

Equality Impact Assessment – ADR UK Funding Opportunity for ESRC Doctoral Training Partnerships: PhD Studentships Using Linked Administrative Data

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) is committed to promoting equality and participation in all its 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 a public body, 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 and why does UKRI use it?

When developing a new scheme, or considering changes to an existing one, UKRI will carry out an equality impact assessment to review how it may affect particular groups or individuals and will take the findings into account. We expect that very rarely our actions will create barriers to participation. The assessment may however flag issues that are not of UKRI's making but we will, where it is in our remit to do so, recommend actions and adjustments. Some impacts are not exclusive to the scheme or change that is being evaluated and need to be addressed throughout our organisation. In some cases, we may not have enough expertise and we will consult with others.

Our leadership and building on good practice

It is our ambition to be recognised as a leader in Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion and to build on our record of achievements to date, following on from the RCUK, Innovate UK and HEFCE Action Plans. These Plans are updated from time to time and Equality Impact Assessments will help us to prioritise actions.

Current good practice that is relevant to the **ADR UK PhD Studentships Funding Opportunity** includes our:

- Postgraduate Funding Guide
- Training grant terms and conditions, including recognition for sick leave and all forms of parental leave
- EDI in Panel Meetings Guidance for all panel members.

There are multiple dimensions/aspects to this Equality Impact Assessment:

- 1) Ensuring that the eligibility criteria are clear and objectively justified
- 2) Ensuring that the submission, Panel review and awarding processes are free from unintentional bias
- 3) The identification of any potential barriers to attendance and participation in the call and the assessment and awarding process as below
 - a. Meeting duration – Appropriate duration to facilitate good environmental conditions for assessment and inclusion
 - b. Venue location and arrangements to accommodate needs
 - c. Broad ranging panel membership
 - d. Meeting management/Chair/robust assessment criteria

Question	Response
<p>1. Name of policy/funding activity/event being assessed</p>	<p>ADR UK Funding Opportunity for ESRC Doctoral Training Partnerships: PhD Studentships Using Linked Administrative Data</p>
<p>2. Summary of aims and objectives of the policy/funding activity/event</p>	<p>ADR UK is providing a new Funding Opportunity for ESRC Doctoral Training Partnerships to host PhD studentships focused on quantitative research using linked administrative data. Funding will be available for a total of up to 20 PhD studentships located anywhere in the UK, starting in October 2023.</p> <p>DTPs are invited to apply for funding to host up to four supervisor-led PhD studentships each. While supervisors are welcome to host studentships using any research-ready administrative dataset, those that plan to use one of ADR UK's flagship datasets (list provided as part of the call documents) will be prioritised.</p> <p>Applications will be assessed against the following key criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fit to the call • The quality of the research environment and training provision • Supervisory arrangements • Recruitment process • Approach to community building
<p>3. What involvement and consultation has been done in relation to this policy? (e.g., with relevant groups and stakeholders)</p>	<p>Between November 2021 and March 2022, the ADR UK Training and Capacity Building Team established its Task & Finish Group to deliver on ADR UK's strategic objective to build the capacity and capability of researchers trained to analyse complex linked administrative datasets. The aim of this Group, which consisted of academics, government, and ESRC staff, was to shape and contribute to the development of a scalable workplan for delivery of the ADR UK Training and Capacity Building Strategy across different levels of maturity. The Strategy identifies five routes of delivery, including one that is intended to tap into existing ESRC-funded programmes. A specific activity identified by the Task & Finish Group and approved at the ESRC Director's level was to use existing relationships with ESRC DTPs to grow awareness of, and opportunities for, engagement with administrative data, including</p>

	<p>through supervisor-led competitions and co-funding. This Funding Opportunity has further been developed in consultation with the ESRC Skills & Methods Team.</p> <p>ESRC commissioned a Review of the PhD in the social sciences highlighted the continuing need for us to develop capacity in data skills and advanced quantitative methods (AQM).</p>
<p>4. Who is affected by the policy/funding activity/event?</p>	<p>Applicants to the Funding Opportunity including ESRC DTPs, supervisors across constituent research organisations, and students funded through the call. ESRC currently funds 14 DTPs comprised of 73 high quality research organisations.</p> <p>Panel members reviewing the applications for this Funding Opportunity and making funding decisions.</p> <p>ESRC staff working on the call and attending the Panel meeting.</p>
<p>5. What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the actual impact of the policy/funding activity/event?</p>	<p>An investment management approach will be taken at the level of the DTP.</p> <p>DTPs are subject to a monitoring framework that includes annual reports.</p> <p>Student surveys will be conducted every two years.</p>

GENERAL EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS

ESRC's research commissioning processes are designed with fairness in mind.

