



EPSRC - Equality Impact Assessment

Question	Response
1. Name of policy/funding activity/event being assessed	EPSRC Cybersecurity Research Institutes Research Projects Call
2. Summary of aims and objectives of the policy/funding activity/event	EPSRC’s Digital Security & Resilience theme will support up to £7.5m of research projects aligned with the four EPSRC-NCSC Research Institutes which address national security challenges of strategic importance such as those set out in the Integrated Review, developing innovative, adventurous solutions to critical issues in cybersecurity.
3. What involvement and consultation has been done in relation to this policy? (e.g. with relevant groups and stakeholders)	EPSRC Digital Security & Resilience/Digital Economy/Digital Twins teams, Business Improvement Team, Regional Engagement Team National Cyber Security Centre technical experts
4. Who is affected by the policy/funding activity/event?	UK research and innovation community, project partners from industry, NCSC and other relevant government bodies, RO staff, RC staff, external reviewers.
5. What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the actual impact of the policy/funding activity/event?	Projects must submit a plan for engaging with NCSC and the Research Institutes. This call is trialing the use of discussion boards prior to the prioritisation panel, the success of these will be reviewed with the Business Improvement Team.

As a funder of research, EPSRC remains committed to attracting the best potential researchers from a diverse population into research careers. The Research Councils have together developed the ambitious [RCUK Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan](#) to outline our collective aspirations for working with the research community, and partners throughout the sector. 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	Panel meeting attendees with physical disabilities may have difficulties if meeting venues cannot cater for their needs.	Panels are likely to be virtual. Where not fully virtual, the option to attend virtually will be available. In the event of an actual meeting, to solicit information from panel meeting participants (in confidence) about any additional requirements they may have in order to fully participate.
Gender reassignment	No known negative impact		
Marriage or civil partnership	No known negative impact		
Pregnancy and maternity	Potentially negative	Panel members may not be able to participate in panels due to accessibility issues or maternity leave.	Timetable of key dates will be made available to applicants and panellists in advance as early possible. Virtual panel attendance will increase accessibility to panel members with mobility impairments or caring responsibilities.

			Provisions for parental leave are covered in the UKRI terms and conditions.
Race	Potentially negative	Racial bias may be perceived.	Unconscious bias Briefing will be given as part of the panel guidance and panel presentation. EPSRC presence at assessment meetings acts as an additional assurance to help ensure unbiased peer review.
Religion or belief	Potentially negative	Participation could be affected by coincidence with religious holidays/obligations.	Dates for deadlines and panels will be checked and chosen to avoid clashes with major religious events where possible (applications close one day before Yom Kippur but are open 11 weeks beforehand). Breaks can be scheduled to coincide with any prayer times. Panels are likely to be virtual. If held in person, dietary requirements will be catered for and a prayer room available on request.
Sexual orientation	No known negative impact		
Sex (gender)	Potentially negative		In line with EPSRC policy assessment panels will be mixed-gender, with a target of 30% for the underrepresented gender. Ensure use of gender neutral language in call specification, guidance, etc.

			available to assist with tech or accessibility issues.
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Evaluation:

Question	Explanation / justification	
Is it possible the proposed change in policy, funding activity or event could discriminate or unfairly disadvantage people?	A number potential negative impacts have been identified and considered as part of the call design. Reasonable adjustments will be made and by adhering to the standard peer review principles the risks have been/will be mitigated as far as possible.	
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	Y	See mitigations 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:	05/07/2022
Review date (if applicable):	

Change log

Name	Date	Version	Change
Greg Smith	When published	1	