



**UK Research
and Innovation**

**UK Research and Innovation
Equality Impact Assessment Form**

Overview of activity

	Response
Name of activity being assessed	Responsive mode
Council/department/project team	Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council
Aims and objectives of the activity	The aim of the Responsive Mode scheme is to advance excellent bioscience across the UKRI-BBSRC remit. It does this by supporting and delivering: • frontier bioscience research • strategic research • collaborative research and development • policy relevant research • international research partnerships • next generation research leaders Key features: • Research grant applications can be submitted at any time for assessment by one of the Research Committees, on any topic within our portfolio. • There are two parallel opportunities. A standard research grant and new investigator award. • Research Committees meet three times a year. • Committee members use their own knowledge and experience to evaluate the proposal, reviewer's comments, and applicant response against set assessment criteria. • The Committee then rank the proposals in that round to inform funding recommendations. • The Committee recommendations are considered internally by BBSRC and a final decision is taken on the list of awards to be supported. A funding opportunity requires consideration of equality as part of the application process, and assessment related processes such as external review, committee building and hosting committee meetings.

Who is affected by your policy/funding activity/event?	Applicants to the scheme, external peer reviewers, Committee members and Chairs, the UKRI-BBSRC secretariat and employees supporting delivery of the funding opportunity, external national and international organisations with co-interest or offering co-funding for applications submitted to the opportunity.
What data and consultation have you used?	• Consultation with the UKRI-BBSRC events management team to ensure that the committee meetings allow attendance and participation from a diverse range of people • Consultation with a member of UKRI-BBSRC's Equality and Inclusion Policy Group to review the EIA and the responsive mode process • Consultation with Committee meeting attendees to understand potential barriers and take action, where possible, to enable attendance and participation • 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 • Higher Education Statistic Agency, Staff Statistics Bulletin 2022/23 [accessed 28/11/2024]

Analysing your impact

Protected characteristics

Protected characteristic	Positive impact or opportunity to benefit	Negative impact	Please explain the impact or why there is no impact including details of any evidence/data used	Detail actions taken/ that will be taken to increase positive or reduce negative impact (or why action is not possible). Detail how you plan to measure the relevant outcomes and outputs of your activity.
	Leave blank if there is no impact or unknown			

Age	☐	☐	If an applicant's age became known to the panel or reviewers, there is the potential for unconscious bias, but at no point during the assessment process is this disclosed to reviewers or panel members.	
Disability	☐	☒	General issues regarding UKRI's grant application systems and provisions for flexibility are addressed through policies designed to apply across our organisation. Committee members and interviewees with physical disabilities may find it difficult to access a physical meeting venue and / or participate in the meeting if the assessment venue cannot cater for their needs. If an applicant's disability became known to the panel or reviewers, there is the potential for unconscious bias but at no point during the assessment process is this disclosed to reviewers or committee members, with the exception of prior consented disclosure in the application by the applicant.	Applicants with a disability (inclusive of physical or neurological) can cost for additional support required that is directly related to the grant. Reviewers and committee members are advised applications may include these costs for reasonable adjustments and are advised they should be accepted without comment. UKRI will ensure their eligibility. Disability and accessibility support for applicants and grant holders is offered during the application and assessment periods and, the ability to provide information in their applications about disability or long-term health conditions that they may wish to be considered by reviewers or committee members. UKRI-BBSRC will: Use a virtual meeting format and Discussion boards following UKRI's 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 Gather information from meeting participants about any additional requirement they may need to fully participate Ensure that plenty of breaks are built into the committee meeting agenda Allow for potential use of screen readers for participants of committee meetings 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 to committee meetings
Gender reassignment (Trans identity)	☐	☒	As per UKRI's policies we take care to adopt gender neutral language and protect applications personal details. If an applicant's gender reassignment became known to the committee or reviewers, there is the potential for unconscious bias, but at no point during the assessment process is this disclosed to reviewers or committee members.	We will ensure to use gender neutral language in all call materials and engagement with the community.

Marriage or civil partnership	☐	☐	Applicants are not required to declare their marital or civil partnership status. Reviewers and committee members are provided the opportunity to declare conflicts of interest, but never directly asked to provide their marital or civil partnership status. If an applicant, reviewer or committee member's marital or civil partnership status became known to UKRI-BBSRC, there is no point during the assessment process where this is disclosed. UKRI's policies protect applicant and committee members' personal data, and UKRI's Conflict of Interest policy safeguards against undue influence.	
Pregnancy and maternity	☐	☒	Committee members and interview candidates who are pregnant or on maternity leave may be discouraged from participating in committee meetings. If an applicant's pregnancy or maternity leave status became known to the committee or reviewers, there is the potential for unconscious bias, but at no point during the assessment process is this disclosed to reviewers or committee members.	If individuals receive a funding decision during their maternity leave period and are on leave for the start date of the grant, they can, as per UKRI's Grant Terms and Conditions RGC 6.1 extend the grant period by up to 12 months without additional funding subject to our prior written approval. UKRI-BBSRC will use a virtual meeting format and Discussion boards following UKRI's Virtual first policy

