

Equality Impact Assessment – BBSRC Discovery Fellowships

Question	Response
1. Name of policy, funding activity, or event being assessed	UKRI-BBSRC Discovery Fellowships (DF) Scheme. This is the annual advertisement and selection process including the application, shortlisting, and interview stages for the award of DFs.
2. Summary of aims and objectives of the policy, funding activity or event	<p>Discovery Fellowships provide support for researchers wishing to undertake independent research and gain leadership skills. The Discovery Fellowship will support the transition of early-stage researchers to fully independent research leaders.</p> <p>The Discovery Fellowship represents part of UKRI-BBSRC's commitment to the supply of highly skilled professional scientists to the UK.</p> <p>Applications are assessed by UKRI-BBSRC's Committee E.</p> <p>The scheme is aimed at researchers who are in the early stages of their careers who have the desire to conduct their own independent research within a host laboratory. The opportunity is open to any individual who has appropriate and relevant research or innovation experience. This could be through recent completion of a PhD or other higher qualification or relevant employment within a research or innovation environment. Applicants do not need to hold, or be studying for, a PhD to apply, although those currently studying for a PhD are expected to have completed their PhD viva exam by the date published in the opportunity documentation.</p>
3. What involvement and consultation has been done in relation to this policy? (for example with relevant groups and stakeholders)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation with the UKRI-BBSRC events management team to ensure that the committee meetings allow attendance and participation from as diverse a range of individuals as possible. • Consultation with meeting attendees (including staff and those assessing applications) to understand potential barriers and act, where possible, to enable attendance and full participation. • Consultation with UKRI-BBSRC's Equality and Inclusion Policy Group to review the EIA • Maintenance of two-way channels of communication between UKRI-BBSRC and stakeholders • Learning from good practice in objective decision making and interview processes from across UKRI, supported by external independent advice
4. Who is affected by the policy, funding activity or event?	Applicants to the Discovery Fellowships funding opportunity, external peer reviewers, Committee E members and Chairs the UKRI-BBSRC secretariat and employees working on the opportunity.
5. What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the actual impact of the policy, funding activity or event?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UKRI-BBSRC will review the equality impact assessment before commencing each new Discovery Fellowship funding opportunity. • The protected characteristics voluntarily submitted by applicants during the submission process are monitored for each round. Success rates are monitored for each round. • Multiple feedback sessions take place during each round for UKRI-BBSRC staff and Committee E members. <p>UKRI-BBSRC is proactive in increasing the diversity of our reviewers and committee members. The committee membership is published on the UKRI-BBSRC website.</p> <p>Further information: https://bbsrc.ukri.org/about/equality-diversity/</p>

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	<p>UKRI-BBSRC is dedicated to ensuring that the processes for the Discovery Fellowships funding opportunity are open and inclusive. Those engaged in the processes endeavour to conduct each stage in a fair manner and without prejudice or bias. In line with this we adopt the following principles:</p> <p>For applicants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The opportunity is advertised widely to reach the largest possible audience • The opportunity call text and guidance clearly state the eligibility and assessment criteria • The UKRI-BBSRC website conforms to accessibility requirements for websites, including the ability to adjust the text size or use a text reader on the page • UKRI-BBSRC supports applicants as much as possible, both before and after submission, to assist them in the application and assessment process. <p>For assessors: reviewers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewers are drawn from as wide a pool as possible • The guidance clearly states the expectations of reviewers • UKRI-BBSRC provides support to reviewers as much as possible, to assist them in the assessment process. <p>For assessors: Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone involved in the decision-making process has had training in Unconscious Bias to raise awareness of conditions that may impact on their decision-making • UKRI-BBSRC is committed to enabling participation for people with alternative work patterns, including reduced working hours • UKRI-BBSRC provides a geographic spread of meeting locations as much as possible when face-to-face meetings are held, rather than virtual meetings • Committee members are asked to inform UKRI-BBSRC if they have any additional needs to enable attendance or participation • UKRI-BBSRC consults with committee members on a regular basis regarding business improvements including an opportunity at each meeting for feedback • UKRI-BBSRC provides regular training and guidance on new or revised ways of working.

