

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'.¹

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.

¹http://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	NERC research call titled: Role of environmental quality in health benefits of connecting with nature
2. Summary of aims and objectives of the policy/funding activity/event	<p>The aim is to connect environmental scientists with wider nature-connectedness disciplines and practitioners, and fund proof-of-concept studies to explore how methods, approaches and datasets from environmental sciences can be used in mixed-methods approaches to investigate the role of ecological quality of the environment in health and wellbeing, health equity and environmental benefits of connecting people with nature.</p> <p>Researchers can apply for up to £250,000 to design and deliver a collaborative activity that will culminate in the project providing funding for a number of groups to carry out short proof-of-concept studies (3-6 months). It is anticipated that the majority of the activities will take place online.</p> <p>This call will be advertised through the Funding Finder but delivered outside JeS and Siebel and paid through purchase order.</p>
3. What involvement and consultation has been done in relation to this policy? (e.g. with relevant groups and stakeholders)	Consultation has been undertaken with relevant research networks in the UK, across NERC teams, MRC, ESRC, AHRC, DEFRA and Natural England. Existing networks in other disciplines that have run similar collaborative workshop events have also been consulted.
4. Who is affected by the policy/funding activity/event?	<p>UKRI eligible researchers in the environmental, health, arts and humanities and social sciences, and policy makers and practitioners working on connecting people with nature, are directly affected by this activity.</p> <p>Citizens in the UK may also benefit from this research, as a result of this research more initiatives on green/blue prescribing might be implemented.</p>
5. What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the actual impact of the policy/funding activity/event?	Research groups that are awarded funding are required to report monthly with progress updates and provide a final report six months after the completion of the grant to provide information on overall outputs and outcomes.

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)

Disability	Positive	Applicants/reviewers with physical disabilities will be able to participate remotely	Gather information from meeting participants about any additional requirements they may need in order to fully participate
	Negative	<p>Applicants/reviewers with neuro-disabilities may experience difficulties with concentration.</p> <p>Online resources may be difficult for visually or physically disabled to complete.</p>	<p>Ensure that plenty of breaks are built into the agenda</p> <p>Ensure that colours chosen don't trigger migraines, different colours may assist</p> <p>Provide alternative document formatting (e.g., documents in visually impaired/dyslexia friendly format such as sans-serif fonts, such as Arial or Calibri)</p> <p>Ensure that the selection criteria used are objective, transparent and robust. We will provide guidance and remind all assessors about not bringing in personal biases and provide a panel briefing in objective decision making. We will seek to fund a diverse range of individuals that represent the community</p> <p>Ensure Call documents are available as a word document and should be suited for users who have accessibility modifications to their computing systems</p>
Gender reassignment	N/A	N/A	N/A
Marriage or civil partnership	N/A	N/A	N/A

			<p>decision making. We will seek to fund a diverse range of individuals that represent the community</p> <p>Ensure all panel members have the opportunity to contribute equally through effective meeting management</p>
Age	NA		

Evaluation:

Question	Explanation / justification	
Is it possible the proposed policy or activity or change in policy or activity could discriminate or unfairly disadvantage people?	It is assumed that by using standard NERC processes and best practice for ensuring equality, diversity, and inclusion that discrimination will be minimised. Also, by implementing the above actions, this proposed funding opportunity will not discriminate or unfairly disadvantage people.	
Final Decision:	Tick the relevant box	Include any explanation / justification required
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	✓	Actions listed 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 proceed with caution with this policy or practice knowing that it may favour some people less than others, providing justification for this decision.		

Will this EIA be published* Yes/Not required (*EIA's should be published alongside relevant funding activities e.g. calls and events:	Yes
Date completed:	12/08/2021
Review date (if applicable):	N/A

Change log

Name	Date	Version	Change
	When published	1	