

## **Equality Impact Assessment – Revised strategy for Doctoral Training**

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 revised strategy for doctoral training includes our:

- UKRI Training Grant terms and conditions, including recognition for sick leave and all forms of parental leave
- ESRC Postgraduate Funding Guide

There are multiple dimensions/aspects to this Equality Impact Assessment:

- 1) Ensuring that the eligibility criteria are clear and objectively justified
- 2) The identification of any potential barriers to attendance and participation in the training and activities set out in the revised strategy for Doctoral Training

The ESRC Review of the PhD in the Social Sciences highlighted a number of areas that ESRC needed to address to ensure that social science graduates remain internationally competitive, with the right skills to work in complex interdisciplinary, collaborative and challenge-led environments; and across a range of sectors.

Doctoral training must prepare students for the changing research environment and ensure they have the core skills fundamental to both academic and non-academic career pathways. All students should have access to high-quality, innovative and experientially-based professional development opportunities throughout the doctoral experience which develop transferable skills and provide opportunities to apply knowledge in different contexts.

We need to ensure that ESRC research training keeps pace with cutting edge methods and that students have access to strong advanced training. The training also needs to be more responsive to the diversity of student experience and the specific needs of disciplines.

Another fundamental pillar of the response to the Review of the PhD in Social Sciences is Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and student wellbeing. ESRC is committed to increasing the diversity of our student population and ensuring that we provide an inclusive and supportive environment for all. The Review highlighted the scale of the issue in terms of the low access to ESRC studentships by ethnic minorities and the differential access of students from different social economic backgrounds. The doctoral training partnerships we fund must ensure that they have the governance structure and processes in place to support students throughout their studies.

These findings have been incorporated into the recommissioning exercise for the Doctoral Training Partnerships 2024 and form the basis of the Postgraduate Training and Development Guidelines 2022.

Question	Response
1. Name of policy/funding activity/event being assessed	Revised strategy for Doctoral Training
2. Summary of aims and objectives of the policy/funding activity/event	<p>Following the <a href="#">Review of the PhD in the Social Sciences</a>, the <a href="#">ESRC response</a> set out a number of ESRC actions that would be taken forward to address the issues from the review.</p> <p>In 2022 we will commence recommissioning of our doctoral training partnerships, many of the changes outlined in the ESRC response will form part of this recommissioning.</p> <p>The strategy for Doctoral Training have been refreshed in light of our vision to develop globally competitive social science researchers who are able to operate in interdisciplinary, collaborative, and challenge-led environments across a range of sectors, and are drawn from diverse backgrounds and experiences.</p>
3. What involvement and consultation has been done in	These changes are being introduced following extensive consultation with the community

<p><b>relation to this policy?</b> (e.g. with relevant groups and stakeholders)</p>	<p>(including academics and students) as part of the Review of the PhD in the Social Sciences.</p> <p>Internal Consultation has also taken place with relevant ESRC Deputy Directors as well as with ESRC Council.</p>
<p><b>4. Who is affected by the policy/funding activity/event?</b></p>	<p>Those applying to be a doctoral training partnership (DTP) and the students that will be subsequently funded through the DTPs and who commence their studies from October 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>Student surveys will be conducted every two years.</p> <p>Feedback will be sought from the ESRC Student Engagement Forum.</p> <p>DTPs will be subject to a monitoring framework that includes annual reports, assurance checks and a Mid-term review.</p>

## GENERAL EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS

The UKRI terms and conditions are, where possible, analogous to employee provisions, with processes in place for sick leave, maternity leave, adoption leave and parental leave.

DTPs have been given more flexibility in the provision and delivery of the training offered; and when and how training and opportunities are completed throughout the duration of a studentship.

Placements, as part of the Research in Practice element, will not be mandated from the outset. A flexible suite of placement opportunities will be developed to ensure they can meet the needs of the individual. No-one should be excluded due to their own personal circumstances.

DTPs must create a bespoke Development Needs Analysis process that caters to the individual, recognising past experiences and ensuring that the student has access to a wide range of training and development opportunities throughout the life of their award.

UKRI awards are available for both full and part time study and DTPs must ensure flexible working patterns are also catered for.

The Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) framework also sets out the support for disabled students in order to make adjustments to allow them to complete their studentship project and training programme.

As part of the accreditation, DTPs must set out their EDI and widening participation strategies to show how they will enable the participation of doctoral candidates from all backgrounds, as well as details on the support systems in place to protect students' physical and mental health and wellbeing. This will be assessed by the commissioning panel as part of the funding bid.

ESRC will also work with the DTPs to share and develop best practice in promoting student wellbeing and EDI practices that support and promote a positive research culture. Diversity and equality must be promoted in all aspects of the recruitment and career management of students, in particular Research Organisations must ensure that supervisors are trained and supported in this area.

When assessing applications, to ensure excellence is the primary criterion, we expect studentships to be allocated through a fair and transparent competition, not based on internal quotas.

As well as the Review of the PhD in the Social Sciences commissioned by ESRC, UKRI has identified an initial four areas to address as part of the New Deal for Postgraduate Research: diversification of models and access, funding and stipend levels, rights and conditions and routes in through and out. This work aims to increase diversity in doctoral study. ESRC is already part of cross-UKRI projects to create best practice for doctoral recruitment.

