> <p>Availability of applicant and/or team members for interviews may be limited if pregnant or on maternity /parental leave.</p>	<p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p> <p>Applicants have some discretion on who can attend the interview. The requirements are that the interview team can include up to 4 people, which includes the DTP Director. An alternative person could be allocated to attend on behalf of the team member in their absence.</p> <p>We should ensure the use of gender neutral language – parental leave, irrespective of sexual orientation.</p> <p>Consider whether the venue for the commissioning panel meeting, Polaris House, is able to provide facilities for breastfeeding/expressing mothers if necessary.</p> <p>Will seek to schedule Panel meeting and Interviews at a time that would avoid requiring additional childcare.</p> <p>Reimbursement of additional childcare costs (over and above normal working hours) if the meeting participant is otherwise unable to attend.</p>
<b>Race (including ethnicity)</b>	Potential negative	See above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.	See above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations (particularly in relation to panel composition and mitigations against unconscious bias)

<b>Religion or belief</b>	Potential negative	<p>See above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p> <p>There could be potential discrimination because it is known that somebody (either a panel member, a research applicant or research participants) has a particular faith or belief.</p>	<p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations (particularly in relation to panel composition and mitigations against unconscious bias)</p> <p>Ensure that religious observances are taken into account when planning panel meetings.</p>
<b>Sexual orientation</b>	Probably not	Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.	Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.
<b>Sex (gender)</b>	Potential negative	Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.	<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 (aim for at worst 60:40 split)</p>
<b>Age</b>	Potential negative or positive depending on scheme eligibility requirements	<p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p> <p>This scheme requires an experienced team to lead the DTP and the career stage and therefore age (indirectly) of applicants may lead to difficulties demonstrating the level of experience needed.</p> <p>This scheme requires an experienced Commissioning Panel and the career stage</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.</p> <p>Panel members are briefed to make clear that they should be assessing the application in front of them and not reading between the lines. They should assess an individual's capability to deliver their proposed objectives.</p>

		<p>and therefore age (indirectly) of potential panel members may lead to difficulties demonstrating the level of experience needed.</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>
<p><b>Other characteristics not protected under the Equality Act</b></p>	<p>Potential negative. ESRC 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>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>ROs need to be clear of their responsibilities. The Research funding guide states: ‘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’.</p> <p>Call specifications should draw attention to ESRC’s aspirations around ED&amp;I.</p> <p>Potential reimbursement of additional childcare costs (over and above normal working hours) if the meeting participant is otherwise unable to attend.</p> <p>Applicants should be alerted to the fact that if they wish to participate in an ESRC-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>It is our ambition to have DTP coverage across the UK. Due to the nature of the competition, locations would be based on the strength of the bids received.</p> <p>We work to ensure that panels are balanced as far as possible (within the constraints of quality and</p>

			appropriateness) across the range of protected characteristics, where we have the data, 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.
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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	✓	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>	26 <sup>th</sup> May 2022
<b>Review date</b> (if applicable):	N/A