

[REDACTED]

13 October 2020

Dear [REDACTED],

Freedom of Information request: FOI2020/00242

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request received on the 31 July and subsequent follow up and clarification emails, received on the 7 August, 11 August, 13 August, 17 August, 19 August, 2 September, 3 September and 9 September, in which you requested the following:

Your request:

I would like to see data pertaining to the ethnic composition of UKRI Research Council committees, from the following Research Councils:

- *Arts & Humanities Research Council*
- *Biotechnology & Biological Sciences Research Council*
- *Economic & Social Research Council*
- *Engineering & Physical Sciences Research Council*
- *Medical Research Council*
- *Natural Environment Research Council*
- *Research England*
- *UK Research and Innovation Future Leaders Fellowship Scheme (Cross-Council)*

At this time, following advice from the FOI Team on narrowing the scope of the request to avoid engaging Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act, I agree to omit data from the following Research Councils:

- *Innovate UK*
- *Science & Technologies Facilities Council*

By "committee", I mean a group of people who collectively agree on assessing grant applications, making decisions relating to making grant awards, and groups of people who collectively advise on strategy. For example, in the case of BBSRC, this would be Committees A, B, C, D and E, because they are involved in assessment and decision-making. It would also include BBSRC Council, because this body advises on strategy. This would not include the 'Pool of Experts' because they are not collectively engaged in the process of making decisions – their members are invited to join Committees A-E from time to time as required.

If possible, please provide ethnicity data for each ethnic category (for example, Black, Asian or White colleagues), but I would be happy with a replication of the ethnicity-related tables in the "EPSRC Diversity Data on Peer Review Panel April 2019" report (<https://epsrc.ukri.org/files/funding/edi/epsrc-peer-review-diversity-data-narrative-and-tables-april-2019-pdf/>).

It would be informative to understand the evolution of these numbers over time, so if possible, please provide numbers per year, dating back over the last 5 years if available.

In order to make this more meaningful for my purposes, I think it would be important to supplement the data with the number of times that committee meetings have taken place in each year, and the fraction of meetings at which no BAME individual has participated in each year.

Our response:

I can confirm UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) hold the information relevant to your request. Please see the information below.

UKRI was formed in 2018 and brings together the seven Research Councils, Innovate UK and Research England. Prior to this, each Research Council acted as an independent body, which is important to note in the context of the information being provided in this response.

UKRI are an independent organisation and are supported and challenged by an independent chair and board, which is principally funded through the Science Budget by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). The UKRI Board is appointed by the Secretary of State for BEIS. Further information around the governance and structure of UKRI can be found at <https://www.ukri.org/about-us/governance-and-structure/>.

The information provided in this response has been presented in the same format as previously released harmonised diversity data relating to grant and fellowship applications and awardees and PhD studentship starts, which can be found at <https://www.ukri.org/about-us/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/diversity-data/>.

It is important to note that UKRI is currently planning future work to explore this subject matter further, but at the present time our ability to respond to requests of this kind is dependent on the nature of the record keeping within individual Research Councils.

When responding to your request, consideration was given to protecting the personal information and confidentiality of individuals. Individuals in a small group are also considered to be identifiable. It is standard statistical reporting to suppress the disclosure of personal data in these situations.

In order to reduce the impact of this on the information you have requested, ethnicity data will be presented in four categories; Ethnic Minority, Not disclosed, Unknown and White.

Ethnicity is a protected characteristic and sensitive personal data. Information held on this is only available where an individual has opted to provide confidential diversity monitoring information. Due to the individual nature of each Research Council this information has not been recorded in a uniform manner from Council to Council, therefore for the purposes of providing a consistent response the following criteria was used to define each category:

- **Ethnic Minority** – any individual who has identified as being Asian, Black, Chinese, Mixed or Other, or any subset of these categories
- **Not disclosed** – any individual who has provided diversity monitoring information and opted not to disclose their ethnicity
- **Unknown** – if an individual has not provided diversity monitoring information, or ethnicity information is not held. No assumptions have been made about an individual's ethnicity
- **White** – any individual who has identified as being White or any subset of this category

In answering this request, some information has been withheld under section 40(2) where it relates to fewer than five members in a category as defined above. Information has also been withheld if disclosing it would allow a subset of fewer than five members to be identified as a consequence of its release.

We are exempting the ethnicity of members that fall within these sub-sets under section 40(2) of the FOIA. Disclosing this information would contravene the first Data Protection Principle as defined under Section 86 of the Data Protection Act 2018 and Article 5 of EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2016.

Section 40(2) is an absolute exemption and does not require a public interest test.

Members in each category have been rounded to the nearest value of five and their respective percentage proportions rounded to zero decimal places. Due to this the proportions may not add up to 100%. Categories represented by a null value (..) have suppressed results in line with section 40(2) of the FOIA as described above where categories consist of one to four members.

