

RCUK Action Plan for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Our ambition is for RCUK to be recognised as a leader in equality and diversity in the research community, working with partners throughout the sector. This action plan represents the collective aspiration of the Research Councils and will be supported by individual Research Council plans setting out more specific targets as appropriate.



Objective	Actions to be taken	Lead Responsibility	Date for completion of action
Leading by example			
1. Achieve improved diversity in the membership of RCUK Councils, advisory and peer review bodies.	1.1. To work with BIS to develop best practice guidelines on increasing the diversity of Council membership. To include: searching widely for candidates (drawing on both traditional and non-traditional sources ¹ , shortlisting, interviewing and recommendations to Ministers.	RCUK CEOs/BIS	Paper to be completed by April 2016
	1.2. To manage Council appointments to achieve at least 40% of the under-represented gender on each Council	RCUK CEOs/BIS	April 2017
	1.3. To agree and achieve appropriate minimum published targets for the under-represented gender on all advisory and peer review bodies and referee pools across the Councils. The overall target should be 30% of the under-represented gender across RCUK.	RCUK CEOs	Agree by April 2016 Achieve by 2017-18 ²
	1.4. Develop appropriate targets – informed by data – for the ethnic balance across Councils, peer review bodies and referee pools.	RCUK CEOs	Agree by April 2017 Achieve by 2019
	1.5. To look at improving the data on disability that RCUK hold.	RCUK CEOs	Agree process by April 2017

¹ A pilot project by BBSRC using Linked-In produced additional, more diverse applicants for a position that had been advertised

² Date for achievement of target to be set by each Council

2. Ensure that RCUK has a diverse workforce, equipped to act as ambassadors for equality, diversity and inclusion in all that we do.	2.1. To improve the diversity and career progression data on current RCUK staff. To undertake separate monitoring (including using staff surveys) for staff employed at head office and as researchers.	RCUK CEOs/ HR Directors/ BIS	Agree process by April 2016 Achieve/publish by end 2016
	2.2. Take appropriate actions within each Research Council to avoid single gender panels on all recruitment and promotion panels at head office and in institutes	RCUK CEOs	April 2016
	2.3. To run a small number of pilots to explore anonymous shortlisting when recruiting to Research Council vacancies and to use the evidence of these pilots to assess the feasibility of a wider roll-out. In addition to investigate whether there is any way this could be feasible in terms of research posts in research units, centres and institutes and if so to implement any appropriate action.	RCUK CEOs	April 2017
	2.4. Ensure end to end tracking of diversity characteristics of applicants for RCUK employment.	RCUK CEOs	Start internal engagement April 2016 ³
	2.5. Embed open discussion of E&D issues amongst Research Council staff informed by data and in line with E&D guidance. ⁴	All RCUK CEOs and managers	September 2016
	2.6. Provide a programme of learning opportunities (seminars, workshops, masterclasses etc.) for all staff covering all aspects of E&D. Develop plans at Council level for a future programme of E&D learning for staff.	RCUK CEOs	Resource and materials together by April 2016 Achieve by Sept 2016
Challenging bias and ensuring fair and inclusive funding processes			

³ The tracking of diversity characteristics will be explored in parallel with discussions around a new internal HR system.

⁴ Internal links: <https://moss.ssc.rcuk.ac.uk/HR/Documents/Equality%20and%20Diversity%20Policy.aspx>
<https://moss.ssc.rcuk.ac.uk/HR/Documents/Equality%20and%20Diversity%20Guidance%20for%20Research%20Funding.aspx>

