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**UKRI - Equality Impact Assessment**

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| **Question** | **Response** |
| 1. **Name of policy/funding activity/event being assessed** | EPSRC Centres for Doctoral Training funding opportunity 2023 |
| 1. **Summary of aims and objectives of the policy/funding activity/event** | To invest in Centres for Doctoral Training (CDTs) that develop skilled people across the EPSRC remit aligned to UK training needs and complement existing UKRI investments.  In particular we aim to:   * fund a balanced portfolio of CDTs that are aligned to identified skills needs for the UK in the engineering and physical sciences * produce highly skilled and talented researchers, and future leaders, by funding world leading innovative centres that are aligned to major research strengths * support high quality research training environments led by robust leadership teams to train internationally competitive doctoral students through a cohort training approach. |
| 1. **What involvement and consultation has been done in relation to this policy?** *(e.g. with relevant groups and stakeholders)* | External stakeholders:   * EPSRC Council * Science, Engineering and Technology Board (SETB) * Key business and university partners * Ministry of Defence   Internal stakeholders:   * Heads of Programmes * Business Engagement Forum * Business Improvement Team * Senior Leadership Board (SLB) |
| 1. **Who is affected by the policy/funding activity/event?** | * UK HEIs * Admin Staff * Exec Level * Academics * Students wishing to pursue doctoral training * Third parties with interest in UK research and UK skills training at the doctoral level * International academics * UKRI councils * Government, particularly BEIS * UKRI staff |
| 1. **What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the actual impact of the policy/funding activity/event?** | **External:**  The funding opportunity will be published on the UKRI funding finder website and available to all interested parties to support their applications. Contact details are provided to support queries related to the opportunity.  This activity represents a significant peer review activity during a busy period. The load on academics during the assessment process, as applicants, reviewers and panel members has been considered as the process has been designed.  The impact of the activity on businesses has been considered in the design of the processes. Advice is available on how to reduce the workload for project partners.  The impact on UKRI councils has been  considered in designing the process, including  contributing staff resource to deliver the opportunity.  Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (E,D&I) requirements have been embedded in the call. It will be a requirement for all funded proposals to develop an EDI plan. This will ensure that university led activities such as recruitment, flexible working and other activities promote equality and inclusive participation.  Once funded, a monitoring and evaluation framework will be put in place to monitor the centres throughout their lifetime. Each centre will have a UKRI project officer who will attend steering committee meetings and provide support. A mid-term review of all centres is intended at this stage, which will include  capturing student feedback and assessment against E,D&I criteria.  **Internal:**  UKRI staff – A project plan has been created for the development of the funding opportunity, and thoughts given to the resources involved in these activities. These resources will support staff and ensure consistency across the  whole time scale of the activity.  **Both:**  The assessment process has been reviewed and designed to ensure any unconscious bias will be identified, challenged and managed. All UKRI staff involved in the call have received unconscious bias training. All Panel Chairs and members will receive an unconscious bias briefing.  Demand management options have been implemented to manage workloads within UKRI and HEIs, this is to ensure that a high quality peer review process is delivered. |

As a funder of research, UKRI 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](https://www.ukri.org/files/legacy/documents/actionplan2016-pdf/) to outline our collective aspirations for working with the research community, and partners throughout the sector. For policy changes, funding activities and events UKRI 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](https://epsrc.ukri.org/funding/applicationprocess/basics/caringresponsibilities/).
* 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 minimise 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 endeavour to achieve the minimum 30% for the underrepresented gender on the panel.
* Abide by the principles of peer review
* Provide UKRI 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.

