UK Research and Innovation Equality Impact Assessment Form

About your activity

UKRI Policy Fellowships

Council or business area

UKRI Talent and Skills, AHRC, BBSRC, EPSRC, ESRC, MRC, NERC, STFC

Aims and objectives

UKRI Policy Fellowships embed researchers within UK or devolved government departments, mayoral strategic authorities, regional partnerships and What Works Network organisations to co-design research that informs policy on pressing national and global challenges. Because the scheme affects access to funding, selection processes, and participation opportunities, it requires an Equality Impact Assessment to ensure eligibility criteria, review, and awarding processes are free from unintentional bias and do not disadvantage any protected groups.

Who is affected?

Applicants to the opportunity: This opportunity will be open to applicants with a PhD or equivalent research experience at early and mid-career stages.

Commissioning Panel Members for the opportunity: Proposals will be assessed by a panel of academic and non-academic experts.

UKRI staff involved in the commissioning and delivery process.

Scheme partners involved in the commissioning and delivery process, and hosting Policy Fellows.

What data and consultation have you used?

Survey and consultation with previous 2021, 2023 and 2025 call panel members, government hosts and fellows.

Evaluation surveys and one-to-one feedback sessions with fellows. Consultation has resulted in modifications to fellowship structures, commissioning processes including interview, budget, timeline, co-funding, training requirements and funding opportunity documents for the 2026 funding opportunity.

The short timeframe between the closing date for the 2026 funding opportunity and the opening date for the 2027 funding opportunity has precluded a detailed review of the operation of the 2026 opportunity.

Impact on specific groups

Are there general impacts on multiple groups?

Panel recruitment

- We will aim to ensure that the composition of the commissioning panel is diverse
- Whilst panel members are appointed, first and foremost, based on expertise, decisions will aim to balance the panels by gender and geography and seek to ensure a diversity of career stage and institutions. 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.
- UKRI staff can assess the available EDI characteristics of commissioning panels through The Funding Service, and this will be used to monitor diversity within panels.
- We will utilise existing links with academic networks which focus on membership with shared protected characteristics to share opportunities.

Process

- All panel members will receive guidance with regarding safeguarding the peer review process, aiming to ensure fairness and objectivity, and mitigate against unconscious bias.
- It is the role of panel members to assess the quality of applications against the scheme assessment criteria. Panel members will be briefed on identifying and managing unconscious bias and empowered to constructively challenge potential bias where they identify it.
- UKRI have delegated interview stage to fellowship host partners for this call. UKRI provide interview guidance to host partners which includes advice regarding interview panel representation, scheduling and provision of reasonable adjustments.

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 is "wholly responsible for staff funded from the grant, including fellows, and accept all duties owed to and

responsibility for these staff, including, without limitation, their terms and conditions of employment, and their training and supervision, arising from the employer and employee relationship". RGC 8.2 states that Research Organisations are expected to adopt the principles, standards and good practice for the management of research staff set out in the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, one of which is to "Ensure that institutional policies and practices relevant to researchers are inclusive, equitable and transparent, and are well-communicated to researchers and their managers." This should include reasonable adjustments as required to support their award holders.

- In addition to compliance with UKRI standard terms and conditions, applicants will have a secondment agreement with the Host Government department that will be compatible with UKRI terms and conditions. This agreement sets out key support arrangements about working arrangements, induction processes, and line management for fellows. The document has been developed in consultation with UKRI Legal, Cabinet Office Secondments Unit and university partners. The exemplar documents will be published with the funding call for applicants' information.

Impact on protected characteristics

Complete the table for all characteristics. You only need to add details if there is a positive or negative impact.

Protected characteristic	**Impact (positive, negative, none or unknown)**	**Details of impact**	**Actions to reduce negative or increase positive impact**
Age	Potential negative	See 'impacts on specific groups' section. Early career researchers* may be disadvantaged as they do not have the same track record to draw on as a more experienced researcher. (*It is assumed that early career researchers are generally younger than their more experienced peers, although this is by no means always the case. This is why this point has been included	See 'impacts on specific groups' section. Track record is not an explicit criterion, given likely relationship to career stage and hence (indirectly) age. Panels are briefed to ensure that experience is assessed relevant to career stage and that assessments are evidence-based, assessing an individual's capability to deliver the proposed fellowship. UKRI specify in call guidance that ECR status is not timebound. Applicants are supported by an institutional mentor if they are early

