



Paper: 20-07
 UKRI EDI External Advisory Group
 Author: [REDACTED]

Minutes of the 12th meeting of the UK Research and Innovation External Advisory Group for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion held on 14 July 2020 via Zoom

EAG Attendees	
Jennifer Rubin (Chair)	Karen Salt (Deputy Chair)
Rosanna Duncan	Eugene Oteng-Ntim
Zabeen Hirji	Giovanni Razzu
Simon McKeown	Tom Welton
Claire Murray	Wendy Loretto
UKRI Attendees	
[REDACTED] (Secretariat)	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Apologies	
Zamila Bunglawala	[REDACTED]
Dina Belluigi	[REDACTED]

1. Welcome & Chair's update

[REDACTED] welcomed attendees to the meeting. [REDACTED] thanked members for extending their membership for a third year. [REDACTED] confirmed that UKRI will take onboard feedback to review the diversity of the group during the upcoming recruitment round.

Attendees introduced themselves. Apologies were received from [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] provided some updates:

- The R&D roadmap is currently out for consultation. It includes an entire page on EDI so offers an important opportunity to highlight issues in this area. Members are encouraged to read the 'People and Culture' chapter and to provide feedback. The relevant link was shared via Zoom chat: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-research-and-development-roadmap>
- Professor Dame Ottoline Leyser has joined as the new CEO of UKRI. She is greatly supportive of EDI and has already led an all-staff meeting on EDI. She will be interested in attending an EAG in the near future.

2. Minutes and actions from the last meeting

The minutes from the last meeting were accepted without comment.

Action 1 (Members to send suggestions to UKRI for further groups the EDI team should be engaging with on EDI impacts of Covid-19) continues to be relevant and members are encouraged to keep contacting UKRI with suggestions. [REDACTED] will speak on this topic at agenda item 8.

3. Update on EDI programme

[REDACTED] led this agenda item in [REDACTED] absence.

[REDACTED] informed the group that the responses to the Women and Equalities Committee's inquiry 'Unequal impact: Coronavirus (Covid-19) and the impact on people with protected characteristics' had now been published. The link was shared via Zoom chat:

<https://committees.parliament.uk/work/227/unequal-impact-coronavirus-covid19-and-the-impact-on-people-with-protected-characteristics/publications/>

The group discussed the topic of productivity levels during Covid-19. Analysis so far shows that UKRI has received proportionally more funding application since the beginning of lockdown. [REDACTED] mentioned a RSC study showing that in China submission rates increased in the early stages of lockdown, before subsequently going down by 18%. It was noted that the R&D Roadmap includes a review of productivity levels. The group agreed on the importance of interventions to prevent the creation of a 'lost generation' in the research sector due to Covid-19.

[REDACTED] informed the group that UKRI had decided not to publish its EDI vision document to date, given the scale of the instability in the research sector, but that it plans to do so in the coming weeks.

4. Comms update

[REDACTED] joined the meeting to provide an update on EDI-related communications.

UKRI published a statement on Black Lives Matter two weeks after the death of George Floyd, signed by the CEO and all Executive Chairs. It acknowledged the existing anger and grief and made a firm commitment to diversity and to holding itself accountable as an organisation and providing regular updates on the actions it will take. The reception of the statement was largely positive, with the relevant Tweet being UKRI's most widely-viewed in June. Other funders as well as [REDACTED] also showed support for UKRI's statement. A number of follow-on actions are planned. To date, UKRI has held two townhall meetings for its employee to discuss the meaning of the statement. Externally, it has raised awareness of research it has funded on topics of race and ethnicity. Alongside this, it is planning longer-term sustained engagement with different communities. Further, it is funding research on Covid-19 and ethnicity, with successful projects from the first round of the NIHR/UKRI call due to be announced next week.

In early June, UKRI also published its long-anticipated funding data diversity result. The release was generally well received, especially thanks to the level of detail that was made available, the fact that data were published in different accessible format, and the general commitment to transparency that the publication demonstrates. As a follow-on action, detailed ethnicity and intersectional analysis will be published as a second package of work and presented to the EAG shortly. Further work is also underway to continue to improve the accessibility of all UKRI's communications, including working with an external consultancy, Big Voice communications to make improvements in this area.

Further, UKRI ran a campaign for Pride month in June, focused on engaging the staff community with the aim of:

1. Creating positive role models through inclusive storytelling
2. Gaining greater insight into the perspectives of LGBTQ+ staff members
3. Visibly show UKRI to be engaging with this community

The campaign received positive feedback internally and on social media and inspired a call for a

UKRI-wide LBGT forum. Future plans include:

- Continued promotion of Pride Month content
- Looking ahead to LGBT STEM day on 18th November
- Content series on UKRI-funded research into LGBTQ+ issues and celebrating LGBTQ+ STEM researchers and innovators
- Working with HR teams on roll-out of LGBTQ+ networks, support etc
- Highlighting relevant funded research

Other recent UKRI publication include the Gender Pay Gap report and the report on Research Integrity: A landscape study.

Related to the Gender Pay Gap report members asked what evidence had been found to understand why the gap is widening and what measures UKRI is taking to close it.

Action 1: Invite the UKRI HR team to an upcoming meeting of the EAG to update on internal EDI work.

5. Bullying and Harassment: engagement activities

██████████ introduced paper EAG 20-06 (Tackling bullying and harassment: engagement activities to support culture change), noting the connection between the proposed activities outlined in this paper and the topic to be covered by ██████████ in agenda item 6.