			Career breaks in applicant track records due to parental leave may result in the potential for unconscious bias.	UKRI-BBSRC consults with all participants to understand and cater for their requirements for participation. Applicants are provided an outline of the key dates during the assessment period which will require their participation as soon as possible after the close date of the opportunity Committee members are provided an outline of the key dates during the assessment period which will require their participation upon invitation to participate so they can make an informed decision on their involvement Resume for Research and Innovation (R4RI) has an optional additions section, where applicants may provide context, such as details for career breaks Guidance to be provided to the committee to ensure appropriate assessment of applicant track record without bias against career breaks due to parental leave/caring responsibilities and others UKRI-BBSRC extends Pool of Experts membership period if Maternity leave is taken during their appointment
Race	☐	☒	If an applicant's race or ethnicity became known to the committee or reviewers, there is the potential for unconscious bias, but at	UKRI-BBSRC will monitor the diversity of committee members and applicants to

			no point during the assessment process is this disclosed to reviewers or committee members. Individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds are underrepresented as academic staff (HESA, 2022/23). It is important that selection of committee members and peer reviewers is from a diverse community which represents the community and UK as a whole.	ensure representation of the community and a diversity of opinion.
Religion or belief	☐	☒	Assessment timelines may fall over religious holidays resulting in applicants and/or committee members being unable to, or requiring flexibility to participate.	UKRI-BBSRC ensures that religious observances are considered as much as possible when timetabling major activities. Applicants are provided an outline of the key dates during the assessment period which will require their participation as soon as possible after the close date of the opportunity Committee members are provided an outline of the key dates during the assessment period which will require their participation upon invitation to participate so they can make an informed decision on their involvement. When applicable, UKRI-BBSRC ensures that the venue caters for all dietary requirements
Sexual orientation	☐	☐	If an applicant's sexual orientation became known to the committee or	

			reviewers, there is the potential for unconscious bias, but at no point during the assessment process is this disclosed to reviewers or committee members.	
Sex	☐	☒	The awards are open to new investigators and project leads at lecturer level and above but given the greater proportion of males at the mid and advanced career stages (HESA, 2022/23) this could result in an increased proportion of applications from male applicants to the scheme. Whilst Pool of Experts membership from which committee members are drawn is open to a wide range of backgrounds (academia, industry, early career researchers, and those with a non-traditional background) there is an uneven gender split in the Pool of Experts. During committee building in preparation for a meeting, gender is considered to ensure equal representation as far as practicable. If an applicant's sex became known to the committee or reviewers, there is the potential for unconscious bias, but at no point during the assessment process is this disclosed to reviewers or committee members.	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

Additional characteristics

Additional characteristics	Positive impact or opportunity to benefit	Negative impact	Please explain the impact including details of any evidence/data used	Detail actions taken/ that will be taken to increase positive or reduce negative impact (or why action is not possible).
	Leave blank if there is no impact or unknown			
Geographical location and place (consider UK and international offices)	☐	☒	Pool of Experts members may be prevented from participating due to the travel requirement associated for in person meetings During committee building in preparation for a meeting, geographical spread across the UK is considered as far as practicable to ensure representation.	UKRI-BBSRC will: Use a virtual meeting format and Discussion boards following UKRI's Virtual-first policy
Socio-economic status	☐	☐		
Education background	☐	☒	Project lead applicants must have a contract of employment at lecturer level or equivalent. The Pool of Experts membership from which committee members are drawn is open to a wide range of backgrounds (academia, industry, early career researchers, and those with a non-traditional background). However some of these areas may be underrepresented.	The Resume for Research and Innovation enables applicants to describe their track record, and additionally to describe any factors that provide context, such as career breaks. Steps have been taken to minimise the potential impact of unconscious bias in the assessment process see below for more information in general or overarching impacts section.

