

UK Research and Innovation

Paper: 18-01
UKRI EDI External Advisory Group
4th October 2018
Author: [REDACTED]

Draft minutes of the first UK Research and Innovation External Advisory Group meeting for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Meeting held on 25th July 2018 at UKRI, Swindon.

Attendees	
Professor Jennifer Rubin (Chair)	Dr Dina Belluigi
Ms Zamila Bunglawala	Dr Rosanna Duncan
Miss Zabeen Hirji (by phone)	Professor Wendy Loretto
Mr Simon McKeown	Dr Claire Murray
Dr Eugene Oteng-Ntim	
UKRI attendees	
[REDACTED] (Secretariat)	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Apologies	
Dr Karen Salt	Professor Giovanni Razzu
Professor Tom Welton	

1. Welcome and Introductions

[REDACTED] welcomed attendees to the first UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) External Advisory Group meeting. Apologies were noted from [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] was unfortunately unable to join the meeting fully due to technological issues.

[REDACTED] informed members that [REDACTED] had been appointed as deputy Chair to the group. [REDACTED] was involved in the recruitment process for the advisory group and has had long-term contact with the Council through [REDACTED] role on the AHRC Advisory Board. [REDACTED] deep knowledge and experience alongside [REDACTED] commitment to Council, will facilitate the external advisory group's connection and coordination with the Councils.

Members were thanked for their understanding and for working at pace since their appointment to allow for a first meeting to be held before the summer break. Members introduced themselves and noted that the group itself is very diverse. This diversity includes a good mix of policy, practice and strategy, geographic diversity including national and international expertise, and a wide range of perspectives from across areas for diversity and inclusion policy. This diversity and expertise will inform an ambitious but feasible, long-term strategy for equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) for UKRI and the research and innovation landscape.

2. Introductory remarks, terms of reference and ways of working

██████████ informed members that UKRI was established on 1st April bringing together the seven Research Councils, Innovate UK and Research England and has a combined budget of more than £6bn. A strong commitment to EDI has been set out on UKRI's vision and mission and in April 2018, to take forward this commitment, ██████████ appointed ██████████ as the Executive Champion for EDI to lead this agenda. ██████████ noted that ██████████ background is relevant for this role, both in terms of some of ██████████ own research, and as a social scientist with a sustained commitment to evidence improving outcomes.

Following ██████████ appointment, five high level priorities for EDI were set out in UKRI's Strategic Prospectus published in May 2018. One of those priorities is to establish an external advisory group to provide advice to UKRI to inform the development of a long-term strategy for EDI and its policies and interventions.

██████████ presented the terms of reference to members. Minor amendments were noted to reflect the skills of the group rather than its members (for sustainability beyond the specific members present for this term), and to be more precise on the expected duration of appointment.

Members discussed potential ways of working recognizing that there may be times when it is appropriate to appoint sub-groups or leads to take forward particular themes or issues. It was agreed that such additional activities would always be discussed and agreed in the meeting before tasks were taken forward with a clear scope, timeframe and support from UKRI.

██████████ acknowledged that members will be associated with various other strategic groups and/or networks across the sector providing ambassadorial opportunities for UKRI. Members recognized that there will be some occasions where discussions could be early-thinking or involve sensitivities and therefore should be mindful of the way these are referred to outside of the meeting.

Action: UKRI Strategy to amend the Terms of Reference reflecting the proposed minor amendments for sign off at the next meeting.

3. UKRI Long-term strategy

██████████ presented a snapshot of the work already underway across UKRI in equality, diversity and inclusion and whilst not exhaustive, activities include:

- Progress through the Research Councils UK (RCUK) action plan published in 2016 through activities such as the annual publication of diversity success rate data, setting diversity targets on funding panels and boards, developing various diversity toolkits and; providing unconscious bias training to peer reviewers.
- Innovate UK's 'Infocus' initiative and their more recent 'Ideas mean business' programme in partnership with The Princes' Trust to change the perceived and real barriers to which are holding young people and women back from becoming innovators and entrepreneurs.
- Research England, a newly formed Council previously was within the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) introduced Equality and Diversity Panels in the Research Excellence Framework (REF).

██████████ highlighted the key deliverables for UKRI for the short, medium and longer-term including developing a long-term strategy that sets UKRI on a trajectory for bringing about a culture change for EDI across the research and innovation landscape. Members noted that there is a lot of good work underway acknowledging Councils are very willing to work together to share good practice and set some big ambitions as UKRI.

