

Equality and Inclusion Impact Assessment – Ernest Rutherford Fellowships

STFC uses equality and inclusion impact assessments as a tool to review our funding mechanisms, processes and practices to ensure they are not inadvertently presenting barriers to participation and to reduce the potential for unintentional bias.

The template below sets out the key elements of an Equality and Inclusion Impact Assessment that need to be documented.

Section 1

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| 1. Policy/activity being assessed | <p>STFC Ernest Rutherford Fellowships (ERF) Scheme, including eligibility, nature of the scheme, conditions and the annual selection process including the application, shortlisting and interview stages for the award of ERFs.</p> <p>Ernest Rutherford Fellowships are intended for early career researchers. Applicants should hold a PhD, but not hold a permanent academic position.</p> <p>ERFs provide five years' support for researchers wishing to establish their first independent research group undertaking a programme of excellent research in the STFC core science programme.</p> <p>The scheme is open to applicants of any nationality.</p> |
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| <p>2. Summary of aims and objectives of the policy/activity</p> | <p>The ERFs enable early career researchers with clear leadership potential to establish a strong independent research programme to become future research leaders in the community. They encourage talented researchers in UK universities to remain in the country and attract outstanding overseas researchers to the UK.</p> <p>ERFs invest in scientists using the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The excellence of the applicant, including the volume and significance of research outputs, their standing in their field and ability to communicate their science effectively. • The timeliness and quality of the research proposal; • The potential of the individual, including the capability to fulfil the wider responsibilities of an academic career (teaching, service on committees, public engagement etc.) and evidence of leadership ability; • The appropriateness of the group with whom the individual intends to work; • Alignment with STFC strategic priorities; • A clearly thought through and project-specific Pathways to Impact Statement. <p>The ERF represents part of STFC's commitment to the supply of highly skilled professional research leaders to the UK.</p> <p>Applicants will be able to demonstrate great potential and have a scientific career showing a clear upward trajectory. Proposals are assessed by STFC's Fellowship Panel.</p> |
| <p>3. Is the policy/activity relevant to equality and diversity? <i>(Advice should be sought from HR. If not relevant, record reasons and</i></p> | <p>Yes.</p> |
| <p><i>evidence; the remainder of the form need not be completed)</i></p> | |

4. What involvement and consultation has been done in relation to this policy? (e.g. with relevant stakeholders)

STFC is dedicated to ensuring that the peer review process is open and inclusive. Those engaged in the process endeavour to conduct each stage in a fair manner, without prejudice or bias, In line with this we follow the Nolan Principles. Additionally, comments and suggestions received as part of the peer review survey are implemented where possible to improve the process.

The Education Training and Careers Committee (ETCC) advises on the policy related to ERFs and regularly reviews the scheme and its processes. A Programmatic Review was held in 2013 to look at the split of funding across the community which included views from the community. A Balance of Skills programme exercise was carried out in 2017-18 and included fellowship schemes in its remit. It included views on the impact of the scheme and whether it provides funding for the most appropriate career stages in the most appropriate ways. ETCC has provided information and recommendations to both exercises.

For Applicants:

- The call is advertised widely to reach the largest possible audience
- The call text and guidance provides detailed guidelines to Applicants about the process and has clear eligibility and assessment criteria
- STFC will make available hard copies of documents when required
- The STFC website conforms to accessibility requirements for websites
- STFC will support Applicants throughout the process, from pre-submission right through to informing them of the outcome.

For Reviewers:

- A wide range of reviewers are approached, and usage and spread is monitored each round
- Written guidance is available and reviewed annually
- Our guidance clearly states our expectations of reviewers
- STFC will provide all reasonable support to our reviewers in order to ensure they understand the aims, objectives, and processes of Ernest Rutherford Fellowship scheme.

