

## EQUALITY AND INCLUSION IMPACT ASSESSMENT

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| 1. Policy / activity being assessed  | STFC Public Engagement Early-Career Researcher (PEER) Forum – the annual process of appointing early-career researchers to the PEER Forum, including application and short-listing.   |
| 2. Summary of aims and objectives of the policy / activity                     | <p>The STFC Public Engagement Early-Career Researcher Forum (the ‘PEER Forum’) will support talented scientists and engineers in the early stages of their career to develop their public engagement and outreach goals, to ensure the next generation of STFC scientists and engineers continue to deliver the highest quality of purposeful, audience-driven public engagement.</p> <p>PEER Forum aims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To foster peer learning and peer support between early career researchers with a passion for public engagement and outreach.</li> <li>- To improve understanding of the support STFC provides for public engagement and outreach (including funding mechanisms, evaluation, and reporting) and how to successfully utilise this support.</li> <li>- To stimulate discussions that help to develop and influence STFC’s approaches to public engagement.</li> </ul>   |
| 3. What involvement and consultation has been done in relation to this policy? | <p>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.</p> <p>A significant proportion of STFC’s engagement is designed and delivered by researchers near the start of their career, who are working hard to balance the demands of establishing their research efforts alongside their passion for leading high quality public engagement and outreach. Findings from our 2016 report, Public Engagement: Attitudes, Culture and Ethos (<a href="https://stfc.ukri.org/files/corporate-publications/pe-attitudes-culture-ethos/">https://stfc.ukri.org/files/corporate-publications/pe-attitudes-culture-ethos/</a>), indicate that this balance is a real challenge: people can feel left without support, can struggle to keep abreast of current good practice, find themselves unable to make the time to plan new engagement and outreach to their satisfaction, or have no-one in their immediate peer group that shares their belief in the importance of engagement. One of the</p> |

goals of the PEER Forum is to help change this situation.

The annual call for the PEER Forum will be advertised on the STFC website, and disseminated by email and social media across the UK STEM, public engagement, and science communication sectors.

This EIA has been reviewed by a member of STFC's Equality and Diversity policy group.

STFC is dedicated to ensuring that our processes for funding are open and inclusive. Individuals engaged with our funding processes endeavour to conduct each stage in a fair and objective manner, without prejudice or bias. In line with this, STFC adheres to the seven principles of public life. In addition, we adopt the following principles for the PEER network:

**For Applicants:**

- The call is advertised widely to reach the largest possible audience
- The call is advertised clearly on the STFC website
- The call text and guidance clearly states the eligibility and assessment criteria
- The STFC website conforms to accessibility requirements for websites, including the ability to adjust the text size or use a text reader on the page
- STFC will offer hard copies of the call documentation to an applicant if requested
- STFC will provide all reasonable support to applicants before and after submission in order to assist them in the application and assessment process. This opportunity is highlighted in the call documentation

**For assessors: PEER forum reviewer panel:**

- 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
- The PEER Forum reviewer panel is selected to ensure a breadth of expertise that encompasses all major fields of STFC science and technology
- The membership of the review panel will be a minimum of 30% female, or objectively justified if this is ever not the case
- 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 the PEER Forum
- STFC is committed to taking all reasonable steps to enable participation for individuals with alternative working patterns,

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|  | <p>including reduced working hours</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Panel reviewers are asked to inform STFC if they have any additional needs to enable attendance or participation</li> <li>• STFC will schedule appropriate breaks and provide appropriate refreshments for panel members</li> </ul> <p><b>For STFC Staff:</b></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> |
| 4. Who is affected by the policy/funding activity/event?                 | Anyone who applies to the STFC PEER Forum and external panel reviewers involved in the assessment process.  |
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| 5. Arrangements for monitoring and reviewing actual impact of the policy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• STFC will review this equality impact assessment annually to identify any actions or interventions that are required to improve diversity and inclusion.</li> <li>• STFC monitors and analyses data to better understand the diversity of its Community</li> <li>• STFC hold an annual application exercise for Panel membership and when published provides guidance on diversity targets</li> <li>• Panel membership for each meeting is published on the website</li> </ul>   |
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| Group | Potential for positive or negative impact? | Examples of any evidence/data used | Action to address negative impact (e.g. adjustment to the policy) |
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| Disability | Yes – negative impact | <p>Applicants and/or reviewers with visual disabilities or impairments may find it difficult to access and review electronic documentation.</p> <p>Applicants or panel members with mobility disabilities may face difficulties in attending the panel meetings.</p> <p>Panel members with hearing difficulties may find it hard to engage in discussions.</p> <p>Attendees with neuro-disabilities may experience difficulties with concentration during panel assessments.</p> | <p>STFC will take all reasonable steps to make adjustments to the assessment process in order to enable participation. As examples, this may include the use of video conferencing or equivalent tools, tailored timing of the meeting schedule, or provision of specific facilities to enable an applicant or panel member to be comfortable in the meeting environment.</p> <p>Electronic information is accessible and STFC will investigate the ability for the potential use of screen readers for personnel who are visually impaired.</p> <p>STFC will respond to individual support needs on a case by case basis.</p> <p>STFC will ensure the meeting venue is compatible with the use of hearing aid loops and will work with individuals to understand what other help can be provided.</p> <p>STFC will select a room that is light and airy, ensure that plenty of breaks are built in to the agenda and ensure that colours chosen don't trigger migraines, different colours may assist in this if personnel don't bring their own laptops.</p> <p>STFC consult with all Panel members to understand any specific requirements for participation and will accommodate where required.</p> |
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| Gender reassignment  | Yes – negative impact | Information regarding gender reassignment is not made available throughout the peer review process. However, this may become apparent during the meeting stage or it may be possible that panel members already know this information or could endeavour to seek it out. | Panel members are required to follow best practice in taking positive steps to safeguard funding decisions, and are reminded of the conditions that may lead to unconscious bias during each meeting. STFC staff presence during panel meeting acts as an additional assurance to ensure unbiased peer review  |
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| Marriage or civil partnership  | Yes – negative impact | Bias may be voiced in relation to new partners starting a family therefore not given as a high a priority  | Panel members are required to follow best practice in taking positive steps to safeguard funding decisions, and are reminded of the conditions that may lead to unconscious bias during each meeting. STFC staff presence during meetings acts as an additional assurance to ensure unbiased peer review.  |
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| Pregnancy, Maternity, Paternity, Nursing mothers, Caring responsibilities? | Yes – negative impact | <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</p>   | <p>Panel members are required to follow best practice in taking positive steps to safeguard funding decisions, and are reminded of the conditions that may lead to unconscious bias during each meeting. STFC staff presence during meetings acts as an additional assurance to ensure unbiased peer review.</p> <p>STFC consult with all Panel members to understand and cater for their requirements for participation. As a general principle, venues are easily accessible to main rail links.</p> <p>Meetings are timetabled to allow for adequate breaks.</p> <p>Ensure suitable accommodation provided for nursing mothers and additional</p> |