Protected Characteristic Group	Is there a potential for positive or negative impact?	Please explain and give examples of any evidence or data used	Action to address negative impact (for example, adjustment to the policy)
Disability	Potential negative impact	<p>Impact varies depending on types of disability which may include neurological, visual, auditory, or other physical disability.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants, reviewers, and committee members with neuro-disabilities may find it difficult to access and view electronic documentation or experience difficulties with concentration • When considering the neurodiversity of participants, it is recognised that some people may feel more comfortable engaging in different ways or with an adjusted environment. • Individuals with visual disabilities may find it difficult to access and view electronic documentation • Committee members and interviewees with physical disabilities may find it difficult to access a physical meeting venue or participate in the meeting if the assessment venue cannot cater for their needs. • Individuals with disabilities may find it difficult to engage with online platforms and virtual assessments both as applicants and the committee members. 	<p>UKRI-BBSRC will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use a virtual meeting format and Discussion boards for the application sift meeting following UKRIs Virtual-first policy • consider a return to accessible face-to-face meetings based on business needs, following UKRI's Virtual-first policy • respond to individual support needs on a case-by-case basis. • ensure that electronic information is accessible to all participants • gather information from participants about any additional requirement they may need to fully participate • ensure that plenty of breaks are built into the agenda • allow for potential use of screen readers for participants who are visually impaired • ensure that colours chosen, and other visual stimuli do not trigger migraines or affect those with colour blindness; different colours may assist with this if participants do not bring their own laptops • ensure adjustments are made throughout the assessment process where appropriate, for example regarding interview attendance to assist individual applicants. This may include the use of video conferencing. • make adjustments throughout the assessment process where appropriate, for example ensuring that applicants and committee members who do not wish to use Zoom can use an alternative online platform. • ensure that locations and venues for interviews are accessible and adapted for those with limited mobility and are supportive of individuals with cognitive impairment. • ensure as a general principle, that venues are easily accessible from the main public transport and rail/air links.

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure meeting rooms are comfortable, light, and well ventilated and meetings timetabled to allow for adequate breaks. at interview stage, ensure committee members follow best practice in taking positive steps to safeguard funding decisions and are annually refreshed regarding the conditions that can result in unintentional bias. provide training and documentation to help with using online platforms to ensure that all individuals are comfortable if online assessments and interviews are required.
Gender reassignment	Potential negative impact	Potential for unintentional bias	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At interview stage, committee members are required to follow procedures in line with UKRI-BBSRC annual unintentional bias training At sift, applications will only be referred to by reference number At interview, candidates will be referred to by surname only
Marriage or civil partnership	Potential negative impact	Potential for unintentional bias	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At interview stage, committee members are required to follow procedures in line with UKRI-BBSRC annual unintentional bias training
Pregnancy and maternity	Potential negative impact	<p>Applicants and committee members who are pregnant, on maternity or paternity leave may find it difficult to access venues or participate in the process.</p> <p>Applicants may be on parental leave whilst the opportunity is open, potentially affecting their awareness of this opportunity and ability to participate.</p> <p>Career breaks in an applicant's track record due to parental leave or caring responsibilities may be seen as negative by the committee.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The timeline is published ahead of time to increase opportunities for participation. The opportunity is recurring on an annual basis enabling individuals to apply to subsequent rounds. UKRI-BBSRC will use a virtual meeting format and Discussion Boards for the application sift meeting, following UKRI's Virtual first policy Adjustments are made throughout the assessment process where appropriate for example, regarding interview attendance to assist individual applicants. This may include flexibility in the timing of interview or the use of video conferencing. UKRI-BBSRC consults with all participants to understand and cater for their requirements for participation Guidance is provided to the committee to ensure appropriate assessment of applicant track record without bias against career breaks due to parental leave or caring responsibilities