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| | <p>For Panel Members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-meeting discussions take place, STFC staff will work closely with the Panel Chair to agree approaches that are designed to minimise opportunities for bias and improve transparency of the decision making process • Everyone involved in the decision-making process is aware of Unconscious Bias and encouraged to undertake training. It is planned that going forward such training will be mandatory • STFC endeavour to achieve the minimum 30% female participation and will justify if this isn't the case. • STFC enable participation for people with alternative work patterns, including reduced working hours • Panel members are asked to inform STFC if they have any additional needs to enable attendance or participation • STFC will schedule appropriate breaks and provide refreshments for Panel members <p>For STFC Staff:</p> <p>All STFC staff involved in the process will receive training in unconscious bias to raise awareness of conditions that may impact upon their decision making</p> <p>Venue arrangements when required will be selected for ease of accessibility; will not conflict with different cultures, religions or beliefs; and will offer a full range of sensory accessibility relating to visual and hearing impairments.</p> <p>Catering will be arranged with clear labelling and be appropriate to those who have specific cultural, religious, health or disability needs</p> |
| <p>5. Who is affected by the policy?</p> | <p>ERF applicants and potential applicants. Fellowship holders.</p> |

6. Arrangements for monitoring and reviewing actual impact of the policy

Annual statistics on applicants and awards are gathered in respect of gender, age and ethnicity. They are considered by the Education, Training and Careers Committee and are published.

Fellows are requested to complete a questionnaire at the end of their fellowship which monitors first destinations... The analysis is monitored by ETCC annually and is published. Data on the research outputs generated by fellows is collected on Research Fish. Membership of the Fellowship Panel is also monitored by gender, age and ethnicity by ETCC. . The reviewer pool is reviewed annually to identify any changes required to improve the process.

Section 2 – Identifying Impact

| 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) |
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| <p>Declared disabilities</p> | <p>Potential negative impact – however based on current policies this is very low risk at the peer review stage.</p> | <p>Data is collected regarding disability at the ERF application stage. Data is published and measured against HESA community data.</p> <p>Due to the application limits on the number of applications that institutions can submit there is a potential risk of a negative impact during the pre-selection phase in universities.</p> | <p>There is an STFC equality and diversity strategy which includes details of what is expected of the institutions it funds.</p> <p>There is flexibility to make adjustments throughout the assessment process where appropriate e.g. regarding interview attendance to assist individual applicants. This may include the use of video conferencing and other mechanisms etc. or rescheduling of times.</p> <p>Included in the interview invite letter is a request for any access issues to be notified to STFC so appropriate assistance can be put in place.</p> <p>At interview stage, panel members are required to follow best practice in taking positive steps to safeguard funding decisions. Guidance is provided by STFC and this is discussed prior to the interviews starting –, and is annually refreshed with the guidance regarding the circumstances that can result in unintentional bias.</p> <p>STFC presence at assessment meetings and during interviews acts as an additional</p> |

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| | | | <p>assurance to help ensure unbiased peer review. Staff have received unconscious bias training.</p> <p>We have investigated options for mitigating the risks of bias in the preselection phase in universities (which impacts on most of the protected characteristics). We piloted an equality and diversity form for preselected candidates to complete, but the completion rate was very low. We are discussing options for addressing this issue with the Education, Training and Careers Committee.</p> |
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| <p>Gender reassignment</p> | <p>Potential negative impact – however based on current policies this is very low risk at the peer review stage.</p> | <p>This information is not made available to reviewers or assessment panel members throughout the peer review process.</p> <p>Due to the application limits on the number of applications that institutions can submit there is a potential risk of a negative impact during the pre-selection phase in universities.</p> | <p>Throughout the process and particularly at interview stage, panel members are required to follow best practice in taking positive steps to safeguard funding decisions, and are annually refreshed regarding the conditions that can result in unintentional bias.</p> <p>Flexible arrangements such as rescheduling interview times are in place to appropriately support applicants who require time to attend psychiatrist/psychologist appointments or who are undergoing gender reassignment involving medical interventions.</p> <p>STFC presence at assessment meetings and during interviews acts as an additional assurance to help ensure unbiased peer review.</p> |
| <p>Marriage or civil partnership</p> | <p>Potential negative impact.</p> | <p>Due to the two body situation those in a marriage or civil partnership may be limited on their choice of host institution. Potential negative impact of the criteria on independence which may favour mobility.</p> | <p>Applicants are requested to state if they are unable to move institutions due to personal reasons so this can be taken into account in the assessment.</p> <p>The scheme also allows for transfer between institutions after the first year.</p> |