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|                    |                       | <p>support in terms of suitable accommodation or childcare</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 may face additional childcare costs if having to work outside of their normal hours.</p> | <p>childcare.</p> <p>STFC recognise this issue and the potential impact and will consider as part of the review. The office will appropriately moderate discussions and ensure the objective application of the assessment criteria.</p> <p>STFC will reimburse additional childcare costs, above any beyond that required during normal working hours.</p>   |
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| Race               | Yes – negative impact | Information regarding race is not made available throughout the peer review process. However, it may be possible that panel members already know this information or could endeavour to seek it out.  | Panel members are required to follow best practice in taking positive steps to safeguard funding decisions, and are reminded of the conditions that may lead to unconscious bias during each meeting. STFC staff presence during meetings acts as an additional assurance to ensure unbiased peer review.   |
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| Religion or belief | Yes – negative impact | Panel members may be unable to participate in meetings due to   | <p>Panel members are required to follow best practice in taking positive steps to safeguard funding decisions, and are reminded of the conditions that may lead to unconscious bias during each meeting. STFC staff presence during meetings acts as an additional assurance to ensure unbiased peer review.</p> <p>Consideration will be given to the timing of panel meetings so that Panel members from different religious communities can attend if requested.</p> |

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|                    |                       | <p>religious observances</p> <p>Panel members or attendees may have specific dietary requirements due to religious belief.</p>   | <p>STFC consult with all Panel members to understand and cater for their requirements for participation. Ensure the venue caters for all dietary requirements.</p>  |
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| Sexual orientation | Yes – negative impact | <p>Information regarding sexual orientation is not made available throughout the peer review process. However, it may be possible that panel members already know this information or could endeavour to seek it out.</p>                                      | <p>Panel members are required to follow best practice in taking positive steps to safeguard funding decisions, and are reminded of the conditions that may lead to unconscious bias during each meeting. STFC staff presence during meetings acts as an additional assurance to ensure unbiased peer review.</p>  |
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| Sex (gender)       | Yes – negative impact | <p>Panel members, reviewers may criticise track record, publication history which could be as a result of extended maternity, paternity leave.</p> <p>Negative perceptions of an applicant's gender may be expressed by a peer reviewer or a panel member.</p> | <p>STFC are committed to ensuring that Panel Members are briefed on how to handle such situations.</p> <p>Panel members are required to follow best practice in taking positive steps to safeguard funding decisions, and are reminded of the conditions that may lead to unconscious bias during each meeting. STFC staff presence during meetings acts as an additional assurance to ensure unbiased peer review.</p> |

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|     |                       | An applicant's career path and track record may be criticised due to the existence of a number of career breaks.   | The flexibility of the PEER Forum application process allows for career breaks in an applicant's career history. STFC staff will reinforce this flexibility in the minds of the review panel, appropriately moderating discussions and ensuring objective application of assessment criteria.   |
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| Age | Yes – negative impact | <p>Panel members, reviewers may cite age in terms of lack of experience or in terms of near retirement</p> <p>Applicants must have completed their highest level of academic qualification within the last ten years to be eligible for the PEER Forum, not including career breaks.</p> | <p>Panel members are required to follow best practice in taking positive steps to safeguard funding decisions, and are reminded of the conditions that may lead to unconscious bias during each meeting. STFC staff presence during meetings acts as an additional assurance to ensure unbiased peer review.</p> <p>The Assessment criteria for PEER Forum are not linked to age</p> <p>This requirement is not equivalent to there being any absolute barriers based on an applicant's age or career path. The stipulation that time spent on career breaks – for any reason – does not count towards the ten-year limit is designed to remove absolute barriers based on age.</p> |
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