EPSRC - Equality Impact Assessment

	Question	Response
1.	**Name of policy/funding activity/event being assessed**	Research for a Plastics Circular Economy (funding activity)
2.	**Summary of aims and objectives of the policy/funding activity/event**	This call aims to fund interdisciplinary research in the engineering, ICT, biotechnological, physical, mathematical and biological sciences to support a more sustainable overall plastics system and move towards a circular plastics economy. EPSRC and BBSRC welcome proposals from across the plastics research community. The whole of the product lifecycle is in scope from extraction and novel and conventional production, to maximizing the longevity and value achieved while in use and finally to recycling and recovery at the end of life. Proposals should be adventurous and high quality, tackling high impact real world research challenges which must have been demonstrably developed in partnership with relevant stakeholders such as industry and/or government.
3.	**What involvement and consultation has been done in relation to this policy?** *(e.g. with relevant groups and stakeholders)*	- Manufacturing and Circular Economy Theme - Plastics Research and Innovation Fund Strategic advisory Group - Representatives from the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy - Industrial stakeholders - Academic stakeholders
4.	**Who is affected by the policy/funding activity/event?**	- Research office/institutions and staff - Research councils and staff - External reviewers (outline panel, postal peer reviewers, prioritisation panel) - PDRAs employed by the funded projects. - Support staff will also be employed on the grant. - There will be significant interaction with industry and the wider innovation landscape. - Students may be aligned to the funded projects,

	although not directly funded through the grants.
5. **What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the actual impact of the policy/funding activity/event?**	Research outcomes are collected through Researchfish and additional data through an annual data return. Feedback is sought from those involved in the process and policies are considered in light of feedback received.

As a funder of research, EPSRC remains committed to attracting the best potential researchers from a diverse population into research careers. For policy changes, funding activities and events EPSRC will aim to:

- Select venues that are accessible and where possible accommodate any specific requirement in our planning and organisation of an initiative to support wider participation. This includes for applicants, reviewers, panel members and staff. Included in the interview invitation letter is a request for any access issues to be notified.
- All participants in the process are asked to inform staff if they have any additional needs to enable attendance or participation.
- Offer support for people with caring responsibilities, further details are available here.
- Clearly communicate the timeline and key milestones for funding activities, advertise these widely to reach the largest possible audience.
- Support and encourage panel members to follow best practice in taking positive steps to safeguard funding decisions. Staff will work closely with the Panel Chair(s) to agree approaches that are designed to minimize opportunities for bias and improve transparency of the decision making process. This includes managing environmental conditions, such as providing appropriate breaks.
- Support flexible working of stakeholders.
- Ensure diversity of peer review assessment and interview panels. Staff will adhere to a mixed panel policy and endeavor to achieve the minimum 30% for the underrepresented gender on the panel.
- Abide by the principles of peer review
- Provide EPSRC staff with tailored unconscious bias training for Peer Review processes and clear guidance for assessors.
- Handle personal sensitive information in compliance with General Data Protection Regulation 2018.

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	Potentially negative	All information provided is in written format. Travel may be a barrier for any in-person panels.	Any reasonable adjustments for specific requirements will be made. Documents will be produced in line with EPSRC formatting guidelines. Panels are likely to be virtual.

			Where not fully virtual, the option to attend virtually will be available. Accessibility will be considered when choosing a physical venue.
		Potential for unconscious bias	Standard EPSRC policies will be followed, including providing training materials for panellists on unconscious bias and empowering all panellists to challenge potential bias.
Gender reassignment	Potentially Negative	Potential for unconscious bias	Standard EPSRC policies will be followed, including providing training materials for panellists on unconscious bias and empowering all panellists to challenge potential bias.
Marriage or civil partnership	None identified		Standard EPSRC policies will be followed.
Pregnancy and maternity	Potentially negative	Participation in activity could be restricted by lack of availability due to parental leave/caring responsibilities/ pregnancy	Accomodations will be made for individuals if required at all stages of the process. Timetable of key dates will be made available to applicants and panellists in advance as early possible. EPSRC policies for offering support to those with caring responsibilities will be followed and panel

			members and applicants will be made aware of these. Panellists will be informed if a panel meeting is to be held virtually as far in advance as possible. If this happens we reserve the right to change the timetable of the meeting to take into account individual circumstances and allow additional time for breaks and technical issues.
		Potential for unconscious bias	Standard EPSRC policies will be followed, including providing training materials for panellists on unconscious bias and empowering all panellists to challenge potential bias.
Race	Potentially negative	Potential for unconscious bias	Standard EPSRC policies will be followed, including providing training materials for panellists on unconscious bias and empowering all panellists to challenge potential bias.
Religion or belief	Potentially negative	Potential for unconscious bias	Ensure religious observances are taken into account when meeting dates are chosen, and where possible that there is a prayer room available.
Sexual orientation	Potentially negative	Potential for unconscious bias	Standard EPSRC policies will be followed, including

			providing training materials for panellists on unconscious bias and empowering all panellists to challenge potential bias.
Sex (gender)	Potentially negative	Possibility for unconscious bias	Gender neutral language will be used throughout and will be encouraged at panel meetings. Efforts will be made to select gender diverse panellists and reviewers.

Standard EPSRC policies will be followed, including providing training materials for panellists on unconscious bias and empowering all panellists to challenge potential bias. |
| **Age** | Potentially negative | Possibility for unconscious bias | Standard EPSRC policies will be followed, including providing training materials for panellists on unconscious bias and empowering all panellists to challenge potential bias. |
| **Additional aspects (not covered by a protected characteristic)** | Caring responsibilities – potentially negative | Panellists and applicants may have reduced availability due to COVID-19 pandemic if they have to care for a vulnerable person or schools close as part of Government Guidelines | Dates for panels will be outside of school holidays wherever possible.

Panellists will be informed in advance if a panel meeting is to be held virtually. Timetable of key dates will be made available to applicants and |

			panellists as far in advance as possible.
	Zoom panel meetings – potentially negative	Due to the COVID-19 pandemic it may be necessary to hold panel meetings virtually (potentially switching from in person to virtual at short notice if government guidance changes).	Guidance will be provided to panellists – best practice and tools that can be used such as the hand raising and mute functions. 'Test runs' will be offered to those who have not used Zoom before. Extra time will be allowed to to assist with cognitive load and 'short term' technical difficulties Contingency plans will be put in place if Zoom cannot be used Learning from virtual panels held prior to this, will be incorporated to improve the process.

Evaluation:

Question	Explanation / justification
Is it possible the proposed change in policy, funding activity or event could discriminate or unfairly disadvantage people?	There is a potential that some individuals may be disadvantaged; however, mitigating steps will be taken to minimise any impact.
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		
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.	✓	This activity needs to proceed at this time. Everything has been done to be as fair and flexible as possible to all applicants. We will promote and inform as early as possible, and take circumstances into due account when necessary.

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:	**31/05/2022**
Review date (if applicable):	**N/A**

Change log

Name	Date	Version	Change
Mark Tarplee	When published	1	