

30th May 2019

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Freedom of Information request: 2019/0114 EP

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request received on 13th May 2019 in which you requested the following:

Your Request:

I am looking into the role of gender in unconscious bias and how it impacts the panel review process. Specifically, I am interested in getting data for peer review responsive mode panels from October 2016 to the present. I would like information regarding a rank ordered list of proposals, indicating where the funding cut off was made for each round.

For each proposal I would like identify the gender of each of the 3 introducers, and what the male/female ratio was of the panel composition for each call.

I am also interested in what the final score was for each proposal and where possible what original score each introducer gave the proposal. I understand from that obtaining the original introducer score may be more difficult, but even if you could find it for a subset of calls it would provide an indication of a trend.

Our response:

I can confirm UK Research and Innovation hold some information relevant to your request.

We have investigated the FOI request and are not able to provide all the information in the format requested.

The FOI requests for the rank order list and the funding cut off data for peer review responsive mode panels from October 2016 to the present; this is already publicly available via Grants on the Web: <https://gow.epsrc.ukri.org/>

EPSRC does not record individual introducer scores on our grants system or retain and collate individual introducer scores into a dataset. We believe the time taken to compile the information would be unreasonable.

Section 12 of FOIA allows a public authority to refuse to deal with a request where it estimates that it would exceed the appropriate limit to: - either comply with the request in its entirety or; - confirm or deny whether the requested information is held. The estimate must be reasonable in the circumstances of the case. The appropriate limit is £450 for UKRI (18 Hours*£25= £450).

It is our reasonable estimation that if UKRI were to manually attempt to collate the data requested, it would take 86.5 hours (79 responsive mode panel meetings since October 2016) x (~60 minutes per panel) + (~7.5 hours to collate & format data), which would exceed this cost limit.

There is also a risk that if this information was available for each proposal and used with information requested on introducers gender and information published on the panel membership on Grants on the Web, that introducer scores could be attributed to individual panel members breaking peer review confidentiality.

Panel scores themselves have no validity outside the meeting and are currently used as a tool to reach a rank order. This is stated in our policy and we are clear that all information provided in relation to submissions including peer review information is confidential, therefore this has been withheld under Section 41(1)(b) of the FOIA, as this would constitute a breach of confidence. As this exemption is absolute there is no requirement to conduct a public interest test.

The FOI requests "the male/female ratio of each panel" for all standard mode application peer review prioritisation panels from October 2016 to present.

EPSRC is able to share diversity information where it has been appropriately anonymised to protect the confidentiality of the individuals. However, we are not able to share any data where there is a chance that any given individual may be identified. Due to the small numbers of individuals who attend peer review prioritisation panels (approximately 8-15 per panel) and given that EPSRC publishes the names of those individual on Grants on the Web, we are unable to provide the data at the level requested, due to the high risk of these two datasets being amalgamated to reveal the protected characteristics of those individuals.

However, by aggregating the data where the number of panel members involved would be larger and therefore the risk of revealing protected characteristics of individuals removed we have been able to share panel membership by gender at the relevant theme level by financial year. Please note that even at this aggregated level the data has been rounded and where appropriate suppressed (see methodology section below) so as not to reveal the identity of any individual.

Data Capture Methodology

- The data presented in Annex 1 shows EPSRC standard mode application peer review prioritisation panel membership data by gender by relevant theme only.
- The data set is inclusive of all standard mode application peer review prioritisation panels between the dates of 2016/17 financial year (starting: 1st October 2016) to financial year 2019/20 (up to 2nd May 2019). The data excludes prioritisation and interview panels for strategic call interventions and does not include Fellowship prioritisation panels. The prioritisation panels are represented by financial year. Where there is no entry against a particular theme this indicates that no prioritisation panel has taken place in the associated period.
- The data details the number and percentage of panel members (inclusive of panel chairs) that have identified their gender as either Male, Female, Not Disclosed or Unknown. The data is generated from returns by individuals to their Je-S account, where all individuals are assigned a 'unique person identifier'
- The data shows only attended panel members and excludes EPSRC staff (Theme Lead, Panel Convenor, support staff and any observers).
- The data follows HESA Rounding and Suppression Methodology and as such percentages are not published/suppressed if they are fractions of a small group of individuals (fewer than 22.5). In this situation percentages are suppressed to "...".
- Please note that the sum totals may not match the sum of the categories - Female, Male, Not Disclosed and Unknown because the actual real sum is rounded independently of the constituent parts.

