

Equality/Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) for research proposals – advice and sources of info

The information in this document summarises some of the guidance available from research funders and draws on our experience of grant writing. It is intended as an aid to preparing your research proposals and is for the use of UoE employees only. Although effort will be made to keep it up to date, the RDM team cannot guarantee that the information is current (depending on when the doc is accessed), or that it will be applicable to every funding scheme. Each PI is responsible to ensure that they meet the requirements of a specific funding call. We will strive to update the document regularly throughout the year. We advise that you get in touch with the RDM team to discuss individual requirements/needs.

Introduction

Equality/Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) is a conceptual framework that seeks to ensure fair treatment and opportunity for all, and to protect against discrimination on grounds of protected characteristics. These are defined by the Equality Act 2010 as Age, Disability, Gender reassignment, Marriage and civil partnership, Pregnancy and maternity, Race, Religion or belief, Sex and Sexual orientation.

EDI is increasingly important to research funders, that want to make sure that the research they invest in is conducted by teams that include people from a range of backgrounds and experiences, and that the outcomes of the research will apply to, and benefit, as broad a range of people as possible. This recognises that the diverse and complex problems faced globally cannot be solved without diverse knowledge, experience and approaches. In addition, there is a recognition that some people have faced, and continue to face, systemic barriers at all levels of research participation and leadership. Research lacking the information and enrichment these groups and individuals can contribute is a missed opportunity.

Several funders therefore include a requirement for funding applications to demonstrate how EDI will be embedded within research teams, research design and research outcomes. This may range from the integration of EDI approaches throughout a research proposal, to a dedicated EDI plan submitted with the application. Some funders like Horizon Europe require that institutions have an EDI plan in place. Gender equality is a cross-cutting principle under Horizon Europe.

For example, the Approach section of the most recent UKRI TFS application asks applicants to *“identify how accessibility and inclusiveness in the widest sense have been incorporated into the design of the project. For example, you may wish to reference relevant institutional strategies and policies which support equality, diversity, and inclusion as they relate to access to equipment and facilities and indicate how the proposed project has been designed and will be delivered with broad access in mind.”*

You can find links to SBS and UoE policies and information, and to a selection of funder EDI policies and statements at the end of this document.

Key points to consider when developing your application

Try to avoid generic statements around your EDI commitments or claiming that EDI issues do not exist in your institute/organisation/team. Bear in mind that more progress has been made in

addressing gender-related issues (though some remain). While it is still important to uphold these values, it is vital that other protected characteristics are not neglected. The research community, including applicants, reviewers, stakeholders, grantees and leaders should reflect the diversity of society.

Your research team

- What is the **gender balance** on your research team/advisory board/stakeholders? Are there representatives from a range of career stages, ethnicities and backgrounds?
- **Recruitment:** If you are hoping to recruit to your team, can you describe how you will ensure an inclusive approach to the recruitment process? This could be following good practice on the wording of job adverts, balance of people on the selection panel etc. Do the recruiting/interviewing arrangements provide equal access to those with disabilities? You could mention the University Challenging Unconscious Bias training for staff involved in recruitment panels. You could also reference the School's Silver award in Athena SWAN.
- What about **staff development opportunities**? How much time will be protected for career/personal development? Note that the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers includes a minimum of 10 days' professional development pro rata per year for researchers. See [10 Days Professional Development | SUPPORT FOR RESEARCHERS \(ed.ac.uk\)](https://www.ed.ac.uk/10-days-professional-development) How will you support researchers in your team to use this time, take ownership of their careers and identify their development needs? Are any adjustments needed to ensure that all staff have equal access to training/mentoring/other opportunities? This might include adjustments to timings for team members with caring responsibilities, adjustments to access for team members with disabilities, embedding practices relating to work/life balance and flexible working hours, and ensuring that early career team members are given the opportunity to develop, co-author papers etc.
- The university has mandatory **EDI training** for all new starts. You could mention that the team will all complete this training and commit to a team culture that supports equality and diversity, observing the school commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity for all staff and students and following the School Dignity and Respect policy. What measures can you put in place within your team to protect this?
- **Mentoring** SBS has implemented a formal mentoring scheme for researchers at the start of their careers, which ensures equitable access to opportunities for career development and support. Early career research staff in SBS are all assigned a mentor. Post-docs are offered a mentor by their post-doc advisor within their first 12 months in role and can request mentorship at any time. The [IAD mentoring resources](#) are available for all research staff.
- **Support for Female Researchers** The IAD ([Institute for Academic Development | The University of Edinburgh](#)) is committed to supporting female researchers develop their skills and advance their careers at the University, and beyond. Although all IAD workshops offer support and guidance for women (as well as men) the IAD also runs the bi-annual 'Ingenious Women' course, specifically for female academic research staff and students. With an emphasis on self-awareness and defining personal success, the course focuses on three themes (creativity, cash and control), and involves a combination of theory, experiential learning, group discussion and feedback. The IAD runs the [Elevate Programme](#), which is a senior leadership programme for women of colour at UoE.
- **Managing your Research Teams** IAD online training for all PIs and staff in management roles across the University. The training covers the policies and procedures necessary for

recruitment, development, and management of their teams, as well as equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) training.