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At interview, UKRI-BBSRC allows applicants and committee members to claim expenses for reasonable childcare costs during the meeting UKRI-BBSRC committee membership period is extended if Maternity leave is taken during their appointment
Race	Potential negative impact	<p>It is important that committee members and peer reviewers are from a diverse community which represents the community and UK as a whole.</p> <p>Potential for unintentional bias</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UKRI-BBSRC will monitor the diversity of committee members to ensure representation of the community and a diversity of opinion At interview stage, committee members are required to follow procedures in line with BBSRC annual unintentional bias training
Religion or belief	Potential negative impact	<p>The funding opportunity may coincide with a religious holiday.</p> <p>Participants may be unable to take part in committee meetings or interviews due to religious observances.</p> <p>Participants may have specific dietary requirements due to religious beliefs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UKRI-BBSRC ensures that religious observances are considered as much as possible when timetabling major activities. If catering is provided it should allow for religious observances. All participants will be asked to provide any details of dietary requirements ahead of time.
Sexual orientation	Potential negative impact	Potential for unintentional bias	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At interview stage, committee members are required to follow procedures in line with UKRI-BBSRC annual unintentional bias training
Sex (gender)	Potential negative impact	<p>Committee members and interview candidates may find it difficult to participate if they have caring responsibilities.</p> <p>There is an uneven gender split in the community of applicants and committee members.</p> <p>Potential for unintentional bias</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UKRI-BBSRC ensures that school holidays are considered where possible when timetabling discussion boards and virtual meetings. Expectations and dates for all aspects of the process are set out as far in advance as possible, allowing for preparation for participants to cover any caring responsibilities. Where possible, UKRI-BBSRC aims to schedule meetings in standard working hours. UKRI-BBSRC will pay the cost of additional caring responsibilities incurred while on UKRI-BBSRC business. UKRI-BBSRC will monitor the diversity of committee members to ensure representation of the community and a diversity of opinion To avoid potential unconscious bias, first names and titles of applicants will not be used during virtual meeting discussions
Age	Potential negative impact	Potential for unintentional bias	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Career breaks, changes of career and other factors are considered throughout the process to ensure applicants are not penalised for following alternative career paths.

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At interview stage, committee members are required to follow procedures in line with BBSRC annual unintentional bias training.
Other (for example, Parenting, Caring, Guardianship or other responsibilities)	Potential negative impact	<p>Applicants and committee members with child or other caring responsibilities may be cautious about committing to attend meetings that may conflict with these responsibilities (for example, school holidays) or incur additional costs for additional care</p> <p>Ongoing industrial action may prevent applicants or committee members attending interview panels in person</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UKRI-BBSRC will use a virtual meeting format and Discussion boards for the application sift meeting following UKRI's Virtual first policy UKRI-BBSRC consults with all participants to understand and cater for their requirements for participation UKRI-BBSRC ensures that school holidays are considered where possible when timetabling discussion boards and virtual meetings. Expectations and dates for all aspects of the process are set out as far in advance as possible, allowing for preparation for participants to cover any caring responsibilities. Where possible, UKRI-BBSRC aims to schedule meetings in standard working hours. UKRI-BBSRC will pay the cost of additional caring responsibilities incurred while on UKRI-BBSRC business. UKRI-BBSRC will make adjustments where participants are unable to personally attend interview due to ongoing industrial action on public transport or in other sectors

Evaluation:

Question	Explanation / justification	
Is it possible the proposed policy or activity or change in policy or activity could discriminate or unfairly disadvantage people?	There is potential that some groups may be disadvantaged but with the mitigations stated above in place this has been minimised. Support will be provided to individuals where they are identified.	
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	✓	There is potential that some groups may be disadvantaged but with the mitigations stated above in place this has been minimised. Support will be provided to individuals where they are identified. Our monitoring process will enable us to identify unforeseen barriers and address them through adaptation if necessary.
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 (for example, 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 for example calls and events)	Yes
Date completed:	24 February 2023
Review date (if applicable):	24 February 2024

Change log

Name	Date	Version	Change
Andrea Blake	28 February 2023	1	