

## Equality Impact Assessments

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.

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' used throughout this document, covers the range of functions, activities and decisions for which the organisation is responsible, including for example, strategic decision-making, arranging scientific strategy panels, conferences, training courses and employment policies. 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. Advice can be sought from your Research Council HR team.

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.

**Ideally, an impact assessment 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.**

### 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, 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. 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 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 safe-guard 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. Consultation can add evidence to the assessment.

### **Provisional Assessment**

At the initial stage, 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**

EIA's 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 if you find a significant difference:

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. In **extreme cases** or where **positive action** is taken you can **justify it**. For example, if the policy would require the use of animals in the research in a particular country. You've looked at the policy or practice from every angle, considered all available options carefully, and there still seems no other proportionate way to achieve the aim of the policy or practice. Then you are going to continue with this policy or practice knowing that it may favour some people less than others.

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 or the corporate risk register.

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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)

Depending on the nature of the policy change, 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 SRO, budget holder, project board or the most relevant senior manager. Further advice is available from your Equality, Diversity & Inclusion lead contact, HR, Peer Review Team, or the Events team.

## Equality Impact Assessment

Question	Comments
<b>1. Policy/funding activity/event being assessed</b>	GCRF Collective Fund: Interdisciplinary Research Hubs to Address Intractable Challenges Faced by Developing Countries call for full proposals
<b>2. Summary of aims and objectives of the policy/activity</b>	<p>Following a call for outline proposals Research Councils UK invites 52 of the 248 proposals received to submit a full application for a challenge-led and outcome-focused GCRF Interdisciplinary Research Hubs which meet the aims of Official Development Assistance.</p> <p>Proposals will be required to make the case for the specific intractable development challenge(s) they will address and explain why the proposed Hub is the most appropriate approach. Each Hub will be required to demonstrate a well-integrated, interdisciplinary approach; research excellence; appropriate management and governance; a realistic pathway to impact; and a satisfactory framework to monitor and evaluate the programme.</p> <p>Priority will be given to proposals that address really challenging problems with genuinely radical and potentially transformative approaches.</p> <p>Assessment at full stage will be through a two stage process: the first involving external expert review and a sift panel comprising a broad interdisciplinary, international Panel (academic and non-academic); and the second whereby a subset of proposals are invited to interview again by interdisciplinary international panel(s) with representation from across academia and other stakeholder groups. At both stages applications will be assessed against assessment criteria outlined in the call document. The most competitive proposals will then be awarded.</p>
<b>3. Is it possible the proposed change in policy or activity could discriminate or unfairly disadvantage people?</b> <i>(Advice should be sought from HR. If not relevant, record reasons and evidence; the remainder of the form need not be completed)</i>	Yes
<b>4. What involvement and consultation has been done in relation to this policy?</b> <i>(e.g. with relevant groups and stakeholders)</i>	The development of this call has drawn upon feedback from the initial collective fund call, the outline stage of the Interdisciplinary Research Hubs call, and Research Council led GCRF activities as well as advice from a number of advisory groups including the GCRF Strategy Advisory Group which includes members of the research

	<p>community.</p> <p>In addition elements of this call have been socialised with other ODA funders including DfID and the Department of Health and additional members of the research community with feedback from this process contributing to the refinement of the call.</p>
<p><b>5. Who is affected by the policy/funding activity/event?</b></p>	<p>Applicants to the GCRF Collective Fund call for Interdisciplinary Research Hubs to Address Intractable Challenges Faced by Developing Countries.</p>
<p><b>6. Arrangements for monitoring and reviewing actual impact of the policy/funding activity/event</b></p>	<p>Monitoring and review will primarily be through RCUK office, in particular colleagues in the GCRF team, GCRF Co-Ordination Group and Grants Business as Usual Group (GBAUG).</p> <p>In addition the GCRF Strategy Advisory Group will play an active role in monitoring this investment activity. RCUK works hard to ensure appropriate and diverse representation on this group and will apply a similar approach/process for selection of the assessment Panel(s) associated with this call.</p> <p>Due to the restrictions on the budget for this call and the time required to carry out the peer review process for a call of this nature it will only be possible to open the full call for 3 months. To help minimise the potential impacts of this we have ensured that applicants are informed of the outcomes of the outline call and provided proposal specific feedback (successful only) as soon as possible and that the call documents outlining the requirements for proposals be made available as soon as possible. In addition RCUK will be holding an applicant's event to support the applicants in developing high quality proposals and to address any key questions/concerns.</p>