Parent/guardian responsibilities	☐	☒	Committee members and interview candidates may find it difficult to participate if they have caring responsibilities.	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.
Carer/parent carer responsibilities	☐	☒	Committee members and interview candidates may find it difficult to participate if they have caring responsibilities.	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.
Political opinion (Northern Ireland only)	☐	☐		
Other characteristics	☐	☐		

Are there general or overarching impacts on multiple groups? What actions will you take to increase positive impact, or reduce/mitigate negative impact?	UKRI is committed to embedding equality, diversity and inclusion in all we do, so that we can maximise the impact of our research and innovation to involve and benefit all parts of society. Everything we fund must embrace a diversity of thought, people and ideas. Applicants are signposted to our EDI policies and provisions, to include guidance for those who have taken career breaks or need 'reasonable adjustments' to support them in the application process. The Resume for Research and Innovation (R4RI) has an optional additions section, where applicants may provide context, such as details for career breaks, alternative career paths, information about a disability or long-term health condition. The UKRI-BBSRC Responsive Mode scheme adopts the standard UKRI Terms and Conditions of Research Grants, and these are designed to support equality, diversity and inclusion in all that we do. UKRI collates EDI data on grant applicants and publishes this annually. UKRI's Conflict of Interest policy sets out our expectations, alongside our commitment to the Nolan Principles and our Code of Conduct. Operationally we have particularly focussed on considering applicant and college members time commitments ensuring that, where possible, the preparation of applications, closing dates, assessment periods and all committee meetings take into consideration school holidays. Materials for applicants and assessors are provided online, and in accessible formats where required. Virtual settings for committee training and for
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committee meetings and locations and venues for post-award engagements are designed to be physically and neurologically accessible, with agendas considerate of EDI, and all engagements incorporate reasonable adjustments as required to support applicants, assessors and award holders. In line with UKRI's reasonable adjustments guidance, where an application includes costs for reasonable adjustment, UKRI will ensure they are eligible, and these should be accepted without comment.

Reviewers must avoid any bias in their final reports due to; gender, disability, age, racial or ethnic origin, sexual orientation and religious belief. Reviewers comments must not break this policy, or be defamatory or otherwise actionable.

The new UKRI Funding Service, contains an expanded set of questions asked of applicants, which includes some or all, of the protected characteristics above. Data processing will be in line with data protection practice and use will be subject to the new UKRI Funding Service Data Protection Impact Assessment.

UKRI-BBSRC is dedicated to ensuring that the processes for Responsive Mode funding 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:

For applicants

- The call is advertised widely to reach the largest possible audience
- Applicants can submit proposals at any time
- The call text and guidance clearly state the eligibility and assessment criteria and ask questions in a clear and descriptive way
- 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.
- Applicants can contact the funding opportunity lead to discuss individual needs and support in the application process
- Applicants can contact peer review support to provide sensitive information, for example unavailability due to parental leave.

For assessors: reviewers

- Reviewers are drawn from as wide a pool as possible
- The guidance provided clearly states the expectations of reviewers
- UKRI-BBSRC provides support to reviewers as much as possible, to assist them in the assessment process.

For assessors: Committees

- 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
- 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 a questionnaire sent after each meeting for feedback
- UKRI-BBSRC consults with the Committee chairs informally throughout the committee meeting period and formally via a Committee chairs meeting at the end of each round
- UKRI-BBSRC provides regular training and guidance on new or revised ways of working.

Continued below...

Evaluation

Final Decision:	Select the relevant box	Include any explanation / justification required
1. No negative or positive impact identified; therefore, activity will proceed .	☒	As above.
2. Adapt or change the activity in a way which you think will eliminate negative impact or promote equality.	☐	
3. Stop the activity because the evidence shows bias or negative impact towards one or more groups.	☐	
4. Barriers and impact identified, however having considered all available options carefully, there appear to be no other proportionate ways to achieve the activity (e.g. in extreme cases or where positive action is taken). Therefore, you are going to proceed with caution with this activity knowing that it may favour some people less than others, providing justification for this decision.	☐	

Continued below...

Review and sign off

What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the impact of your activity?	UKRI-BBSRC will review this equality impact assessment annually to identify any further actions or interventions that are required to improve the diversity and inclusion of Responsive Mode. UKRI-BBSRC monitors, analyses and publishes data to better understand the diversity of our applicant and assessor community. UKRI-BBSRC is proactive in increasing the diversity of our reviewers and Committee members. Committee membership for each meeting is published on the website after the funding decisions have been made and all outcomes communicated to applicants. Further information: https://bbsrc.ukri.org/about/equality-diversity/
Next review date:	January 2026
Will this EIA be published? * Yes/Not required	Yes
Point of contact	Charlotte Cooper, Amelia Townley-Taylor
Signed off by (name and date):	Charlotte Cooper, 16/01/2025

Before publishing or archiving your EIA, please remove any sensitive or confidential information such as personal identifiable data.

Once your EIA is completed or updated:

1. Upload it to the UKRI central repository via [the EIA submission form](#)

EIAs for ODA and non-ODA ISPF programmes should be emailed to: ISPF@ukri.org

Change log

Name	Date	Version	Change

Continued below...

Action plan

Use the table below to define the actions you intend to take (or have taken) to address the indications of negative impact you have identified or to promote equality. Actions should be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound).

Action	Deadline	Owner	How will it be monitored?	What is/will be the impact/outcome?