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| **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** | Access to meeting venues for  panel members  and applicants  could have a  negative impact  on participation. | Dependant on  location selected | All venues selected will be accessible and reasonable adjustments made to logistics and facilitation plans to  support participation.  Briefing events will be held by webinar, to reduce the barriers associated with in-person meetings. For any future in-person events, information will be made available for those physically not able to attend such as a webinar or transcripts.  UKRI offers support  available for people with caring responsibilities.  Additional care  requirements could occur if individuals are required  to:   * Participate in events on what would normally be a non-working day. * Work extended hours on a normal working day. * Attend meetings with overnight stays and/or travel overseas.   It is an individual’s responsibility  to check with UKRI and confirm what costs can be reimbursed prior to  attendance at a  panel/interview.  UKRI will highlight  student support available  (DSA payments). |
| **Gender reassignment** | It is not expected  that this policy will have any particular impact |  |  |
| **Marriage or civil partnership** | It is not expected  that this policy will have any particular impact |  |  |
| **Pregnancy and maternity** | Participation in the funding opportunity may be negatively  affected, if potential  applicants or peer reviewers are unavailable at key  assessment stages.  Access to events  and panels for panel members and applicants could have a negative impact on participation. | Dependant on  individual  circumstances | Full timeline provided of all key milestones, allowing early engagement with UKRI on specific mitigations.  UKRI will do its best to accommodate  adjustments, such as virtual presence or deputising.  All venues selected will be accessible and reasonable adjustments made to logistics and  facilitation plans to  support participation.  Briefing events will be held by webinar, to reduce the barriers associated with in-person meetings. For any future in-person events, information will be made available for those physically not able to attend such as a webinar or transcripts.  Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (E,D&I) requirements have been embedded in the call. It will be a requirement for all funded proposals to develop an EDI plan. This will ensure that university led activities such as recruitment, flexible working and other activities promote equality and inclusive participation.  EPSRC offers support available for people with caring responsibilities.  Additional care  requirements or facilities could be required if individuals need to:   * Participate in events on what would normally be a non-working day. * Work extended hours on a normal working day. * Attend meetings with overnight stays and/or travel overseas.   It is an individual’s responsibility  to check with UKRI and confirm what costs can be reimbursed prior to  attendance at a  panel or interview. |
| **Race** | Universities vary in the diversity of their populations, organisational restrictions could have potentially negative impacts  Reviewers and  panel members  selection - positive |  | The demand management policy  allows all eligible  organisations to submit to the opportunity, allowing a broad range of  organisations to participate.    Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (E,D&I) requirements have been embedded in the call. It will be a requirement for all funded proposals to develop an EDI plan. This will ensure that university led activities such as recruitment, flexible working and other activities promote equality and inclusive participation.  Ensure diversity of  interview panels. |
| **Religion or belief** | Participation in funding opportunity may be affected, if  potential applicants or peer reviewers  are unavailable  at key assessment  stages.  (Activities could  coincide with religious holidays). |  | A full timeline will be  provided of all key  milestones, allowing  early engagement with UKRI on specific mitigations. UKRI will  do its best to  accommodate  adjustments. |
| **Sexual orientation** | It is not expected  that this policy will have any particular impact |  |  |
| **Sex (gender)** | Reviewers and  panel members  selection - positive  Assessment  process - probably  positive |  | Ensure diversity of peer review assessment and  interview panels.  Assessment criteria  language has been  reviewed to ensure it is gender neutral. Peer Review guidance documents have been updated to remove the  potential of unconscious bias |
| **Age** | Reviewers and  panel members  selection - positive | It is important that the assessment process is undertaken by a diverse community. | Ensure diversity in the peer review assessment and interview panels. Guidance will be provided to UKRI staff when suggesting panel members. For panels, the diversity of the group will be actively considered. |
| **Additional aspects (not covered by a protected characteristic)** | Assessment of  applicants  Outcomes of call:  Probably positive  due to incorporation of E,D&I assessment  criteria and required plan for successful  centres | Dependant on  focus of individual E,D&I plan for  successful centres | In developing the timeline for the funding opportunity effort has been taken to avoid deadlines in key school and religious holidays. The timings have been balanced in order to provide additional time at the outline and full stages of the opportunity.  Reviewers and panel members will be given ED&I guidance to ensure  applicants are not  disadvantaged or  advantaged based on any protected characteristics.  Panel chairs and  convenors will undergo unconscious bias  training. Where possible, college reviewers and panel members will be  used (who will have also undergone this training). Panel briefings and chair  briefings will cover this subject too.  Universities will need to ensure staff and students are not disadvantaged and are supported to  perform to their best. |

**Evaluation:**

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| **Question** | **Explanation / justification** | |
| Is it possible the proposed change in policy, funding activity or event could discriminate or unfairly disadvantage people? | A number of risks have been identified and actively considered as part of the funding opportunity design and internal management  processes for delivery. These risks have been mitigated as far as possible. Further risks could emerge once centres are active, we will actively  monitor the ED&I aspects via the mechanisms described in the funding opportunity to minimise the likelihood that university processes are discriminatory. | |
| **Final Decision:** | **Tick the relevant box** | **Include any explanation / justification required** |
| 1. No barriers identified, therefore activity will **proceed**. |  |  |
| 1. You can decide to **stop** the policy or practice at some point because the data shows bias towards one or more groups |  |  |
| 1. You can **adapt or change** the policy in a way which you think will eliminate the bias | X | Possible risks and bias associated with this activity have been identified and activities adapted accordingly. Given the scale of the activity we will ensure active consideration of ED&I  aspects throughout the activity and will review this EIA accordingly. |
| 1. 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. |  |  |

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| **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:** | **15/05/2023** |
| **Review date** (if applicable): |  |

**Change log**

| **Name** | **Date** | **Version** | **Change** |
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| Sarah King | 15/05/2023 | 1 | N/A |