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</b>	Potential negative impact – however based on current policies this is very low risk.	<p>Data is collected regarding disability at the application stage.</p> <p>Adjustments will be made throughout the assessment process where appropriate.</p>	<p>Flexible terms and conditions are in place to support applicants appropriately without discrimination. Adjustments are made throughout the assessment process where appropriate.</p> <p>RCUK presence at the panel assessment meeting and interviews will act as an additional assurance to help ensure unbiased peer review. In addition all Panel members and the peer reviewers from the UKRI International Development peer review college will receive Unconscious Bias training.</p>
<b>Gender reassignment</b>	Potential negative impact – however based on current policies this is very low risk.	<p>Data is collected regarding gender at the application stage.</p> <p>This information is not made available to the assessment panel members throughout the peer review process.</p>	<p>Throughout the process panel members are required to follow best practice in taking positive steps to safeguard funding decisions. RCUK presence at panel assessment meetings and interviews acts as an additional assurance to help ensure unbiased peer review. In addition all Panel members and the peer reviewers from the UKRI International Development peer review college will receive Unconscious Bias training.</p> <p>Flexible terms and conditions are in</p>

			<p>place to appropriately support applicants who require time to attend psychiatrist/psychologist appointments or who are undergoing gender reassignment involving medical interventions.</p> <p>Adjustments are made throughout the assessment process where appropriate.</p>
<b>Marriage or civil partnership</b>	Impact expected to be neutral.		
<b>Pregnancy and maternity</b>	Potential negative impact – however based on current policies this is very low risk.	This information is not made available to the assessment panel members; however it may become apparent through the proposal paperwork.	<p>Flexible terms and conditions are in place to support applicants appropriately without discrimination. Adjustments are made throughout the assessment process where appropriate to assist individual applicants.</p> <p>Throughout the process, panel members are required to follow best practice in taking positive steps to safeguard funding decisions. RCUK presence at the panel assessment meeting and interviews and interviews will act as an additional assurance to help ensure unbiased peer review. In addition all Panel members and the peer reviewers from the UKRI International Development peer review college will</p>

			receive Unconscious Bias training.
<b>Race</b>	Potential negative impact – however based on current policies this is very low risk.	Data is collected regarding race at the application stage.  This information is not made available to the assessment panel members throughout the peer review process.	Throughout the process panel members are required to follow best practice in taking positive steps to safeguard funding decisions. RCUK presence at panel assessment meeting and interviews acts as an additional assurance to help ensure unbiased peer review. In addition all Panel members and the peer reviewers from the UKRI International Development peer review college will receive Unconscious Bias training.
<b>Religion or belief</b>	Impact expected to be neutral.	This information is not made available to the assessment panel members throughout the peer review process.	Throughout the process panel members are required to follow best practice in taking positive steps to safeguard funding decisions. RCUK presence at panel assessment meeting and interviews acts as an additional assurance to help ensure unbiased peer review. In addition all Panel members and the peer reviewers from the UKRI International Development peer review college will receive Unconscious Bias training.
<b>Sexual orientation</b>	Potential negative impact – however based on current policies this is very low risk.	This information is not made available to the assessment panel members throughout the peer review process.	Throughout the process panel members are required to follow best practice in taking positive steps to safeguard funding decisions. RCUK presence at panel assessment