Eligibility and criteria:

- The ADR UK PhD Studentships Funding Opportunity is open to all ESRC DTPs and their constituent ROs. DTPs are asked to coordinate the application process and are invited to apply for funding to host up to four supervisor-led PhD studentships across their constituent ROs.
- Panel members are instructed to assess the application on its merits and not to 'read between the lines' or give the benefit of the doubt based on the reputation of the individual applicant or team, as this would be a form of confirmation bias.

UKRI Training Grants:

UKRI Training Grant Terms and Conditions comply with UK equality legislation and include provisions designed to mitigate against potential negative impacts (e.g., sick pay, parental and

adoption leave, the possibility of part-time and flexible working, and studentship extensions). Research Organisations are subject to equality legislation and have a duty to comply with it. TGC 3.4 states that the Research Organisation in receipt of the training grant must ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion is considered and supported at all stages throughout the performance of the Training Grant.

Panel recruitment:

- We will aim to ensure that the composition of the review and decision panel is diverse, with at least a 60:40 gender balance.
- Whilst panel members are appointed, first and foremost, based on expertise, we will aim to appoint a diverse panel membership. Final decisions take into account trying to balance the panels by gender and geography and seek to ensure a diversity of career stage and institutions. We will only make recruitment decisions which compromise diversity when it is objectively justified by the necessity to ensure the required breadth of subject expertise with high quality candidates.
- A tool has been developed which allows ESRC staff to assess the EDI characteristics of commissioning panels, and this will be used when appointing panels.

Process

- All meetings are being held virtually. We will take account of access needs and review this continuously.
- All panel members will receive guidance which covers issues including fairness, objectivity and unconscious bias.
- An induction session will also be held for all panellists, where full guidance will be provided.
- It is the role of panel members to individually review and score applications, paying close attention to the assessment and scoring criteria and definitions. They will then collectively discuss and agree final scores for each proposal at the panel meeting day.
- For each proposal we appoint two panellists who formally assess and score the proposal, with all panel members then asked to participate in discussions in order to ensure that an open and transparent assessment process is undertaken, and a diverse range of views are represented.

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 (both mental and physical)	Potential negative	<p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p> <p>Participants with visual and hearing disabilities may have difficulties if virtual activities cannot cater for their needs.</p> <p>Participants with neuro-disabilities may experience difficulties with concentration and focus during virtual activities.</p> <p>The current situation may present additional challenges for those intending to apply. We recognise that due to the shift to homeworking that has followed enforced lockdown (which is now lifted), people with disabilities may find the current circumstances particularly challenging for a variety of reasons.</p>	<p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p> <p>Solicit information from online participants (in confidence) about any additional requirements they may have in order to fully participate.</p> <p>Online meeting platforms offer an accessible and inclusive environment for participants. Depending on the needs identified, considerations might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The chat function and closed captioning can be enabled, and volume adjusted, to support those with hearing requirements; • Adequate lighting, alternative document formatting and potential use of screen readers for the visually impaired; • Provision of documents in sans-serif, dyslexia-friendly fonts; and dyslexia-friendly formats; • Avoiding colours, lighting etc that may trigger migraines, epilepsy; • Where there are particular constraints consider opportunities for participants to engage in a different way (e.g., tele-conference); • Consider the length of any online meetings, shorten if necessary, and ensure that plenty of breaks are built into the agenda;

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that staff have had sufficient EDI/unconscious bias/diversity awareness training so they can respond effectively to the requirements of all participants. • If we promote the event on a web site, we will need to check it is accessible and compatible with the range of specialist hardware and software that people with disabilities use to access electronic information. • Recording of online webinars so that it can be made available for access at any time.
Gender reassignment	Probably not.	<p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p> <p>Use of non-gender-neutral language can present a barrier to participation.</p> <p>There could be potential discrimination against a panel member, or an applicant due to their perceived or actual experience of gender reassignment.</p> <p>Trans people may be absent from work as a consequence of transition and UKRI records may show the wrong gender.</p>	<p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p> <p>We will work to ensure the use of gender-neutral language where possible in our documents.</p> <p>Reflect in unconscious bias briefing for panel.</p> <p>UKRI Training grant terms and conditions are flexible in nature and absence as a result of medical treatment. We would expect that absence related to transition would be covered by the Research Organisation's sick policy and strongly encourage ROs to treat absence relating to transition like any other sick absence.</p> <p>Consideration needs to be given at UKRI level as to how records (including Gateway to Research and other communications materials) might be adjusted.</p>
Marriage or civil partnership	Probably not.		

