

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

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.**

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

Equality Impact Assessment

Question	Response
1. Name of policy/funding activity/event being assessed	Food Systems Resilience Call 3: Sandpit for Early Career Researchers
2. Summary of aims and objectives of the policy/funding activity/event	<p>The sandpit aims to bring together early career researchers (people at the very beginning of eligibility for funding as a PI - so, lecturer level or equivalent), to generate interdisciplinary solutions to the question 'How can we transform our food system so it is based on healthy and sustainable diets and how would this impact on sustainable and resilient food production and supply?'. The approaches used are expected to be disruptive and thinking outside of the 'business as usual' model.</p> <p>The event aims to fund a number of new projects which address the above challenge, adding to the existing portfolio of projects funded under the FSRD programme, addressing food security systemically and with an interdisciplinary approach. The sandpit has been designed to bring balance in terms of career stage to the portfolio.</p>
3. What involvement and consultation has been done in relation to this policy? (e.g. with relevant groups and stakeholders)	<p>The FSRD programme is funded by four partners, ESRC, NERC, BBSRC and Scottish Government who have all been consulted and have agreed on this approach. The sandpit has been designed from its inception in collaboration with the partners, and with oversight by GFS. We also sought internal advice from those with expertise in equality and diversity, and have taken advice from the prospective facilitators on measures they can incorporate to increase inclusivity.</p>
4. Who is affected by the policy/funding activity/event?	<p>People who will be attending – participants from academia, the chair and mentors, facilitators and funder representatives.</p>
5. What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the actual impact of the policy/funding activity/event?	<p>We will look at queries received in advance of the event, and also ask about this through a questionnaire to all participants. We will also monitor this at the event itself and ensure the facilitators are being inclusive in their approach.</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)
Disability	Yes	Sandpits have the potential to exclude people with disabilities, both due to the fact that they are intensive and require travel and overnight trips away from home, and the fact that they are based on in-person social interactions.	A requirement for facilitators to have taken steps to make their sandpits more inclusive to people who find social interactions difficult due to disabilities. Changing the timing of the sandpit to reduce the number of nights spent away from home
Gender reassignment	No		
Marriage or civil partnership	No		
Pregnancy and maternity	Yes	Due to the requirement to spend time away from home, the sandpit could exclude people with childcare responsibilities or pregnant women who might require additional care.	The sandpit has been structured to reduce the time spent away from home. We will choose a venue that has facilities for attendees to bring additional people. We will provide on-site childcare if required and offer to reimburse any additional costs incurred for childcare. We will make the sandpit as comfortable as possible for pregnant attendees.

Race	Yes	There is always the possibility of unconscious bias in selection of participants	We will ensure that the selection criteria used are robust and minimise subjectivity. We will remind all members of the selection panel about unconscious bias and provide training as required, to ensure they make a conscious effort to remove bias from their decision making. We will collect statistics on the makeup of the selection panel and attendees.
Religion or belief	Yes	Specific dietary preferences and requirement for time and space to pray.	These would be catered for as required.
Sexual orientation	No		
Sex (gender)	Yes	There is always the possibility of unconscious bias in selection of participants.	We will ensure that facilitators, chair and mentors are reminded of unconscious bias and provide training on this as required. When choosing mentors we will ensure a balance of genders.

<p>Age</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>We will be limiting the sandpit to early career researchers, which has the potential to exclude older participants. However, this decision has been taken after a robust analysis of the existing portfolio (both funded and unfunded projects) which has demonstrated that early career researchers are under-represented.</p>	<p>To ensure that older early career researchers who have taken different career paths are not excluded, we will remove requirements for time passed since PhD completion and base the requirement solely on career stage i.e. lecturer level or equivalent.</p>
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Evaluation:

Question	Explanation / justification	
Is it possible the proposed policy or activity or change in policy or activity could discriminate or unfairly disadvantage people?	Yes but the measures outlined above will eliminate this possibility.	
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	Y	The sandpit will be designed so that barriers to inclusion are reduced, in line with the actions above.
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* Yes/Not required (*EIA's should be published alongside relevant funding activities e.g. calls and events:	Yes
Date completed:	10/04/2018
Review date (if applicable):	

Change log

Name	Date	Version	Change
	When published	1	