Commenting on the issues raised in the paper, members mentioned positive examples of leadership and investments at UCL. Members were in favour of a proposed manifesto for senior leaders, but stressed the importance of the implied commitment being robust and specific enough to translate into action. Members also stressed the usefulness of audits and sanctions by UKRI in tackling bullying and harassment, suggesting for examples that institutions not complying could be excluded for applying for CDTs or similar funding for a period of time. However, the question was raised of how junior team members who are dependent on grants could be safeguarded in those situations. Members further suggested that in order to avoid adherence to UKRI T&Cs becoming a mere tick-box exercise, it was important for institutions to have strong communications plans to spread awareness of relevant policies and plans. The importance of transparency of carefully considering the implications before moving to sanctions, as well as of prevention strategies, was also noted by members during discussion.

6.

[illegible]

7. UKRI work on Talent and Skills & Future Leaders Fellowship programme

██████████ and ██████████ joined the meeting to present on UKRI's work on Talent&Skills and the Future Leaders Fellowship (FLF) respectively.

██████████ outlined that his team's work is concerned with the what the future research and innovation workforce will look like, and UKRI's role as a funder, employer and leader within that. UKRI invests ca. £600m annually in Talent programmes, £400m of which are for doctoral training. It funds ca. 20% of all UK PhD students. The issue was raised that a PhD can be a very mixed experience for students.

Another focus area is supporting the technical workforce in research and innovation. UKRI has signed up to the Technician Commitment to ensure greater visibility and recognition for technicians in the sector. Additionally, it is a signatory of the Concordat to support the Development of Careers for Researchers and an action plan on this has been signed off by the UKRI Executive Committee.

██████████ continued the presentation and introduced the FLF scheme, noting round 5 of 6 of the scheme had just closed. The scheme is designed to target the early career pinch point and provide unique opportunities for early career researchers and innovators, with a focus on interdisciplinary and cross-sector working as well as international mobility. The scheme imposes no limits at all concerning interdisciplinary working. It also particularly wants to encourage diversity and set no time or age boundaries for applicants. It is also not mandatory for applicants to have a PhD and the scheme is for instance open to technicians or librarians without a doctoral degree. Furthermore it permits job shares and flexible working arrangements. Time away from research and innovation is taken into account when assessing applications and candidates have the opportunity to reply to reviewers and provide additional information at all stages. UKRI is committed to supporting Fellows throughout the award and a dedicated development network is currently out for tender, mandating to have EDI considerations built into the process. Diversity data so far shows that the applicant and award pool looks very similar which is a positive indication. The team are also monitoring the diversity profile of reviewers and panel members for the scheme.

EAG members were invited to discuss:

- What is an appropriate benchmark against which FLF diversity can be judged?
- What levers can UKRI use to address any issues identified by this benchmarking?

Members asked whether a shared understanding of inclusive research culture even exists. UKRI colleagues commented that they were seeing progress and commitment to the things UKRI was signing up to but were struggling with assurance and identifying suitable actions when someone was not behaving as they expected. Members further asked if FLF diversity data was being disaggregated by ethnicity. ██████████ commented that only 1% of applicants, reviewers and panel members identified as Black. ██████████ asked the group for their thoughts on a suitable benchmark and the proportion that should be expected for ethnic minority candidates. The group discussed the broader question of how to measure diversity and what should be considered a success, agreeing that it was important to reach a common understanding in this area. In this context, it was noted that the process of setting benchmarks itself may already be skewed and thus perpetuate inequality. A possible solution is to intentionally set higher targets for representation (a mark-up) to make up for already existing inequality and thus help move out of an already structurally unequal system. Related to this discussion and the wider work on Talent it was noted that it should also be viewed as success when people with PhDs proceed into non-academic careers.

8. Long-term impact of Covid-19 on researchers in high-risk group

██████████ gave a presentation on 'COVID Resilience and a level playing field'. It drew out concerns around organisations in the research sector, including UKRI Councils, 'accidentally' ignoring the additional needs of high-risk individuals, who have in many cases faced a multitude of additional pressures during lockdown. For example, a recent AHRC call included normative activities (such as events, exhibitions), which inherently prejudices non-normative activities (such as online-based activities). Addressing this concern now will have the added benefit of better preparedness for future

lockdowns and outbreaks.

UKRI colleagues acknowledged the concerns raised, noting that UKRI is considering the additional pressures caused by Covid-19 on a range of different groups, including those with disabilities, caring responsibilities of those who suffer from Covid-19 symptoms.

Members asked if Equality Impact Assessments were being carried out on funding calls during COVID-19. UKRI colleagues confirmed that the EDI team is contributing to these assessments, but that presently more data is needed to establish adaptive policies that protect many different communities. Additionally, a dedicated disability taskforce is due to address issues.

Members noted that uncertainty and the inability to plan were currently creating an additional burden. For that reason, it was important to e.g. share presentations in advance to make sure everyone can participate in online meetings. It was also noted that those most successful were currently benefiting from extra money being made available through grant funding. For that reason, it is vital to attach further conditions around EDI to those grants.

██████████ acknowledged that this had been achieved and it had been agreed that grant money will be dispersed at least in proportion to existing diversity profile and that it should additionally be used to iron out inequalities. This has been included in grant terms and conditions and UKRI will be audited on this requirement. It was suggested that the EAG could develop a joint public statement on this topic.

Action 2: To share relevant grant terms and conditions with the group and to follow up about a possible joint statement.

9. AOB

No other business was raised by members.

10. Forward look & close

██████████ thanked members for participating in the meeting. ██████ noted that UKRI plan to hold the next meeting in September and Secretariat will be in touch shortly to confirm the date. Topics at the next meeting will include:

- HR update: internal work on EDI
- Further work with diversity data, including results from detailed ethnicity analysis

Members are invited to propose additional items for discussion at the next meeting and should contact ██████████ with suggestions.