<p>Pregnancy and maternity</p>	<p>Potential negative</p>	<p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p> <p>Childcare responsibilities may be a barrier to attending events and meetings.</p> <p>Completion of the studentship may be affected by maternity and parental leave and leave related to surrogacy and adoption.</p>	<p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p> <p>Provision for parental leave (including maternity leave, paternity leave and leave related to surrogacy and adoption) are covered in the UKRI training grant terms and conditions.</p> <p>Dates will be agreed and publicised in advance to allow potential attendees to make arrangements to attend, and events will be held during core working hours.</p> <p>Ensure there are sufficient breaks in any online meeting to provide breaks for breastfeeding/expressing mothers if necessary.</p> <p>Ensure the use of gender-neutral language – parental leave, irrespective of sexual orientation.</p>
<p>Race (including ethnicity)</p>	<p>Potential negative</p>	<p>See above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p>	<p>See above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations (particularly in relation to panel composition and mitigations against unconscious bias)</p>
<p>Religion or belief</p>	<p>Potential negative</p>	<p>See above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p> <p>There could be potential discrimination because it is known that somebody (either a panel member, a research applicant or research participants) has a particular faith or belief.</p>	<p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations (particularly in relation to panel composition and mitigations against unconscious bias)</p> <p>Ensure that religious observances are taken into account when planning panel meetings. Considerations might include:</p>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scheduling meetings to avoid major religious festivals; (if impossible to avoid then consider mitigations); • Allowing prayer breaks if requested
Sexual orientation	Potential negative	Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.	Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.
Sex (gender)	Potential negative	Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.	<p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p> <p>Ensure use of gender-neutral language in call specification, guidance, etc.</p> <p>Ensure that the panel has balanced gender representation (aim for at worst 60:40 split)</p>
Age	Potential negative	<p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p> <p>Early career researchers* may be disadvantaged as they don't have the same track record to draw on as an experienced researcher.</p> <p>(*It is assumed that early career researchers are generally younger than their more experienced peers, although this by no means always the case. This is why this point has been included under 'age').</p>	<p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p> <p>Track record is not an explicit criterion, given likely relationship to career stage and hence (indirectly) age. Panel members are briefed to make clear that they should be assessing the application in front of them and not reading between the lines. They should assess the supervisor's capabilities and experiences in supporting students to deliver their proposed research.</p> <p>Use of a variety of different communication strategies including social media to ensure that our messages reach the widest possible target audience.</p>

<p>Other characteristics not protected under the Equality Act</p>	<p>Potential negative.</p>		<p>ESRC is committed to go above and beyond bare compliance with Equalities legislation to ensure that our processes are as fair and equitable as they can be.</p> <p>When developing strategies, we will ensure that we look beyond the protected characteristics to ensure general inclusivity.</p> <p>Call specifications draw attention to ESRC’s aspirations around ED&I, with applicants alerted to the fact that if they wish to participate in an ESRC-led activity but find that they are barred from doing so as a consequence of ED&I considerations they should contact the office for advice.</p> <p>It is our ambition to have DTP coverage across the UK; however due to the nature of the competition, locations would be based on the strength of the bids received.</p> <p>We work to ensure that panels are balanced as far as possible (within the constraints of quality and appropriateness) across the range of protected characteristics, where we have the data, and across broader characteristics including participation from post-1992 and Russell Group institutions, ensuring that we have a good geographical spread of panel members across the four nations of the UK, and across a diversity of career stages and paths.</p>
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Evaluation:

Question	Explanation / justification	
Is it possible the proposed policy or activity or change in policy or activity could discriminate or unfairly disadvantage people?	See the potential negative impacts outlined above.	
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	✓	See the mitigations outlined 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:	26 July 2022	
Review date (if applicable):	Not applicable.	