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| <p>Pregnancy and maternity</p> | <p>Potential negative impact – however based on current policies this is very low risk at the peer review stage.</p> | <p>This information is not made available to reviewers and assessment panel members throughout the peer review process. At interview stage however it may become apparent to the Panel.</p> <p>An applicant's career path and track record may be criticised due to the existence of a number of career breaks due to maternity/paternity.</p> <p>Panel members who are pregnant or on parental leave may find it difficult to access the venue and /or participate in meetings.</p> <p>Nursing mothers may need additional support in terms of suitable accommodation or childcare</p> <p>Due to the application limits on the number of applications that institutions can submit there is a potential risk of a negative impact during the pre-selection phase in universities. For example, prior career breaks</p> | <p>Flexible terms and conditions are in place to support applicants appropriately without discrimination (for example, Fellowships may be held part-time (minimum 50), may be placed in abeyance to allow for career breaks and may be held flexibly to fit around caring responsibilities. Fellows are also entitled to take maternity, paternity, adoption and parental leave in line with the terms and conditions of their employer...</p> <p>Applicants are requested to list any career breaks on CV so this can be taken into account in the assessment process. Guidance on taking into account career breaks is provided to reviewers and panel members.</p> <p>Adjustments are made throughout the assessment process where appropriate e.g. regarding interview attendance to assist individual applicants and panel members. This may include the use of video conferencing and provision of suitable accommodation for nursing mothers. Whenever possible, panel meetings will be scheduled to avoid school holidays.</p> <p>Throughout the process and particularly at interview stage, panel members are required to follow best practice in taking positive steps to safeguard funding decisions, and are annually refreshed regarding the conditions that can result in unintentional bias.</p> <p>STFC presence at assessment meetings and during interviews acts as an additional assurance to help ensure unbiased peer review.</p> |
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| | | <p>may have a negative impact on the assessment of track record.</p> <p>Panel members may face additional childcare costs if having to work outside of their normal hours.</p> | <p>A return to research bursary is also available for those returning from a career break who can apply for funds to help them develop a suitable application for an ERF.</p> <p>Returner fellowships are available for outstanding candidates who are returning from a career break. Candidates are judged on their track record prior to the break from research. These are in addition to the normal ERF awards.</p> <p>Childcare allowance is available for those fellows who need to engage additional childcare for attendance at conferences or collaborative visits</p> |
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| <p>Race</p> | <p>Potential negative impact if it becomes apparent at interview. .</p> | <p>Data is collected regarding race at the ERF application stage. This is analysed by ETCC and is also published.</p> <p>This information is not made available to reviewers and assessment panel members throughout the peer review process. At interview stage however it may become apparent to the Panel.</p> <p>Due to the application limits on the number of applications that institutions can submit there is a potential risk of a negative impact during the pre-selection phase in universities. If the scheme guidance is not clear this could disproportionately impact on its accessibility to non-UK applicants.</p> | <p>Scheme is open to applicants of any nationality.</p> <p>At interview stage, panel members are required to follow best practice in taking positive steps to safeguard funding decisions, and are annually refreshed regarding the conditions that can result in unintentional bias.</p> <p>STFC presence at assessment meetings and during interviews acts as an additional assurance to help ensure unbiased peer review.</p> <p>The guidance will be reviewed to ensure that it is clearly worded and accessible to as wide a range of potential applicants as possible.</p> |
| <p>Religion or belief</p> | <p>Potential negative impact if it becomes apparent to the panel at interview stage. .</p> | <p>This information is not made available to reviewers and assessment panel members throughout the peer review process. At interview stage however it may become apparent to the Panel.</p> <p>Applicants and panel members may be unable to attend interviews or shortlisting</p> | <p>Throughout the process and particularly at interview stage, panel members are required to follow best practice in taking positive steps to safeguard funding decisions, and are annually refreshed regarding the conditions that can result in unintentional bias.</p> <p>Consideration would be given to the timing of interviews/panel meetings so that panel members and suitable applicants from different religious communities can attend if requested.</p> |

