

Equality Impact Assessment Guidance and Template

This document provides guidance when completing an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA). The EIA template can be found at the end of this document.

The Research Councils are committed to promoting equality and participation in all their 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 public authorities 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 (EIA) and why do we need to complete one?

An equality impact assessment (EIA) is an evidence-based approach designed to help organisations ensure that their policies, practices, events and decision-making processes are fair and do not present barriers to participation or disadvantage any protected groups from participation. This covers both strategic and operational activities.

The term 'policy', as used throughout this document, covers the range of functions, activities and decisions for which your organisation is responsible, including for example, strategic decision-making, arranging strategy & funding panels, conferences, training courses and employment policies.

The EIA will help to ensure that:

- we understand the potential effects of the policy by assessing the impacts on different groups both external and internal
- any adverse impacts are identified and actions identified to remove or mitigate them
- decisions are transparent and based on evidence with clear reasoning.

When might I need to complete an EIA?

Whether an EIA is needed or not will depend on the likely impact that the policy may have and relevance of the activity to equality. The EIA should be done when the need for a new policy or practice is identified, or when an existing one is reviewed. Depending on the type of policy or activity advice can be sought from either your HR team, your Equality, Diversity and Inclusion team, your Peer Review Policy team or their equivalents.

Ideally, an EIA should form part of any new policy, event or funding activity and be factored in as early as one would for other considerations such as risk, budget or health and safety.

Who is responsible for completing and signing off the EIA?

Depending on the nature of the policy, event or funding activity, the responsibility of who should complete the assessment, who should be consulted, and who should sign off the EIA will vary. Ultimate responsibility on whether an EIA is required and the evaluation decision(s) made after completing the EIA lies with the Senior Responsible Officer, budget

holder, project board or the most relevant senior manager. Further advice is available from your Equality, Diversity & Inclusion contact.

What is discrimination?

Discrimination is where someone is treated less favourably or put at a disadvantage because of their protected characteristic. The different groups covered by the Equality Act are referred to as protected characteristics: disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership status, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, sex (gender), and age.

Discrimination is usually unintended and can often remain undetected until there is a complaint. Improving or promoting equality is when you identify ways to remove barriers and improve participation for people or groups with a protected characteristic.

Building the evidence, making a judgement

In cases of new policies or management decisions there may be little evidence of the potential effect on protected characteristic groups. In such cases you should make a judgement that is as reliable as possible. Consultation will strengthen these value judgements by building a consensus that can avoid obvious prejudices or assumptions.

Consultation

Consultation can add evidence to the assessment. Consultation is very important and key to demonstrating that organisations are meeting the equality duties, but it also needs to be proportionate and relevant. Considering the degree and range of consultation will safeguard against 'groupthink' by involving a diverse range of consultees. These are the key considerations, to avoid over-consultation on a small policy or practice and under-consultation on a significant policy or an activity that has the potential to create barriers to participation.

Provisional Assessment

At the initial stages, you may not have all the evidence you need so you can conduct a provisional assessment. Where a provisional assessment has been carried out, there must be plans to gather the required data so that a full assessment can be completed after a reasonable time. The scale of these plans should be proportionate to the activity at hand. When there is enough evidence a full impact assessment should be prepared. Only one EIA should be created for each policy, as more evidence becomes available the provisional assessment should be built upon.

Valuing Differences

EIAs are about making comparisons between groups of employees, service users or stakeholders to identify differences in their needs and/or requirements. If the difference is disproportionate, then the policy may have a detrimental impact on some and not others.

'You are looking for bias that can occur when there are significant differences (disproportionate difference) between groups of people in the way a policy or practice has impacted on them, asking the question "Why?" and investigating further'.¹

¹ http://www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/s/n/Acas_managers_guide_to_equality_assessments.pdf

Evaluation Decision

There are four options open to you:

1. No barriers or impact identified, therefore activity will **proceed**.
2. You can decide to **stop** the policy or practice at some point because the evidence 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, or
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.

In most cases, where disproportionate disadvantage is found by carrying out EIAs, policies **and practices are usually changed or adapted. In these cases, or when a change has been** justified you should consider making a record on the project risk register.

Examples of recently completed EIA templates can be found in annex 1.

Please send completed EIAs to EDI@esrc.ukri.org

Equality Impact Assessment

Question	Response
1. Name of policy/funding activity/event being assessed	Population Research UK Coordinating Hub
2. Summary of aims and objectives of the policy/funding activity/event	<p>ESRC and MRC are recruiting a coordinating hub for Population Research UK (PRUK)</p> <p>PRUK is a new national resource funded by the UKRI Infrastructure Fund and is designed to maximise the use of, and benefits from, UK longitudinal population studies across social, economic and biomedical science. It is aligned with strategies at a UK Government, UKRI and council level.</p>
3. What involvement and consultation has been done in relation to this policy? (e.g. with relevant groups and stakeholders)	The PRUK Programme board and MRC have advised on the preparation of the call specification.
4. Who is affected by the policy/funding activity/event?	<p>Applicants to the call.</p> <p>Commissioning panel members.</p> <p>ESRC and MRC</p>
5. What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the actual impact of the policy/funding activity/event?	Regular investment management meetings and reporting to both funders.