Research Culture

- How will you create a compassionate and inclusive environment, where everyone's voice is heard, and everyone feels they are valued and respected? Some examples of how this can be achieved include establishing a mentoring buddy system for new team members, embedding mentoring conversations as a standard in your meetings with your staff, providing leadership opportunities for your staff especially for those currently underrepresented in such positions like BAME, LGBT and disabled workforce. The best way to ensure there is inclusive practice is to lead by example, and to have frequent and open conversations with the team.
- Can you articulate how as project lead you will take a lead in promoting a positive research culture and making a meaningful contribution to fostering an inclusive and diverse environment.?

Research design

It is important to consider EDI during the conception of the grant, design of the research and implementation.

- Some good information on incorporating EDI practices in project design is available from EPSRC in the [expectations for EDI](#).
- **Design of research:** e.g. working on drug discovery have you given enough consideration of potential effect on females: males? If you intend to develop technology, does it have any EDI implications, e.g. will it be equally beneficial to all?
- **Responsible research & innovation** – taking into account the wider impact of research & innovation, such as unintended consequences, ethical dilemmas, social transformations.
- **Data diversity** – e.g. will the data generated reflect for example only a small section of the population, is it focused for example on western societies only?
- **Participants in research-** consider sex/race or other characteristics of human participants. Sex of animal research subjects – note that [MRC's policy on embedding diversity in research design](#) includes the requirement for both sexes to be used in the experimental design of grant applications involving animals, and human and animal tissues and cells, unless there is a strong justification for not doing so. In December 2023 29 leading UK medical funders and academic publishers backed the introduction of sex and gender policies for biomedical, health and care research: [Medical Science Sex & Gender Equity \(messageproject.co.uk\)](#)
- **Incorporate potential impact activities** – e.g., consider who/where you are targeting with public engagement activities. Consider inclusiveness of any communications – inclusive language and communication routes. How will you ensure that your communications reach historically underserved communities?
- **Composition of the team** – consider the composition of your team and any associated advisory boards. E.g., have you invited a diverse group of investigators with appropriate expertise? It may be appropriate to have an EDI champion/lead as part of your management structure for large/strategic grants (e.g. Hubs, Centres).
- **Try to incorporate EDI across your proposal.** In the track record/narrative CV evidence how you have upheld EDI principles in your career to date, and if applicable state what EDI considerations went into the composition of your team. You can refer to University/SBS

policies and demonstrate how important EDI is – highlight any staff community/support groups etc that your team can access.

Justification of resources

- For any staff recruited you can say recruitment will strictly adhere to the EDI (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) policies enforced in UoE/partner organisations. Will you make provisions to recruit project staff according to best practice in HR and EDI by including in the panel an EDI expert?
- To attract diverse applicants and ensure a healthy research culture, the panel will undergo Unconscious Bias and Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity training prior to recruitment, with the advert wording chosen carefully (the SBS Director of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion who can be consulted on this).

Case for Support

- If you will be recruiting human participants explain how you will ensure diversity in terms of sex or ethnic background.
- What innovative EDI actions will you take in the running of this grant? How are EDI principles embedded in your project team and research design?
- Has the application of the research topic typically benefitted the majority population in the UK and how might its application extend beyond these groups? Will some groups potentially benefit more than others? What are the consequences of this, and what measures might you take?

Track records/narrative CV

Consider a statement showcasing your expertise/commitment in an EDI context, supervision of students, PDRAs and how all this experience has provided you with the right skills to achieve these goals and to effectively manage the proposed project.

Letter of Support

Consider adding in the letter a statement to the effect of the contributions you have made to school teaching and administration in SBS and that you understand the development of a world-class research environment that fosters the best and brightest talent regardless of background. These are key principles to which the school remains fully committed.

Other useful sources of information:

Equality Act 2010

- [Equality Act 2010 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/154)

University of Edinburgh

The University of Edinburgh introduced a single equality strategy to coincide with the implementation of the Equality Act 2010. EDI has been integrated into the University strategic plans and relevant information and policies are available on a dedicated website.