Members discussed the approach for UKRI establishing a long-term strategy. [REDACTED] highlighted the benefit of identifying where the disparities for UKRI are and being transparent with this, to help shape a long-term approach. [REDACTED] further articulated the need to take an evidence-based approach with members encouraging UKRI to move beyond activities to look at the impact and outcomes to establish what works and what doesn't to inform action and intervention.

It is recognized that visible commitment and senior leadership helps to drive change with members discussing a need to create a culture around safeguarding and fairness as a foundation that is enabling for all. There was also emphasis on the importance to operating a fair and inclusive environment for UKRI staff as an employer as well as the community as a funder. [REDACTED] proposed UKRI consider which priorities it wishes to focus on and subsequently how it wishes to act to help start to shape a long-term strategy.

4. UKRI Data and evidence

[REDACTED] presented a summary of the progress and work underway in relation to data, analysis and the approach to building an evidence base to underpin a UKRI long-term strategy.

Members noted the information presented in paper 18-03 and discussed the potential opportunities at the different levels applicants 'touch' UKRI both as an organization and as a funder. These could include categories such as; who applies for funding, who we fund, how they progress and who works for UKRI. UKRI should consider what we know about itself as an employer and as a funder against the wider evidence base of what is and isn't working and how we can start to build on this.

[REDACTED] informed members of the Cabinet Office's Race Disparity Audit as one approach to collecting data and starting to examine how people from different backgrounds are treated across different sectors. Members agreed a demonstration of the Race Disparity Audit would be beneficial for learning from its approach and its impacts. It was felt that this could inform a wider discussion which starts to consider what data means to UKRI, what data UKRI has and how to start to build on this.

Members discussed the feasibility of tracking culture change, including who is using our data and why. It was agreed there is a need for consistency in language which will provide an opportunity to align data across the landscape. Through consistency UKRI will be able to establish a fuller picture to identify the extent of the issues and challenges, and how best and where UKRI can add value.

From an internal perspective, [REDACTED] suggested UKRI consider using employee surveys to understand better the information by the different groups, including personal experiences for a more nuanced approach. Members agreed that this information can start to identify the issues and underlying challenges and establish what factors are within our control e.g. from adverts through to career trajectories.

Members noted the proposed evidence review as part of building the evidence base for UKRI. It was agreed beneficial to present these nationally and internationally to understand what works and what doesn't work within both the UK and abroad. [REDACTED] emphasized the need to ensure the methodologies are consistent and comparable to help start to produce a comprehensive evidence base. Findings from these reviews will be presented back to the external advisory group at a future meeting.

5. UKRI Levers and incentives

[REDACTED] introduced an open discussion for members to start to consider what the role of UKRI is as a funder and subsequently, what levers and incentives it could or should use to maximise benefit across the landscape.

Members discussed the powerful position that UKRI is in as the largest funder across the research and innovation landscape. It was acknowledged that UKRI could incentivise the community in a number of ways, which could include firm action such as the mandating of Athena Swan. However,

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members agreed UKRI should consider carefully how it could or should incentivise that doesn't create an unintended burden or detract from the main purpose of UKRI funding.

██████████ highlighted that internationally, Canada have taken steps through making changes to some funding policies particularly around gender and increasing the number of women receiving grants. Members agreed that UKRI could build in formal requirements in to both recruitment and funding processes however, should consider the extent in which to extend these. It was proposed a soft approach may be to introduce EDI impact statements as part of the application process in a similar way to pathways to impact assessments.

Members recognised engaging with external stakeholders should not be underestimated in helping to both identify the levers and bring about change. ██████████ informed members that UKRI is working closely with the Office for Students (OfS) and acknowledged the potential to collaborate with OfS to encourage institutions to publish a dashboard for EDI which would highlight those institutions who do well and those not so well.

██████████ encouraged UKRI to consider other levers e.g. around accessibility including includes conferences and the ability to read and access data. Members discussed how personal experiences also act as a lever and suggested UKRI could consider positive reinforcement both as a funder and as an employer.

██████████ thanked members for their initial thoughts and contributions noting that UKRI will start to examine further the levers UKRI has as a funder to inform a more in-depth discussion at the next meeting.

Action: UKRI Strategy to schedule an in-depth discussion at the next meeting on shaping a long-term strategy.

6. AOB

No items were raised under any other business.