

EQUALITY AND INCLUSION IMPACT ASSESSMENT

1. Policy / activity being assessed	Follow on Fund (FoF) scheme. The twice yearly process for reviewing and decision making for new FoF proposals including application, independent review and panel assessment,
2. Summary of aims and objectives of the policy / activity	<p>Follow-on Funding is intended to provide financial support at the very early or pre-seed stage of turning research outputs into a commercial proposition. It will support a range of relevant activities to enable the development and examination of a concept to establish its commercial feasibility and scientific and technical merit.</p> <p>FoF closing dates are every six months.</p> <p>Proposals are assessed by written peer review, followed by an assessment panel (the Innovation Partnership Scheme panel) made up of a combination of academic and industrial experts. STFC makes funding decisions based upon the recommendations of this panel.</p> <p>Awards are made subject to the UKRI research grant terms and conditions.</p>
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>The Innovation Advisory Board reviewed all Innovation schemes in 2015 but no recommendations regarding the FoF scheme were made. The IPS panel provide strategic advice and make a wide range of recommendations and have recently proposed an increase to the maximum project value that can be applied for but there is no final decision on this yet.</p> <p>For Applicants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The call is advertised widely to reach the largest possible audience • The call text and guidance provides detailed guidelines to Applicants about the process including clear information on eligibility and assessment criteria and links to the Research Grants Handbook,

- 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, but focus has to be on who has the right expertise to review – the IPS community tends to be heavily male dominated. We will try to improve this by using knowledge of the community including manual searches rather than by using automatic expertise matching.
- 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 the FoF Scheme.

For Panel Members:

- 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. For the IPS panel the current percentage of females is 20%. The Innovations community is an area with marked gender imbalance but 20% is an improvement on the previous 0% female membership.
- 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

For STFC Staff:

	<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>1. Who is affected by the policy/funding activity/event?</p>	<p>Anyone who applies for an STFC Follow on Fund Award, or anyone involved in the assessment process.</p>
<p>5. Arrangements for monitoring and reviewing actual impact of the policy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • STFC will review this equality impact assessment annually to identify any actions or interventions that are required to improve diversity and inclusion. • STFC monitors and analyses data to better understand the diversity of its Community • STFC hold an annual nominations exercise for Panel membership and when published provides guidance on diversity targets • Panel membership for each meeting is published on the website <p>Over the last three financial years (April 16 – March 19) 3% of the applicants were female, compared with 97% male principal applicants. Female applicants had a 100% success rate, compared with a 30% success rate for male applicants. The total number of applications for the period was just 33 spread across multiple calls so volumes are very low however, STFC should look at ways to improve the number of applications from females. The STFC community tends to view Innovation funding as a low priority and hence only a small subset tend to engage with our funding opportunities in this area. Given the already small population of women it is maybe not surprising that the pool of female applicants is even less for this, and other, innovation schemes.</p>

Group	Potential for positive or negative impact?	Examples of any evidence/data used	Action to address negative impact (e.g. adjustment to the policy)
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>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>

		Attendees with neuro-disabilities may experience difficulties with concentration during panel assessments.	<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>
Gender reassignment		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 interview acts as an additional assurance to ensure unbiased peer review
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.

<p>Pregnancy, Maternity, Paternity, Nursing mothers, Caring responsibilities?</p>	<p>Yes – negative impact</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>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>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 childcare.</p> <p>STFC recognise this issue and the potential impact and will consider as part of the review. The Chair 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>
<p>Race</p>	<p>Yes – negative impact</p>	<p>Information regarding race is not made available throughout the peer review process. However, it may be possible that panel members already</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</p>

		know this information or could endeavour to seek it out.	lead to unconscious bias during each meeting. STFC staff presence during meetings acts as an additional assurance to ensure unbiased peer review.
Religion or belief	Yes – negative impact	<p>Panel members may be unable to participate in meetings due to religious observances</p> <p>Panel members or attendees may have specific dietary requirements due to religious belief.</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>Consideration will be given to the timing of panel meetings so that Panel members from different religious communities can attend if requested.</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>
Sexual orientation	Yes – negative impact	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.	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.

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 Chairs 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>
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>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 IPS are not linked to age</p>