UK Research and Innovation

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Equality Impact Assessment Form

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Overview of activity

	Response
Name of activity being assessed	Commissioning of the Northern Ireland Election Study.
Council/department/project team	ESRC Data Strategy and Infrastructure programme
Aims and objectives of the activity	The aims of this opportunity are: • to identify a team and host institution to lead Northern Ireland Assembly and UK General Election studies in Northern Ireland between 2026 and 2036. • to deliver data collection on the anticipated 2027 Northern Ireland Assembly election and the anticipated 2029 UK General Election in Northern Ireland. ESRC's objectives for the successful applicant will be to: 1. produce high-quality data that meets the needs of the research, policy and practice communities, building on the existing politically independent time series data, and ensure those communities have timely access to the data 2. promote the use of the data by the research and wider stakeholder communities, including to maximise the public benefit of the data through informing policy, practice and the public 3. collaborate with the other UK election studies to facilitate meaningful comparison of elections in the UK and the views and behaviour of UK electorates By delivering the objectives the Northern Ireland Election Study (NIES) will support the delivery of ESRC's data infrastructure strategy. In particular building and sustaining a foundation and impact and public benefit.
Who is affected by your policy/funding activity/event?	• Consultees • Applicants to the opportunity • Existing UKRI investments • Commissioning Panel members. • ESRC staff supporting the Panel and delivering the resource • User communities and stakeholders • The wider research community and public as beneficiaries of the outputs and outcomes

What data and consultation have you used?	Evidence used and consultation done relating to the equality impact of the activity. • Relevant ESRC and UKRI guidance and best practice for EDI. • External data, HESA diversity data on university staff (gender and ethnicity), and UKRI diversity data. • Funding opportunity leads • DS&I EDI team lead

GENERAL EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS

The EIA should be considered by **ALL** colleagues who are working on the delivery of the commissioning of this funding opportunity, including those who join the delivery at a later stage. It is the responsibility of **ALL** to ensure the considerations are implemented wherever possible.

Eligibility and criteria

- You must be based at a UK research organisation eligible for ESRC funding
  For full details, visit Eligibility as an individual and Check if your organisation is eligible.

Standard Grant Terms and Conditions:

- UKRI standard 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 grant extensions).

- ROs are subject to equality legislation and have a duty to comply with it. RGC 8 states that 'The RO must assume full responsibility for staff funded from the grant and, in consequence, accept all duties owed to and responsibilities for these staff, including, without limitation, their terms and conditions of employment and their training and supervision, arising from the employer/employee relationship.' Universities are therefore required to make reasonable adjustments as required to support their staff.

Peer review and panel recruitment:

- We will aim to ensure that the composition of the peer review and commissioning panel is diverse, with at least a 60:40 gender balance, in line with UKRI guidelines.

- We will ensure (if possible) that the chair and vice chair (if a vice chair is required) of the commissioning panel are not the same gender.
- We will aim to appoint a diverse peer review and panel membership. Final decisions will take into account trying to balance the reviewers and panel by gender, geography, career stage, institutions, advisor and protected characteristics, consulting best practice guidance as referenced under the *data and consultation used* section of the Overview of Activity.
- 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.
- Relevant guidance will be considered when appointing a panel.

Process:

- Meetings will follow ESRC guidance on hybrid and in-person meetings.
- UKRI accessibility guidelines will be used to ensure materials are suitable for all audiences.
- It is the role of panel members to moderate and assess the quality of peer review and to agree final scores for each proposal. Panel members will be briefed on unconscious bias and encouraged to feel empowered to constructively challenge potential bias where they identify it. The Panel Chairs and Panel Secretaries play a particularly important role in this respect. An implementation intention statement will be read out at the beginning of the commissioning panel meeting which sets the tone for discussions and requires that panel members pay close attention to the scoring criteria and definitions. Members will receive guidance which covers issues including fairness, objectivity and unconscious bias.
- The Chair will be briefed on 'Charing Inclusive Meetings' in order that all panel members feel their voices are heard.

Call dates:

- The call dates and commissioning panel will as much as possible be organised around school holidays and significant religious holidays
- The panel meeting will be scheduled to avoid a clash with any significant holiday.