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	Potential negative	<p>Je-S does not currently comply with disability accessibility schemes.</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</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

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		<p>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>support those with hearing requirements;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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

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			<p>ensure that plenty of breaks are built into the agenda;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recording of online webinars (e.g., panel induction) so that it can be made available for access at any time.
Gender reassignment	Potential negative	<p>Once the grant has been awarded, trans people may be absent from work due to transition.</p> <p>UKRI records may show the wrong gender.</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>UKRI terms and conditions are flexible in nature and cover 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 medical leave.</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> <p>We should ensure the use of gender neutral language.</p> <p>We aim to utilise a diverse decision panel.</p>

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			All panel members will receive guidance which covers issues including fairness, objectivity and unconscious bias.
Marriage or civil partnership	No impact identified		
Pregnancy and maternity	Potential negative	<p>Rigid timeframes – the call will be open for a relatively short time to ensure that an offer letter can be sent by Autumn 2023.</p> <p>Childcare responsibilities may be a barrier to attending in person engagement.</p> <p>Completion of the work may be affected by maternity and parental leave and leave related to surrogacy and adoption.</p>	<p>Applicants will be notified of the timeframe asap. They will be notified of the planned commissioning timeline and of submission requirements. Applicants will be asked, in advance of the call opening and before the timeline is finalised, to confirm that the planned timeline is achievable. Events will be held during core working hours and avoiding school holidays, half term, or other key dates which may compromise participants' ability to commit.</p> <p>The call will be open for the maximum possible length of time within the overall commissioning timeline (which may itself be limited by</p>

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			<p>spend profiling requirements).</p> <p>Provision for parental leave (including maternity leave, paternity leave and leave related to surrogacy and adoption) are covered in the UKRI terms and conditions.</p> <p>We should ensure the use of gender neutral language – parental leave, irrespective of sexual orientation. The costs of additional childcare for grant-holders, beyond that required to meet the normal contracted requirements of the job, and that are directly related to the project, may be requested as a directly incurred cost if the institutional policy is to reimburse them. However, childcare costs associated with normal working patterns may not be sought.</p>
Race	Potential negative	There could be potential discrimination because it is known that somebody (either a panel member, a research applicant or research participants) is a particular race.	We aim to utilise a diverse decision panel. All panel members will receive guidance which covers issues including fairness, objectivity and unconscious bias.
Religion or belief	Potential negative	There could be potential	Ensure that religious observances are taken

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		discrimination if somebody (a research applicant, research participants or ESRC staff member) has a particular faith or belief.	<p>into account when planning the commissioning timeline, scheduling the call opening time with sufficient leeway to accommodate or avoid major religious festivals.</p> <p>We aim to utilise a diverse decision panel. All panel members will receive guidance which covers issues including fairness, objectivity and unconscious bias.</p>
Sexual orientation	Potential negative	There could be potential discrimination because it is known that somebody (either a panel member, a research applicant or research participants) is a particular sexual orientation.	We aim to utilise a diverse decision panel. All panel members will receive guidance which covers issues including fairness, objectivity and unconscious bias.
Sex (gender)	Potential negative	Applicants may be disadvantaged if they have caring responsibilities and the call opening time is short/rigid.	<p>Ensure that main school holidays are taken into account when planning the commissioning timeline, scheduling the call opening time with sufficient leeway to accommodate those who may have childcare responsibilities.</p> <p>Given relatively short call opening window, check with applicants in advance of finalising commissioning timeline/call deadline</p>

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)
			<p>that the planned timeline is achievable.</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 no higher than 60:40 split)</p>
Age	Potential negative	Risk of ageism in data heavy/technology landscape.	<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>Accessibility requirements will be met.</p>
Other characteristics not protected under the Equality Act	Potential negative. 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. For instance, we wish to ensure that potential applicants and stakeholders are not disadvantaged by geography, institutional status etc.		ROs need to be clear of their responsibilities. The Research funding guide states: 'The Research Organisation is responsible for compliance with the terms of the Equality Act 2010 including any subsequent amendments introduced while work is in progress; and for ensuring that the expectations set out in the RCUK statement of expectations for equality and diversity are met'.

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			<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>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>

Note: Excessive use of repeated line breaks can make a document inaccessible for users of assistive technologies. To ensure inclusion, please ensure a new table row is inserted for each point if there is more

than one consideration or impact for each group (please ensure you populate the “protected characteristic group” column e.g. “disability continued”); rather than using the same row for multiple points with repeated line breaks to separate points.

Evaluation:

Question	Explanation / justification	
Is it possible the proposed policy or activity or change in policy or activity could discriminate or unfairly disadvantage people?	As outlined above, a number of potential impacts have been identified but steps will be/have been put in place to mitigate these and ensure that the activity will not unfairly disadvantage anyone.	
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	X	As shown above, steps have been/will be taken to mitigate the various potential impacts identified.
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* *EIAs should be published alongside relevant funding activities e.g. calls and events.	Yes
Date completed:	18/04/2023
End date of activity: (if applicable)	
Review date (if applicable):	

Annex 1: Examples of recently completed EIA templates

Council	Activity
EPSRC	Inclusion Matters Call
EPSRC	New Investigator Awards
EPSRC	Policy change: Limit to the number of applications at a standard panel
BBSRC	BBSRC Future Leader Fellowships (FLF) Scheme
BBSRC	BBSRC/STFC/Innovate UK Biofilms programme