			meeting and interviews acts as an additional assurance to help ensure unbiased peer review. In addition all Panel members and the peer reviewers from the UKRI International Development peer review college will receive Unconscious Bias training.
<b>Sex (gender)</b>	Potential negative impact – however based on current policies this is very low risk.	Data is collected regarding gender identify at the application stage.  This information is not made available to assessment panel members throughout the peer review process. However, it is likely to be apparent in most cases through the proposal paperwork.	Throughout the process panel members are required to follow best practice in taking positive steps to safeguard funding decisions. RCUK presence at panel assessment meeting and interviews acts as an additional assurance to help ensure unbiased peer review. In addition all Panel members and the peer reviewers from the UKRI International Development peer review college will receive Unconscious Bias training.
<b>Age</b>	Potential negative impact – however based on current policies this is very low risk.	Data is collected regarding age at the application stage.  This information is not made available to the assessment panel members; however it may become apparent through the proposal paperwork.	Throughout the process panel members are required to follow best practice in taking positive steps to safeguard funding decisions. RCUK presence at panel assessment meeting and interviews acts as an additional assurance to help ensure unbiased peer review. In addition all Panel members and the peer reviewers from the UKRI International Development peer review college will receive

			Unconscious Bias training.
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**Evaluation Decision: Proceed**

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. In extreme cases or where positive action is taken you can **justify it**.

**Will this EIA be published: Yes**

**Date completed: 01/02/2018**

**Review date (if applicable): N/A**

## Example Equality Impact Assessments

To view several completed EIA's please see the following template and the links below:

- <http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/documents/future-leader-fellowships-impact-assessment-pdf/>
- <http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/documents/biofilms-programme-equality-impact-assessment-pdf/>

### EPSRC Mixed Gender Panel Membership Policy

Question	Comments
<b>1. Policy/funding activity/event being assessed</b>	Mixed Gender panels
<b>2. Summary of aims and objectives of the policy/activity</b>	There is a 30% target for the under-represented gender for all panels by April 2017. The total percentage of female panel members FY 2015/16 was 23%. This target does not mean that every panel has to meet that 30%, but some panels will need to exceed this target if some do not meet it
<b>3. Is it possible the proposed change in policy or activity could discriminate or unfairly disadvantage people?</b> <i>(Advice should be sought from the appropriate internal contact. If not relevant, record reasons and evidence; the remainder of the form need not be completed)</i>	No, gender diversity
<b>4. What involvement and consultation has been done in relation to this policy? (e.g. with relevant stakeholders)</b>	BEIS directive to have all advisory bodies mixed gender, EPSRC E&D network Peer Review Team
<b>5. Who is affected by the</b>	Meeting participants, interviewees, panel convening

<b>policy/funding activity/event ?</b>	team
<b>6. Arrangements for monitoring and reviewing actual impact of the policy/funding activity/event</b>	Panel participants data & review point, log of issues & review point

<b>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>	Neutral	Neutral	
<b>Gender reassignment</b>	Not known at present	Not known at present	Not known at present
<b>Marriage or civil partnership</b>	Neutral	Neutral	
<b>Pregnancy and maternity</b>	Not known at present	Not known at present	Not known at present
<b>Race</b>	Neutral	Neutral	
<b>Religion or belief</b>	Neutral	Neutral	Not known at present
<b>Sexual orientation</b>	Neutral	Neutral	Not known at present

<b>Sex (gender)</b>	Not Neutral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Majority of panels are currently mixed gender.</li> <li>• Further information on panel member balance over the previous four financial years is available here.</li> <li>• Female interviewees will benefit from mixed gender panels</li> <li>• Positive action for more females to be involved in prioritisation panels</li> <li>• Risk of overuse of smaller pool of appropriate female panel members</li> </ul>	Interventions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase gender diversity of the college</li> <li>• Publicise policy to colleagues</li> <li>• Monitor issues log</li> <li>• Monitor panel participant data</li> <li>• Investigate non compliance</li> <li>• Promote alternative methods for panel member participation e.g. videoconference</li> </ul>
<b>Age</b>	Neutral	Neutral	Not known at present

**Evaluation Decision:**

**Agree to change the policy so that all panels are mixed gender, with specific interventions to manage and monitor impact.**

- Different groups affected by the policy have different needs, experiences, issues in relation to it.
- Data showing high/low participation and/or success rates in relation to the policy

**Will this EIA be published: Not required**

**Date completed: May 2016**

**Review date (if applicable): every 6 months: Nov 2016, May 2017...**