Design

- EDI considerations will be embedded throughout the design of the funding opportunity.
- Diversity considerations for applicants will be provided at commissioning stage within the funding opportunity.

- R4RI (the Resume for Research and Innovation) will be used in place of traditional CVs for applicants which provides more flexibility and inclusivity, enabling a broader range of people to evidence a wider variety of skills and experience, along with the added benefit to include context around career breaks, periods of long-term sickness or absence etc.

Analysing your impact

In addition to data gathering and consultation, the guidance materials should be used to assist in identifying impacts on different groups.

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	☐	☒	Age bias can come into play in all aspects of the commissioning: The ESRC may have unconscious bias when considering who is an 'expert' based on age. The study team composition may include predominately senior staff due to research culture and hierarchy of an 'expert'. Early career researchers* may be disadvantaged as they don't have the	Also see General Equality and Diversity Considerations. 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 an individual's capability to deliver their proposed research.

			same track record to draw on as an experienced researcher. (*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').	
Disability	☐	☒	The Funding Service is compliant with relevant accessibility standards. Applicants should seek support from their own institution's research support office. Panel meeting attendees with neuro-disabilities may experience difficulties with concentration and focus during panel assessments. Unconscious bias can come into play between panel members.	Also see General Equality and Diversity Considerations. Solicit information (in confidence) from online panel meeting participants and applicants to be asked about any additional requirements they may have in order to fully participate. Use UKRI accessibility guidelines to ensure materials are suitable for all audiences. Depending on the needs identified, considerations might include: Offer online meeting platforms if required to provide an accessible and inclusive environment for participants. • Enabling closed captioning, and adjusting the volume, to support those with hearing requirements. • Adequate lighting, alternative document formatting and potential use of screen readers (ensure any images are well described so that text-to-speech applications can recognise them). • Provision of documents in sans-serif dyslexia-friendly fonts; and dyslexia-friendly formats.

				• Avoiding colours, lighting etc. that may trigger migraines, epilepsy etc. • Consideration of the length of any online meetings, shortening if necessary and ensuring that plenty of breaks are built into the agenda.
Gender reassignment (Trans identity)	☐	☒	Trans people may be absent from work as a consequence of transition. UKRI records may show the wrong gender. There may be micro-aggression's or unconscious bias towards trans peer review or panel members, or included at any point during the commissioning.	Also see General Equality and Diversity Considerations, including on un-conscious bias guidance. We will work to ensure the use of gender-neutral language where possible in our documents and funding opportunity. UKRI terms and conditions are flexible in nature and permit absence as a result of medical treatment. We would expect that absence related to transition would be covered by the Research Organisation's relevant policies and strongly encourage ROs to treat absence relating to transition like any other health-related absence. As the timeline has been set for the panel date, alternative ways of feeding in could be considered for those who cannot attend due to transition. Consideration needs to be given at UKRI level as to how records (including Gateway to Research and other communications materials) might be adjusted.
Marriage or civil partnership	☐	☐	None identified	
Pregnancy and maternity	☐	☒	Potential panel members may be on parental leave and may either not be able to attend a panel or feel that they are	Also see General Equality and Diversity Considerations.

			unable to take part in an assessment process. Childcare and costs may be a barrier to people attending commissioning panel meetings. Potential applicants may feel unwilling or unable to apply to the opportunity due to maternity leave, parental leave, or childcare commitments.	Provision for parental leave (including maternity leave, paternity leave and leave related to surrogacy and adoption) are covered in the UKRI terms and conditions. Dates will be agreed and publicised in advance to allow meeting attendees to make arrangements to attend. 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. Regular breaks in the panel meetings for parental duties including breastfeeding/expressing if required Reimbursement of additional childcare costs if the meeting participant is otherwise unable to attend (this could include additional hours of childcare in the child's usual setting or paying for a relative to travel to care for school age children) Sensitivity may be needed around pregnancy or maternity, for example people who have experienced pregnancy loss, or people who are not ready to share that they are pregnant. Some pregnant people may require changes to the way they work or access activities for example, need to attend panel meeting virtually.