		under 'age').	career and UKRI aim to recruit fellowship cohort alumni to act as induction buddies to ease transition where available. Use of a variety of different communication strategies including social media to ensure that our messages reach the widest possible target audience.
Disability	Potential negative	See 'impacts on specific groups' section. Applicants may require additional support within applications. Applicants may require flexible working patterns within their awards.	See 'impacts on specific groups' section. We will ensure that applicants with a disability (inclusive of physical and neurological) can cost for additional support required that is directly related to the grant within their applications and that this is explicitly stated in call materials in addition to being published centrally by UKRI. The scheme has been designed to be inclusive of part-time and flexible working. Hosting and recording virtual applicant guidance webinars with above considerations to increase access to support.
Gender reassignment	Potential negative	Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations. Applicants who have had/are in the process of gender reassignment may feel disinclined to apply if our language isn't sensitive. Therefore, gender neutral language is important to support inclusivity, equality and representation. Using government	See 'impacts on specific groups' section. We will ensure to use gender neutral language in all call materials and engagement with the community and encourage participants in guidance documents to note and respect pronouns during meetings. UKRI terms and conditions are flexible in nature. All UKRI fellowships allow extensions to the award to take account of absences due to medical/compassionate leave because of reassignment and fall under extensions related to people

		guidance for employers, we need to consider: 1. Absence because of medical treatment or other absence related to transition. 2. Adjustment of UKRI records (including Gateway to Research) and any communication materials (case studies etc).	related reasons, as detailed in UKRI guidance on FEC grant terms and conditions (RGC 6 – Extensions). The UKRI Talent team will be advised to automatically consider this an exceptional circumstance. UKRI has a legal obligation under the UK GDPR and DPA 2018 to process accurate personal data; the obligation is on the account holder to provide any updates to personal data to us for this purpose.
Marriage or civil partnership	No known positive of negative impact		
Pregnancy and maternity	Potential negative	See 'impacts on specific groups' section. Pregnancy and maternity may impact on an applicant's ability to attend a panel interview. Career breaks associated with pregnancy and maternity may impact on an applicant's perceived track record. There are structural and financial impediments to taking parental leave: UK law requires employees to serve a minimum term before they become eligible for paid parental leave (over and above statutory benefits). New starters or their partners who fall pregnant or are pregnant at the time of application would thus	See 'impacts on specific groups' section. Hosts will be advised to manage interviews to take into consideration pregnancy and parental leave on a case-by-case basis. Guidance will be provided to panel members regarding assessment of career breaks and flexible working within applications. We will ensure the use of gender-neutral language such as parental leave. Provision for parental leave (including maternity leave, paternity leave and leave related to surrogacy and adoption) are covered in the UKRI terms and conditions. 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

		receive little pay during their parental leave. Some employers have moved to a nil qualifying period for maternity or parental leave in recognition of this detriment.	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. Reimbursement of additional childcare costs if the meeting participant is otherwise unable to attend (this could include childcare at the venue, additional hours of childcare in the child's usual setting or paying for a relative to travel to care for school age children). Applicant webinars and panel briefings will be held virtually with regular breaks to allow participants to manage caring responsibilities. Fellowship placements with host partners will be offered on both full and part-time arrangements to increase flexibility for applicants.
Race	Potential negative	See 'impacts on specific groups' section.	See 'impacts on specific groups' section. UKRI will include in its interview guidance for host partners, who undertake interviews, to encourage applicants and interview participants to share names and pronunciation during introductions.
Religion or belief	Potential negative	See 'impacts on specific groups' section. Call and assessment timelines could fall over religious holidays with applicants and/or panelists requiring reasonable adjustments to fully participate.	See 'impacts on specific groups' section. Call timelines will ensure that, where possible, the preparation of applications, closing dates and panel interviews take into consideration religious holidays. Considerations might include: • 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 can get home to break their fast, awareness of the sensitivities around offering Muslims meals during periods of fasting); • Accommodating dietary restrictions (ensuring that there is sufficient choice to allow all participants to eat – recognising that some groups cannot eat pork or beef or shellfish, that others avoid caffeine, ensuring that vegetarian food is available if Kosher or Halal food is not provided) etc; • Not scheduling meetings such that they would require travel late on Friday evenings (Jewish Sabbath) or on Fridays (Friday prayer, Islam) • Allowing prayer breaks if requested
Sex	Potential negative	See 'impacts on specific groups' section. Use of language can present a barrier to participation and it may be perceived that those with caring responsibilities are disadvantaged.	See 'impacts on specific groups' section. Ensure use of gender-neutral language in call specification, guidance, etc. Ensure that the panel has balanced gender representation. See also 'pregnancy and maternity' section above.
Sexual orientation	Potential negative	See 'impacts on specific groups' section.	See 'impacts on specific groups' section.

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Impact on additional characteristics

Complete the table for all characteristics. You only need to add details if there is a positive or negative impact.

Additional characteristics	Impact (positive, negative, none or unknown)	Details of impact	Actions to reduce negative or increase positive impact
Geographical location and place	Potential negative	UKRI 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.	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, 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. Host partners are advised to consider hybrid working arrangements for placements, and applicants may cost for T&S related to travel to the location of their placement. Fellowship budgets also include flexible allocations to support additional travel & subsistence not known at the point of application, as the co-created nature of fellowship projects means not all costs are known at the outset. Applicants are permitted to cost for caring responsibilities within their application. Please also see mitigations outlined under Pregnancy and Maternity above.