<p>3. Raise awareness of and take steps to remove the impact of unintentional bias in RCUK systems, processes, behaviours and culture.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>And</u></p> <p>4. Ensure RCUK funding is not influenced by the gender of the applicant or by other protected characteristics.</p>	<p>3.1. To evaluate recent pilots of anonymous peer review processes in EPSRC and ESRC. All Councils to define their approach to anonymous peer review, tailored to their communities and funding schemes.</p>	RCUK CEOs	April 2017
	<p>3.2. To raise awareness amongst RCUK staff of the effects of unconscious bias and equip staff to challenge bias in all of its forms.</p>	RCUK CEOs	Starting April 2016 Completion/mostly complete during 2018
	<p>3.3. To deliver face-to-face or online unconscious bias training for peer reviewers and those involved in strategic advice to RCUK and decisions on RCUK funding. To work with our training partner, Pearn Kandola, to put in place effective monitoring and evaluation of the training.</p>	RCUK CEOs	Roll out started in 2015 Completion by end 2018
	<p>4.1. To update the RCUK Statement of Expectations for Doctoral Training and the Conditions of Research Council Training Grants to ensure that equality and diversity are promoted in all aspects of the recruitment of postgraduate students. Requiring research organisations to have a robust process in place to attract and recruit the most talented applicants, irrespective of background, and gather equality and diversity monitoring data on all applicants. To plan, communicate and implement a monitoring regime linked to this.</p>	RCUK CEOs/ University partners	Starting April 2016 and subject to reporting cycles mostly complete by April 2018
	<p>4.2. To publish data on the RCUK doctoral population by gender and other protected characteristics, and once applicant data is available, success rates.</p>	RCUK CEOs	Publish data on RCUK doctoral population by April 2016 and success rates by April 2018
	<p>4.3. To work with BIS to commission research to explore how we can effectively measure and assess access to postgraduate study for those from disadvantaged backgrounds.</p>	RCUK CEOs	October 2016

	4.4. All Research Councils to have undertaken a comprehensive investigation of funding mechanisms to identify and remove potential barriers and biases. This would then inform any revision of the Peer Review and funding processes.	RCUK CEOs	April 2017
	4.5. To continue to publish research grant success rates by gender, age and ethnicity and by other protected characteristics where sufficient data is available and to procure an independent external validation of the data and its analysis.	RCUK CEOs	Annually
Leading and supporting change in our research community			
5. Show strong leadership to change the culture, practices and makeup of the research community.	5.1. To use success rate data for research grants to raise the awareness of E&D issues at a senior level within Research Organisations.	RCUK CEOs and HEI VCs	July 2016
	5.2. To commission research to understand more about the barriers to increased participation and career progression of under-represented groups	RCUK CEOs	2016
	5.3. To develop an RCUK Framework for a working partnership between Research Councils and their leading HEI partners which will accelerate the pace of culture change, challenge current thinking around selection metrics and practices to increase diversity in the research workforce.	RCUK CEOs	Development of Framework by July 2016 Achieved by April 2017
	5.4. To develop and deliver online equality and diversity training for all RCUK funded students, to support a change in culture and practice within institutions. To work with our training provider to put in place effective monitoring and evaluation of the training.	RCUK CEOs	Implement in 2017

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>And</u></p>	<p>5.5. To investigate ways in which flexible working in research can become more mainstream, specifically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Examine current RCUK T&Cs for grant holders to remove any current barriers to any form of flexible working including parental leave and ensure harmonisation across RCUK b) To ensure there is a cross council policy on career breaks and to ensure that funding panels/committees/boards have guidance on how to treat career breaks and alternative working patterns c) To continue to show our communities the diverse ways in which a research career can be built and to draw more attention to this work d) To work towards a policy in Research Council institutes, units and head offices where all vacancies are advertised as open to flexible working. Exceptions to this policy would relate to safety, animal welfare or other operational considerations and should be well-evidenced. 	<p>RCUK CEOs and Managers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) January 2016-completion June 2016. b) Start April 2016, completion September 2016 c) Start April 2016, ongoing d) Start consultation April 2016, completion April 2017
	<p>6. Use RCUK assurance processes to ensure progress in equality, diversity and inclusion processes across the research system</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6.1. To undertake a pilot policy assurance process with HEIs and Institutes to ensure that appropriate E&D measures are in place and making a difference 6.2. For Research Councils to expect E&D issues to be part of the dialogue at site visits 	<p>RCUK CEOs</p>

	<p>6.2. RCUK will work with other funders to agree a set of questions which will provide assurance that funded Institutions are addressing their priority areas in Equality and Diversity. The defined criteria will be encompassed in the RCUK Terms and Conditions and the data will also be available to other funders. This will ultimately lead to less duplication and minimise work for the institutions.</p>	RCUK CEOs	April 2016
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