				Pregnancy may make individuals more vulnerable to the effects of COVID-19 and therefore this will affect their ability or confidence to participate.
Race	☐	☒	There may be micro-aggressions or unconscious bias towards people from certain ethnic groups or panel members, included at any point during the commissioning.	Also see General Equality and Diversity Considerations, particularly in relation to diversity and commissioning. The Chair will be briefed on 'Charing Inclusive Meetings' in order that all panel members feel included.
Religion or belief	☐	☒	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. Commissioning dates may clash with religious holidays disadvantaging sectors of the research community.	Also see General Equality and Diversity Considerations. See to foster an environment of respect so that people who do or do not hold a belief can feel included and welcomed, through: • Ensure that religious observances are taken into account when planning panel meetings, and use a religious holiday dates calendar. • Scheduling meetings to avoid major religious festivals; (if impossible to avoid then consider mitigations – ie. during Ramadan ensuring that meetings finish early so that participants are able to get home to break their fast). • Not scheduling meetings when they would conflict with religious attendance or observance on specific days or times (e.g. Jewish Sabbath on Friday evenings or Islamic Friday prayer). • Allowing prayer breaks if requested. The timeline of this commissioning activity will be designed to ensure that key deadlines are not set

				around known religious holidays where possible and suitable migtigations will be put in place in cases where this is unavoidable.
Sexual orientation	☐	☒	There may be micro-aggressions or unconscious bias because of their sexual orientation at any point during the commissioning.	Also see General Equality and Diversity Considerations. Use inclusive language to ensure inclusion of same-sex couples. Clarity/confirmation that 'partners' includes same sex or civil partners.
Sex	☐	☒	Use of language can present a barrier to participation, and it may be perceived that those with caring responsibilities are disadvantaged. Caring responsibilities may have direct and indirect impact on sex. People with caring responsibilities (which falls disproportionately on women) may have less time to attend a panel meeting. There may be micro-aggressions or unconscious bias towards people based on their sex during the commissioning. Panel members and reviewers may criticise track record and/or publication history which could be as a result of extended maternity or paternity leave.	Also see General Equality and Diversity Considerations, including in relation to panel composition, and on un-conscious bias. Ensure use of gender-neutral language in call specification, guidance, etc. Ensure that the panel has balanced gender representation (aim for 60:40 split) in line with UKRI guidance.

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)	☐	☒	The four nations may not all be well represented among panel members. People being based in different time zones may impact their ability to participate.	The following ESRC guidance documents must be considered when compiling a panel: DS&I guidance on 'recruiting diverse advisory groups and panels' 'Appointing a panel' guidance, and 'Advisor Members on Decision Panel's' guidance. Timelines will be agreed and publicised in advance to allow meeting attendees to make arrangements to attend. This will also ensure applicants have advanced notice of deadlines and key dates related to the funding opportunity. Where possible adjustments will be made to deadlines and panel meeting times if panellists are based in a different time zone.
Socio-economic status	☐	☒	There may be unconscious bias towards certain institutions outside of the Russel Group, therefore excluding people from certain socio-economic backgrounds.	The following ESRC guidance documents must be considered when compiling a panel: DS&I guidance on 'recruiting diverse advisory groups and panels' 'Appointing a panel' guidance, and 'Advisor Members on Decision Panel's' guidance.

			Socio-economic status may intersect with other characteristics such as geographical locations, for example the north-south wealth divide. ESRC are unable to provide payment for panellists' work on reviewing applications, impacting inclusion.	Unfortunately, ESRC are unable to provide payment for panellists work on reviewing applications, however with a low number of applications expected the amount of time required from panellists is minimised. Panel meeting is to be held virtually.
Education background	☐	☒	There may be unconscious bias towards certain institutions outside of the Russell Group, in turn creating a bias towards educational background. Use of unnecessary jargon and academic language could impact inclusion.	Include criteria that values skills, knowledge and experience. Explore recruiting of panel members from a wider range of institutions. ESRC must consider diversity when compiling commissioning panels, that includes institution, that education background will fall under. The following ESRC guidance documents must be considered when compiling a panel: DS&I guidance on 'recruiting diverse advisory groups and panels' 'Appointing a panel' guidance, and 'Advisor Members on Decision Panel's' guidance. Avoid unnecessary jargon in call specification and panel information. Use the Résumé for Research and Innovation (R4RI) format for team capability to deliver.