Immigration Status/Right To Work Status	Potential negative	**Indirect race/nationality discrimination** — the ability to pass the government host's required security clearance at the point the grant is awarded may disproportionately limit applicants from outside the UK. **Age impact** — early-career researchers may be more likely to experience delays or administrative barriers to obtaining visas. **Indirect race/nationality discrimination**: access to fellowships varies by where sponsorship is available. Potential disadvantage for applicants without established UK networks (e.g., researchers with disabilities, first-generation academics). Disproportionate impact on applicants needing visas (race/national origin). Additional burden for applicants with dependants. Applicants requiring sponsorship may be discouraged or incorrectly deemed ineligible by the Research Organisation. Fellows on visas face additional administrative and financial burdens.	Use clear, neutral wording in funding opportunity text: "applicants should have the correct UK Immigration status and right to work in place for the start date of the award'. Provide clear information on the host partner's security clearance requirements as part of fellowship position specifications included in the call text. Provide signpost to Global Talent visa web page. Clear communication that choice of research organisation affects sponsorship options. Provide clear timelines on the Funding Finder of assessment and award start date. Visa costs can be requested for Directly Incurred staff undertaking at least 0.5FTE on the Policy Fellowship and be met within the funding cap. Direct applicants to research organisation support.

		Could limit parental leave or long-term health leave options — intersection with **pregnancy/maternity** and **disability**. Disadvantage for applicants from lower-income backgrounds. Disproportionate impact on fellows with families.	
Socio-economic status	Potential negative	Potential impact on applicants from lower-income backgrounds where travel costs associated with the fellowship may present a barrier to participation.	Host partners are advised to consider hybrid working arrangements for placements, and applicants may cost for T&S related to travel to the location of their placement. Fellowship budgets also include flexible allocations to support additional travel & subsistence not known at the point of application, as the co-created nature of fellowship projects means not all costs are known at the outset. Interview guidance for host partners advises that interviews should be conducted online wherever possible, helping to avoid additional costs for applicants.
Education background	Potential negative	Potential bias in assessment process which may disadvantage applicants with non-traditional academic backgrounds or advantage applicants associated with the prestige or status of educational institutions.	Provide clear information in the opportunity call text and assessment guidance that the opportunity is open to both applicants who hold a doctorate and those who can evidence equivalent research experience, recognising that UKRI aims to support a diversity of career pathways.

			UKRI works to ensure that assessment panels are balanced as far as possible (within the constraints of quality and appropriateness) across the range of protected characteristics, and across broader characteristics including participation from post-1992 and Russell Group institutions, ensuring that we have a spread of panel members across a diversity of institutions.
Parent or guardian responsibilities	Potentially negative	Career breaks associated with childcare may impact on an applicant's perceived track record. Applicants may work part time or have commitments during school holidays that may affect their availability during the assessment process.	See mitigations provided in 'pregnancy and maternity' section above.
Carer responsibilities	Potentially negative	Career breaks associated with caring responsibilities may impact on an applicant's perceived track record. Applicants may work part time and this may affect their availability during the assessment process.	Guidance will be provided to panel members regarding assessment of career breaks and flexible working within applications. The scheme has been designed to be inclusive of part-time and flexible working. Applicants are permitted to cost for caring responsibilities within their application. Please also see mitigations outlined under Pregnancy and Maternity above.
Political opinion (Northern Ireland only)	Unknown		See 'impacts on specific groups' section.

Other characteristics	Unknown		

Final decision

Make a decision on whether to proceed with the activity

State which one of the following outcomes applies and give a reason for your decision.

2. Adapt or change the activity in a way which will eliminate negative impact or promote equality

Review and sign off

How will you monitor and review the impact of your activity?

Annual review of policy fellowship outcomes including in relation to protected characteristics and the EIA.

What is the EIA review date?

May 2027

Contact

ukripolicyfellowships@ukri.org

Will the EIA be published?

Yes, on the UKRI Funding Finder.

Who has this been signed off by?

Rachel Hemingway, Strategic Lead UKRI Talent and Skills

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Submitting the form

You need to submit the form to the central repository

EIAs for the International Science Partnership Funds should be emailed to: ISPF@ukri.org

Change log

Include changes as you've reviewed the EIA. For example, based on input received from x at the announcement of opportunity stage, x was added

Name	Date	Version	Change
C Sweeting	14/03/2025	1	Updated for the 2025 opportunity
C Sweeting	March 2026	2	Updated for the 2026 opportunity Included visa and right to work impacts and actions
B Atack	October 2026	3	Updated for the 2027 opportunity. Removed references to panel meetings. Included consideration of impacts on socio-economic status, educational background, parent or guardian responsibilities, and political opinion (Northern Ireland only).

Action plan

Add the actions you intend to take (or have taken) to address the negative impact you have identified. Actions should be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound).

Action	Deadline	Owner	How will it be monitored?	What is the outcome?
Update Funding Finder/Applicant guidance to include	19 May 2026	CS	Information included in the funding opportunity template and published on the Funding Finder	

reference to visa/right to work				