All UKRI Training Grants are subject to the Equality Act 2010 and UKRI expects that the approaches used by training grant holders in supporting equality, diversity and inclusion would exceed all relevant legal obligations, including but not limited to those of the Equality Act 2010.

Data suggests that action to increase the proportion of PhD students from underrepresented groups is urgently needed as, without short-term action, current inequalities are likely to persist for some time. UKRI does support the use of positive action measures to encourage and support the participation of under-represented groups where there is clear evidence of under-representation and that it constitutes a proportionate response.

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>Students may be less able to participate in opportunities offered by DTPs (training courses / placements, Overseas Institutional Visits (OIVs), Overseas Fieldwork)</p>	<p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p> <p>DTPs are expected to increase flexibility in the content and delivery of the training offered and we are providing funding to support this.</p> <p>This can include part-time study, in-person, and on-line events.</p> <p>Placements will not be mandated from the outset, and a range of models can be used to ensure they can meet the needs of the individual.</p> <p>Development Needs Analysis processes bespoke to the individual student allow for specific needs to be addressed.</p> <p>DSA support is available to support additional costs that derive from the OIV / Fieldwork / Placement period.</p> <p>Supervisory best practice has been developed to allow for wider access to support from academic supervisory teams</p>
<b>Gender reassignment</b>	Potential negative	Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.	Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.

		<p>Trans people may be absent from work due to the process of transition and due to the absence be less able to take part in activities.</p> <p>UKRI records may show the wrong gender.</p>	<p>UKRI Training grant terms and conditions are flexible in nature and recognise absence as a result of medical treatment.</p> <p>We would expect that absence related to transition for staff on the grant would be covered by the Research Organisation's sick policy and strongly encourage ROs to treat absence relating to transition like any other sick absence.</p> <p>Promoting increased flexibility across DTPs in how and when training and opportunities are offered.</p> <p>Consideration needs to be given at UKRI level as to how records (including Gateway to Research and other communications materials) might be adjusted.</p>
<b>Marriage or civil partnership</b>	Probably not.		
<b>Pregnancy and maternity</b>	Potential negative	Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.	<p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p> <p>Provision for parental leave (including maternity leave, paternity leave and leave related to surrogacy and adoption) are covered in the UKRI training grant terms and conditions.</p> <p>The costs of additional childcare related to placements and OIVs may be funded from the training grant. However, childcare costs associated with normal working patterns may not be sought.</p>

<b>Race (including ethnicity)</b>	Potential negative	See above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.	See above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations  ESRC is working to develop best practice guidance on Postgraduate Research Assessment Processes which looks beyond traditional academic experience and/or qualifications.
<b>Religion or belief</b>	Potential negative	See above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.  There could be potential discrimination because it is known that a student has a particular faith or belief.  Observance of religious festivals could impact availability to attend training and other opportunities.	Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations  Will ensure considerations are detailed within DTP EDI plans.  Flexibility offered in terms of timings of training and other opportunities.
<b>Sexual orientation</b>	Potential negative	Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.  Due to the opening up of international eligibility for students from countries where homosexuality may be illegal, there may be a potential risk for applicants when disclosing EDI data.	Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.  Applicants are given the choice not to disclose information.
<b>Sex (gender)</b>	Potential negative	Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.	Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.

		<p>Timings and locations of training and opportunities may be a barrier to participation, and it may be perceived that those with caring responsibilities are disadvantaged.</p>	<p>Allowed DTPs flexibility in how and when training and opportunities are offered.</p> <p>The costs of additional childcare related to placements and OIVs may be requested and funded from the training grant.</p> <p>However, childcare costs associated with normal working patterns may not be sought.</p>
<b>Age</b>	Potential negative	<p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p> <p>Could be viewed that postgraduate study is geared towards younger students.</p>	<p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p> <p>Recognising that potential to undertake PhD is not reliant on academic achievements.</p> <p>Training programmes and placement opportunities can be tailored to the needs and past experience of the student.</p> <p>Bespoke DNA process to allow students to develop training opportunities based on their own past experiences and with a range of sectors.</p> <p>Supervision good practice guidance to address inclusion of early career researchers as supervisors to assist their career development.</p>
<b>Other characteristics not protected under the Equality Act</b>	Potential negative.		<p>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.</p>

			<p>When developing strategies, we will ensure that we look beyond the protected characteristics to ensure general inclusivity.</p> <p>Collecting data on socio-economic backgrounds to ensure partnerships can provide an inclusive environment for all.</p> <p>Expectation that the DTP EDI strategies will be inclusive of socio-economic backgrounds.</p> <p>Encourage our DTPs to be inclusive of less research-intensive local pockets of excellence to ensure access to local expertise</p> <p>Moving away from track record in relation to assessment criteria for studentships, recognising past experiences and the diversity of career stages and paths.</p> <p>Ensure that our DTPs take into account the geographical spread of their partnerships when developing cohort building opportunities.</p>
--	--	--	---

**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):	As and when any significant changes are made to the strategy for doctoral training.