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| | | <p>meetings due to religious observances.</p> <p>Panel members or attendees may have specific dietary requirements due to religious belief.</p> <p>Due to the application limits on the number of applications that institutions can submit there is a potential risk of a negative impact during the pre-selection phase in universities.</p> | <p>STFC presence at assessment meetings and during interviews acts as an additional assurance to help ensure unbiased peer review.</p> <p>The criteria for selection of panel meeting venues includes a consideration of catering and dietary requirements.</p> |
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| Sexual orientation | Potential negative impact. | <p>This information is not made available to reviewers and assessment panel members throughout the peer review process.</p> <p>Due to the application limits on the number of applications that institutions can submit there is a potential risk of a negative impact during the pre-selection phase in universities.</p> | <p>Throughout the process and particularly at interview stage, panel members are required to follow best practice in taking positive steps to safeguard funding decisions, and are annually refreshed regarding the conditions that can result in unintentional bias.</p> <p>STFC presence at assessment meetings and during interviews acts as an additional assurance to help ensure unbiased peer review.</p> |
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| <p>Sex (gender)</p> | <p>Potential negative impact.</p> <p>Panel members and reviewers may criticise a publication rate and track record affected by extended maternity or paternity leave.</p> | <p>Data is collected regarding gender identity at the ERF application stage.</p> <p>This information is not made available to reviewers and assessment panel members throughout the peer review process. However, it is likely to be apparent in most cases through the application paperwork and particularly at interview stage.</p> <p>Due to the application limits on the number of applications that institutions can submit there is a potential risk of a negative impact during the pre-selection phase in universities.</p> | <p>At interview stage, panel members are required to follow best practice in taking positive steps to safeguard funding decisions, and are annually refreshed regarding the conditions that can result in unintentional bias.</p> <p>STFC presence at assessment meetings and during interviews acts as an additional assurance to help ensure unbiased peer review.</p> <p>Gender balance is taken into account when appointing the Fellowships Panel and also on the interview panel. This is published and monitored by ETCC. Gender balance is also taken into account when appointing ETCC members.</p> <p>Gender balance is also taken into account when appointing the reviewer pool. This is monitored annually and suggestions for reviewers to fill gaps are sought.</p> <p>See also the section on pregnancy and maternity for policies in place to support pregnant and nursing mothers and other carers, including those related to mitigating the effect of pregnancy/caring responsibilities on track record.</p> |
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| <p>Age</p> | <p>Potential negative impact in respect of postdoctoral experience criteria.</p> <p>Younger applicants are likely to have a lower publication rate making them less competitive.</p> | <p>Data is collected regarding age at the ERF application stage.</p> <p>Due to the application limits on the number of applications that institutions can submit there is a potential risk of a negative impact during the pre-selection phase in universities.</p> | <p>Throughout the process and particularly at interview stage, panel members are required to follow best practice in taking positive steps to safeguard funding decisions, and are annually refreshed regarding the conditions that can result in unintentional bias.</p> <p>STFC presence at assessment meetings and during interviews acts as an additional assurance to help ensure unbiased peer review.</p> <p>STFC tracks the age and number of years of research experience of those applying for and those awarded ERFs.</p> <p>There was a potential negative impact due to the requirement for a minimum amount of postdoctoral experience. For this reason we have removed the requirement and replaced it with a statement of the experience and capabilities expected of fellows. This will still mean that younger, less experienced applicants will be less likely to succeed, but will help ensure the assessment is based on criteria related to demonstrable research excellence and potential, rather than discriminating on the basis of age <i>per se</i>.</p> |
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