Parent/guardian responsibilities	☐	☒	Panel members may be disadvantaged and unable to attend meetings if they have caring responsibilities	Reimbursement of additional childcare costs if the meeting participant is otherwise unable to attend (this could include additional hours of childcare in the child's usual setting or paying for a relative to travel to care for school age children) Timelines will be agreed and publicised in advance to allow meeting attendees to make arrangements to attend. This will also ensure applicants have advanced notice of deadlines and key dates related to the funding opportunity. The panel meeting will be held virtually and scheduled to avoid where possible school run hours and school holidays. Regular breaks will be built into the panel meetings.
Carer/parent carer responsibilities	☐	☒	People with parental/ carer responsibilities (which falls disproportionately on women) may have less time to prepare a proposal or attend a panel meeting.	Organise any meetings, calls or events outside of school run hours and school holidays to enable full participation of people with caring responsibilities. The funding opportunity is open for an extended period as the activity will cut across school holidays. Timelines will be agreed and publicised in advance to allow meeting attendees to make arrangements to attend. This will also ensure applicants have advanced notice of

				deadlines and key dates related to the funding opportunity. Regular breaks will be built into the panel meetings.
Political opinion (Northern Ireland only)	☐	☒	There may be bias towards people based on their political background.	Include provisions to mitigate for unconscious bias towards people of different opinions and beliefs. Communicate a commitment to respect and inclusion in materials.
Other characteristics	☐	☐	None identified	

Are there **general or overarching impacts on multiple groups**? What actions will you take to increase positive impact, or reduce/mitigate negative impact?	**General Equality and Diversity Considerations** ESRC's research commissioning processes are designed with fairness in mind. ESRC staff receive Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training so they can respond effectively to the requirements of all participants. ESRC uses a variety of different communication strategies to ensure that our messages are inclusive and accessible. The Panel meeting will be virtual and adjustments will be incorporated to ensure that the meeting is inclusive, including briefing the Chair to ensure that the session is facilitated to take equality and diversity considerations into account. ESRC must consider diversity throughout the commissioning process using this EIA. The following ESRC guidance documents will be considered: DS&I guidance on 'recruiting diverse advisory groups and panels' 'Appointing a panel' guidance, and 'Advisor Members on Decision Panel's' guidance. Panel members will receive guidance which covers issues including fairness, objectivity and unconscious bias.

	The Chair will be briefed on ‘Charing Inclusive Meetings’ in order that all panel members feel included. The R4RI is used to provide mitigation against potential negative impacts for people with protected characteristics.

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**.	☐	
2. **Adapt or change** the activity in a way which you think will eliminate negative impact or promote equality.	☒	The mitigations outlined enable the opportunity to be adapted to eliminate potential bias
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…

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Review and sign off

What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the impact of your activity?	The EIA is a live document and should regularly be reviewed throughout the life cycle of the activity. • The EIA will be reviewed regularly at important points– see action plan. • Review the EIA as part of any closure or lessons learned activity.
Next review date:	July 2026

Will this EIA be published? * Yes/Not required	Yes. Alongside the funding opportunity.
Point of contact	ESRC Data Strategy and Infrastructure Programme - datainfrastructure@esrc.ukri.org
Signed off by (name and date):	Mollie Rawlins 12/11/2025

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
		1	
		2	
		3	

Continued below…

UK Research and Innovation

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?
Review diversity information in the funding opportunity	TBC	Mollie Rawlins and Thomas Graham	Ensure requirements from the EIA are embedded in the funding opportunity.	Inform inclusive design of the activity.
Review when recruiting for commissioning panel	TBC	Mollie Rawlins and Thomas Graham	Through the use of this document, and review date updated.	A diverse panel is recruited that reflects the diversity of our research community.
Planning for peer review and commissioning panel	TBC	Mollie Rawlins and Thomas Graham	Through the use of this EIA and the incorporation of commissioning documents, and the review date updated.	EDI is embedded in the planning materials for the commissioning panel.
Commissioning panel	TBC	Mollie Rawlins and Thomas Graham	Through the use of this EIA and the incorporation of EDI into the commissioning panel guidelines and documents.	The chair runs an inclusive panel meeting in which everyone has a chance to fully participate. The design is assessed by the commissioning panel in line with the diversity requirements set out in the funding opportunity.