UK Research and Innovation

Equality Impact Assessment Form

Overview of activity

	Response
Name of activity being assessed	UKRI Metascience research grants round 2
Council/department/project team	ESRC
Aims and objectives of the activity	This funding opportunity aims to accelerate the generation of evidence on how we can improve the efficiency, effectiveness, and inclusivity of the research and development (R&D) ecosystem. For this round, we are interested in how the adoption of AI is changing the research landscape; how to optimally design and lead research institutions, and how to measure and understand scientific progress at scale. Metascience, a rapidly expanding research field, draws on a wide range of disciplinary expertise to understand how research is conducted, funded and supported, and how these practices can be enhanced or improved. This EIA will need to cover equality as part of • Advertising the funding opportunity • The application process • The review process (done by the applicants as distributed peer review) • The selection of moderators to ensure that the final ranking of proposals is fair
Who is affected by your policy/funding activity/event?	• Applicants to the funding opportunity, including eventual awardees • Research office staff in organisations eligible for UKRI funding • Moderators • There will be international partners as the funding opportunity encourages applicants to develop partnerships with non-UK project co-leads.
What data and consultation have you used?	Within UKRI, we have worked with the ESRC Grants Delivery Team to ensure that relevant policies have been followed in the design of the call. In order to ensure that the call meets their needs and that we have identified and mitigated any potential issues, we have: • held two roundtables with academic colleagues and other parties interested in metascience

	- held one-to-one meetings with interested parties (academic and non-academic) to ensure that the call meets their needs and we have identified and mitigated any potential issues. - attended Metascience conferences and events to promote the work of the Unit and ensure that the community's needs have been considered within the design of the call. - Commissioned two reports from leadings academics to identify the current size and shape of the academic community and the key research questions and issues of importance. The DSIT-chaired Metascience Unit Programme Board has also been consulted in the design of the call.

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 Leave blank if there is no impact or unknown	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.
Age	☐	☐	Applicants are not asked to disclose their age, and we no longer ask for information such as a CV containing information on the year of graduation etc. This information can be included in application sections covering applicant suitability for award though.	Be aware of language used to encourage early career researchers, and that it doesn't also discourage later career researchers. Reviews displaying age bias will be marked as 'Unusable'.

Disability	☐	☐	The Funding Service is compliant with relevant accessibility standards for RO staff and applicants.	Depending on the needs identified, considerations might include: • Using closed captions during the applicant webinar, which is taking place on an online platform, • Provision of documents in sans serif, dyslexia friendly fonts; and dyslexia-friendly formats • Avoiding colours, lighting etc that may trigger migraines or epilepsy;
Gender reassignment (Trans identity)	☐	☐	Trans people may be absent from work as a consequence of transition and UKRI records may show the wrong gender. Risk of bias against an applicant by reviewers.	We will work to ensure the use of gender-neutral language in our documents. UKRI terms and conditions are flexible in nature and allow for absence as a result of medical treatment. We would expect that absence related to transition would be covered by the Research Organisation's absence policy and strongly encourage ROs to treat absence relating to transition like any other medical absence. Reviewers will receive guidance on fair and objective assessment. ESRC staff will safeguard the integrity of the assessment process by watching for bias and raising any concerns. Clear guidelines on reporting bullying and harassment will be provided. 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	☐	☐	Applicants are not asked to disclose their marital status.	
Pregnancy and maternity	☐	☐	Staff may be absent from work for health reasons or parental leave. Risk of bias against	Provision for parental leave (including maternity leave, paternity leave and leave

			applicant. However, applicants are not asked to disclose their pregnancy status or reasons for leave.	related to surrogacy and adoption) are covered in the UKRI terms and conditions. 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.
Race	☐	☐	Applicants are not asked to disclose their race. Risk of bias by reviewers against an applicant based on name and perceived race	Reviews referencing the race of the applicant or displaying bias will be marked as 'Unusable'.
Religion or belief	☐	☐	Risk of discrimination because it is known that somebody (either a research applicant or research participants) has a particular faith or belief. Risk of bias by scheduling key dates on or around religious holidays.	Ensure that religious observances are taken into account when planning funding opportunity timelines, including scheduling key dates to avoid major religious festivals (if impossible to avoid, otherwise consider mitigations)
Sexual orientation	☐	☐	Applicants are not asked to disclose their sexual orientation. However, there may be potential for bias, bullying or harassment if the sexual orientation of an applicant is known or assumed.	Reviews referencing the sexual orientation of the applicant or displaying bias will be marked as 'Unusable'.
Sex	☐	☐	Use of gendered language can present a barrier to participation	Ensure use of gender-neutral language in call specification, guidance, etc.

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)	☐	☐	This funding opportunity will be open to international partners. Potential reviewer bias based on university ranking or location.	Reviews displaying bias based on university ranking or location will be marked as 'Unusable'. This funding opportunity will not require any travel for the assessment process as everything can be done online, so there is no disadvantage there.
Socio-economic status	☐	☐	Potential reviewer bias based on university ranking or location.	Reviews displaying bias based on university ranking or location will be marked as 'Unusable'.
Education background	☐	☐	Potential for reviewer bias based on whatever is disclosed in the application about applicants' educational backgrounds.	Reviews displaying bias based on educational background will be marked as 'Unusable'.
Parent/guardian responsibilities	☐	☐	It may be perceived that those with caring responsibilities are disadvantaged	Ensure that caring responsibilities are acknowledged as a consideration of time allocated to an awarded grant.
Carer/parent carer responsibilities	☐	☐	See above	See above
Political opinion (Northern Ireland only)	☐	☐	N/A	
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? | ESRC's research commissioning processes are designed with fairness in mind.

Eligibility and criteria
• The opportunity is open to all eligible research organisations (ROs). Applicants are eligible for funding whether or not they are established members of a recognised RO, but applicants who are not an established member of a recognised RO must be accommodated by the RO and provided with appropriate facilities to carry out the research.

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).
• Research Organisations are subject to equality legislation and have a duty to comply with it. RGC 8 states that 'The Research Organisation 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.

Process
• All reviewers will receive the code of practice and guidance which covers issues including fairness, objectivity and unconscious bias.
• It is the role of moderators to corroborate final scores for each proposal. Moderators will be briefed on unconscious bias and encouraged to feel empowered to constructively challenge potential bias where they identify it. 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 moderators pay close attention to the scoring criteria and definitions. |

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 activity has been adapted following the actions described in the previous section.
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?	An EIA is a live document and should regularly be reviewed throughout the life cycle of an activity Consider how you monitor the impact identified in your EIA. Put a plan in place to ensure that the impact is being monitored throughout the activity and evaluate the outcomes of any actions identified in the EIA. For example, you could: • Plan regular reviews of the EIA and action plan • Review the EIA as part of any closure or lessons learned activity. • Be transparent: continue to consult with the groups affected by your activity and use new insights to review you EIA.
Next review date:	20/04/26

Will this EIA be published? * Yes/Not required	Yes
Point of contact	metascience@ukri.org (general email inbox) louise.thomas@esrc.ukri.org
Signed off by (name and date):	

Change log

Name	Date	Version	Change
		1	E.g. Based on input received from consultation groups at the **business case** stage, added actions under the gender section
		2	E.g. Based on input received from x at the **announcement of opportunity** stage, added/removed/edited x
		3	E.g. Based on input received from x at the **investment authorisation** stage, added/removed/edited x

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?
e.g. Update application form to include questions on additional support and reasonable adjustments	December 2023	Applications manager	Updated form published and submissions reflect individual needs	Individual needs can be addressed. Inform inclusive design of the activity