- University of Edinburgh EDI strategy and policies <https://www.ed.ac.uk/equality-diversity/about>
- University of Edinburgh Gender Equality Plan <https://www.ed.ac.uk/research-office/research-integrity/gender-equality-plan>

- University of Edinburgh EDI support – training, accessibility, Athena Swan, EDI groups and policies <https://www.ed.ac.uk/equality-diversity>
 - [Family Friendly | The University of Edinburgh](#)
- University of Edinburgh Equality Impact Assessment – policy, guidance and training [Equality Impact Assessment | The University of Edinburgh](#)
- The School of Biological Sciences support for EDI <https://www.ed.ac.uk/biology/equality-and-diversity> - includes family friendly policies and details of networks, groups and clubs relating to different communities within SBS.
- [Mentoring | The University of Edinburgh](#)

University of Edinburgh, EDI charters:

- The University is a member of the **Race Equality Charter**, a national scheme which aims to improve the representation, progression and success of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) staff and students within higher education. [Race Equality | The University of Edinburgh](#) This page includes details of other UoE anti-racism initiatives.
- The University has been a **Stonewall Diversity Champion** member since 2012, a programme which aims to ensure all LGBT+ staff are able to thrive within the workplace. [LGBT+ equality | The University of Edinburgh](#) This page includes details of other UoE LGBT+ equality activities.
- The University won its first **Athena SWAN** Institutional Bronze Award in 2006, and achieved Institutional Silver in 2015. The Athena Swan Charter is a framework which is used across the globe to support and transform gender equality within higher education and research. Established in 2005 to encourage and recognise commitment to advancing the careers of women in science, technology, engineering, maths and medicine (STEMM) employment, the charter now recognises work undertaken to address gender equality more broadly, and not just barriers to progression that affect women. [Athena SWAN | The University of Edinburgh](#)
 - The School of Biological Sciences was first awarded the Athena SWAN Silver Award in 2013. [Athena SWAN | The University of Edinburgh](#)

Research funders

UKRI:

For UKRI applications, it may be useful to know that UKRI launched its first EDI strategy in 2023. The strategy has four objectives:

1. Foster a world-class research and innovation system, 'by everyone, for everyone'.
2. Include and support a diversity of people and ideas through our funding and partnerships.
3. Create a more inclusive and fair organisational culture, where everyone can contribute and participate, and feels valued and respected.
4. Advance and grow knowledge and capability to support a thriving research and innovation system by being a creative, evidence-based and evidence-informed organisation.

You can access the full strategy here [UKRI's equality, diversity and inclusion strategy – UKRI](#) and find links to individual research council EDI documents here [EDI strategy and action plans – UKRI](#).

Other UKRI resources include:

- <https://www.ukri.org/manage-your-award/good-research-resource-hub/guidance-for-equality-diversity-and-inclusion/>
- <https://www.ukri.org/what-we-do/supporting-healthy-research-and-innovation-culture/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/>

- <https://www.ukri.org/what-we-do/supporting-healthy-research-and-innovation-culture/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/edi-strategy/>
- [BBSRC equality, diversity and inclusion action plan – UKRI](#)
- [EPSRC equality, diversity, and inclusion action plan 2022 to 2025 – UKRI](#)
- <https://www.ukri.org/publications/epsrc-expectations-for-equality-diversity-and-inclusion/>
- [EPSRC-240322-EPSRC-EDI-ExpectationsTable-SummaryVersion.pdf \(ukri.org\)](#)
- <https://www.ukri.org/councils/epsrc/guidance-for-applicants/equality-diversity-and-inclusion-support/>
- <https://www.ukri.org/councils/mrc/guidance-for-applicants/policies-and-guidance-for-researchers/sex-in-experimental-design/>
- [NERC diversity and inclusion action plan 2022 to 2025 – UKRI](#)

Horizon Europe:

- Gender equality is a cross-cutting principle.
- The funding programme aims to eliminate gender inequality and intersecting socio-economic inequalities (eg unconscious bias, systemic structural barriers)
- A gender equality plan (GEP) is required under the eligibility criteria for funding. Integration of the gender dimension within the research and innovation content of a proposal is an award criteria, evaluated under the excellence criterion. Gender balance is a ranking criteria. The GEP must be a public document, with allocated resources under the grant, and supported by training and capacity building. Support for GEP development:
 - [Gender Equality in Academia and Research - GEAR tool | European Institute for Gender Equality \(europa.eu\)](#)
 - [Horizon Europe, gender equality - Publications Office of the EU \(europa.eu\)](#)
 - [Gendered Innovations 2 \(europa.eu\)](#)

Other funder policies:

- [Equity, diversity and inclusion policy | Funding Guidance | Wellcome](#)
- <https://www.leverhulme.ac.uk/Equality-diversity-inclusion>
- <https://royalsociety.org/grants-schemes-awards/grants/about-grants/>
- [Diversity and Inclusion \(raeng.org.uk\)](#)

Other

- <https://www.universityaffairs.ca/career-advice/ask-dr-editor/how-to-incorporate-equity-diversity-and-inclusion-in-your-grant-applications/>
- Science Foundation Ireland External EDI Strategy 2023-28 [SFI-External-Equality-Diversity-and-Inclusion-Strategy-2023-2028.pdf](#)
- [Medical Science Sex & Gender Equity \(messageproject.co.uk\)](#)
 - [message-statement-of-intent-ok.pdf \(georgeinstitute.org\)](#)

Dora Lola-Luz, Head of Research Development
Kirsten Paterson, Research Development Manager
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Annex 1: Good Practice Example**Centre for Adapting to Changing Environments (ACE) EDI strategy**

This document has been made available as a good practice example by kind permission of Prof Emma Cunningham, Director of ACE. Please note that EDI plans must be specific to projects. If you need any help with writing an EDI plan for your proposal, please contact the Research Development Team (Theodora.lola-luz@ed.ac.uk / Kirsten.paterson@ed.ac.uk).

EDI strategy ACE**Introduction**

At the University of Edinburgh and the Centre for Adapting to Changing Environments (ACE) we are strong supporters of equality, diversity and inclusion for all people and this is embedded in everyday practices and the ethos of ACE. At the core of our principles is our ambition to be a champion for the university in changing culture and making a meaningful contribution to fostering an inclusive and diverse environment. This will benefit ACE and UoE in the future by allowing us to recruit, develop and retain the best people and be an employer of choice.

Mission**Our Values**

Integrity/Transparency/ excellence/collaboration/fairness/ Kindness

Definitions

BAME	Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (used to refer to members of non-white communities in the UK).
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender
Carer	A person who provides unpaid practical or emotional support to someone with a disability, addiction or illness.
Protected Characteristics	are age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnerships
Diversity	recognise, understand, celebrate and value the individual differences of everybody
Equality	Ensuring individuals are not viewed less favourably because of their individual characteristics protected or otherwise.
Inclusion	everybody feels able to participate and can benefit from equal opportunity for all.
Neurodiversity	The different ways the brain can work and interpret information. It highlights that people naturally think about things differently. We have different interests and motivations and are naturally better at some things and poorer at others. Neurodivergence includes Attention Deficit Disorders, Autism, Dyslexia and Dyspraxia.

Priority areas

Priority 1: Inclusive Leadership of ACE

At the core of our values is to create a compassionate and inclusive environment, where everyone's voices are heard and everyone feels valued.

This will also be reflected in the leadership of ACE by fostering a culture of compassion where everyone's behaviour and decision making is based on compassion and mutual respect.



How will we achieve this:

- Set a mentoring/buddy system for all members (irrespective of career level) and establish a formal mentoring network for our members to access.
- Embed mentoring conversations as a standard in meeting at centre level but also within our specific teams
- Provide bespoke mentoring and leadership opportunities for our members especially for those currently underrepresented in such positions like BAME, LGBT and disabled workforce

Priority 2. Culture change and mainstreaming equality, diversity, and inclusion

Our aim is to create a culture where all members feel valued and recognised for the contributions. We will practice an inclusive and bottom-up approach in decision making and include members in all decision processes of the centre.

How we will achieve this:

- Informed leadership on their responsibilities in equality and diversity
- Identify and share good practices among members
- Work closely with our communication team to ensure the centre and university branding are representative for all members
- Ensure all leadership teams are diverse reflecting the membership of the centre
- Identify an EDI champion

Priority 3 Improving and supporting career development of all members with focus on underrepresented groups

ACE is committed to supporting developments of its members and will identify any barriers that hinder the advancement of its people and will have a robust strategy in place to mitigate and ensure as much as possible that nobody is disadvantaged.

How we will achieve this:

- Provide development opportunities for all career levels that will meet the requirements of our diverse membership.
- Encourage and facilitate collaborative bids, fellowships and other research grants from staff across the diversity groups and career stages.
- Embed practices relating to work/life balance and flexible working hours to support our membership

Priority 4 Progressive, collaborative and healthy working environment

ACE will create and promote a positive working environment that will empower all our people across the membership to achieve their potential. Everyone will play a role in making ACE a centre where interactions are governed by mutual respect, trust and equity.

How we will achieve this:

- Prevent harassment and bullying and have appropriate mechanisms in place to address issues
- Increase EDI awareness and share good practices amongst members
- Put in place a code of conduct for events and general activities for all members