HESA Rounding and Suppression Methodology

This EPSRC data has been reported following an agreed UKRI methodology, which is in accordance with HESA policy. HESA policy is followed in order to protect the confidentiality of the individuals.

Due to the provisions of the UK Data Protection Act 2018, EU General Data Protection Regulation 2018 and the Equality Act 2010, HESA implements a strategy in published and released tabulations designed to prevent the disclosure of personal information about any individual. This strategy involves rounding all numbers to the nearest multiple of 5 and suppressing percentages based on small populations as follows:

- 0, 1, 2 are rounded to 0
- All other numbers are rounded to the nearest multiple of 5
- Percentages based on fewer than 22.5 individuals are suppressed to '...'

For example 3 is represented as 5, 22 is represented as 20, 3286 is represented as 3285 while 0, 20, 55, 3510 remain unchanged.

Total figures are also subject to this rounding methodology.

Please see the following web link for more information: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/about/regulation/data-protection/rounding-and-suppression-anonymise-statistics>

If you have any queries regarding our response or you are unhappy with the outcome of your request and wish to seek a review of the decision, please contact:

Head of Information Governance

UK Research and Innovation

Polaris House

North Star Avenue

Swindon

SN2 1FL

Email: foi@ukri.org or info-governance@ukri.org

Please quote the reference number above in any future communications.

If you are still not content with the outcome of the review, you may apply to refer the matter to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the review procedure provided by UKRI. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner

Wycliffe House,

Water Lane

Wilmslow

Cheshire


SK9 5AF

Enquiry/Information Line: Between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday 0303 123 1113 or 01625 545745

Further information about the Office of the Information Commissioner can be found at <http://www.ico.gov.uk/>

If you wish to raise a complaint regarding the service you have received or the conduct of any UKRI staff in relation to your request, please see UKRI's complaints policy: <https://www.ukri.org/about-us/policies-and-standards/complaints-policy/>

Yours sincerely,


UK Research and Innovation, Information Governance Team

Email: foi@ukri.org

Annex 1

Table 1: Membership of EPSRC Standard Mode Application Peer Review Prioritisation Panels by gender described by theme and by financial year of panel.

		Gender of Standard Mode Application Prioritisation Panel Members									
		Female		Male		Not Disclosed		Unknown		Total Number	Total Percentage
Financial Year	Lead Theme	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%		
2016/2017	Engineering	5	14.29%	30	85.71%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	35	100.00%
	Information and Communication Technologies	15	27.27%	35	63.64%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	55	90.91%
	Manufacturing the Future	0	...	5	...	0	...	0	...	10	...
	Mathematical Sciences	10	40.00%	15	60.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	25	100.00%
	Physical Sciences	20	36.36%	35	63.64%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	55	100.00%
2016/2017 Total		55	30.56%	125	69.44%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	180	100.00%
2017/2018	Engineering	15	23.08%	45	69.23%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	65	92.31%
	Healthcare Technologies	10	28.57%	20	57.14%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	35	85.71%
	Information and Communication Technologies	35	35.00%	60	60.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	100	95.00%
	Manufacturing the Future	5	...	15	...	0	...	0	...	20	...
	Mathematical Sciences	15	27.27%	40	72.73%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	55	100.00%
	Physical Sciences	35	31.82%	80	72.73%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	110	104.55%
2017/2018 Total		120	31.17%	255	66.23%	5	1.30%	5	1.30%	385	100.00%
2018/2019	Engineering	20	33.33%	40	66.67%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	60	100.00%
	Healthcare Technologies	20	40.00%	30	60.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	50	100.00%
	Information and Communication Technologies	30	37.50%	50	62.50%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	80	100.00%
	Mathematical Sciences	20	36.36%	35	63.64%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	55	100.00%
	Physical Sciences	30	26.09%	85	73.91%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	115	100.00%
2018/2019 Total		115	31.94%	240	66.67%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	360	98.61%
2019/2020	Information and Communication Technologies	5	...	10	...	0	...	0	...	15	...
2019/2020 Total (to date)		5	...	10	...	0	...	0	...	15	...
Grand Total (to date)		295	31.38%	630	67.02%	5	0.53%	10	1.06%	940	100.00%