Information relating to decision making committees has been compiled on a per-meeting basis, which means that if the same member has sat on more than one committee meeting per year their data has been included for each meeting. For the purposes of this response, each year is considered as a financial year beginning 1 April and ending 31 March.

In compiling information on panel meetings with no ethnic minority representation it is important to note that these panels can include White, Not disclosed and Unknown individuals. As the ethnicity status of members that have Not disclosed or who are Unknown is not available it is possible that these panels may still include members that are of an ethnic minority.

Arts & Humanities Research Council (AHRC)

Peer Review Panels

The AHRC convenes non-standing panels from the membership of its Peer Review College. Panels meet ad-hoc according to the requirements of the scheme for which they provide final grades and ranks.

	2015/2016		2016/2017		2017/2018		2018/2019		2019/2020	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Ethnic Minority	..	..	20	7%	10	6%	10	5%	25	13%
Not disclosed	30	16%	30	12%	20	12%	20	14%	25	13%
Unknown	5	4%	25	10%	..	..	5	3%	..	..
White	150	79%	185	71%	140	80%	125	78%	140	73%
Total	190	100%	260	100%	175	100%	160	100%	190	100%
# of Panel Meetings	39		28		31		25		27	
# with no Ethnic Minority represented	36	92%	20	71%	22	71%	19	76%	12	44%

AHRC Council and Advisory Board

The AHRC Council is responsible both for advising the AHRC Executive Chair and making decisions, as delegated to it by the UKRI Board, on scientific, research and innovation matters in its discipline specific area. The Advisory Board advises the AHRC Council and Executive Chair on strategies for research, training, knowledge transfer and impact, and other programmes in line with AHRC's remit.

Both the AHRC Council and Advisory Board's information has been exempted under section 40(2) of the FOIA as described above.

Further information on the AHRC's governance and structure can be found at <https://ahrc.ukri.org/about/governancestructure/>.

Biotechnology & Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC)

Research Committees

The BBSRC has five committees that oversee peer review processes and assessment of grant applications. Each Research Committee has a core membership that is complemented by additional members drawn from a pool of experts. This ensures the appropriate expertise is available to assess the applications received. Core and pool members bring important assessment skills and expertise to BBSRC and gain valuable insights into how grants are assessed.

	2015/2016		2016/2017		2017/2018		2018/2019		2019/2020	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Ethnic Minority	10	4%	15	5%	35	13%	30	11%	30	11%
Not disclosed	25	7%	20	6%	10	4%	20	7%	15	5%
Unknown	20	5%	15	4%	..	..	..	..	..	..
White	290	84%	285	85%	240	83%	235	81%	220	84%
Total	345	100%	340	100%	290	100%	290	100%	265	100%
# of Panel Meetings	17		17		15		15		15	
# with no Ethnic Minority represented	12	71%	7	41%	3	20%	5	33%	5	33%

BBSRC Council and Strategy Advisory Panels

The BBSRC Council is responsible both for advising the BBSRC Executive Chair and making decisions, as delegated to it by the UKRI Board, on scientific, research and innovation matters in its discipline specific area. Strategy Advisory Panels advise BBSRC on strategy development and provides expert advice on key areas of the business and research portfolio.

Both the BBSRC Council and Strategy Advisory Panel's information has been exempted under section 40(2) of the FOIA as described above.

Further information on the BBSRC's governance and structure can be found at <https://bbsrc.ukri.org/about/governance-structure/>.

Economic & Social Research Council (ESRC)

Funding Decision Meetings

The ESRC funding meetings comprise both ad-hoc groups convened to assess proposals submitted in response to specific calls and standing Grant Assessment Panels (GAPs) which assess proposals for three key responsive mode schemes: Research Grants, New Investigator Grants and the Secondary Data Analysis Initiative. Both meeting types are included in this data. Some individuals will have attended both meeting types in a given year.

	2015/2016		2016/2017		2017/2018		2018/2019		2019/2020	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Ethnic Minority	35	8%	55	9%	30	9%	50	6%	55	10%
Not disclosed	50	10%	50	8%	30	8%	70	8%	45	7%
Unknown	35	8%	85	14%	30	8%	100	12%	80	14%
White	355	75%	410	69%	270	75%	605	74%	400	69%
Total	475	100%	600	100%	360	100%	820	100%	580	100%
# of Panel Meetings	29		29		19		43		43	
# with no Ethnic Minority represented	15	52%	8	28%	10	53%	16	37%	17	40%

ESRC Council and Strategic Advisory Network

The ESRC Council is responsible both for advising the ESRC Executive Chair and making decisions, as delegated to it by the UKRI Board, on scientific, research and innovation matters in its discipline specific area. The Strategic Advisory Network provides expert advice and support and is designed to complement the work of Council.

Both the ESRC Council and Strategic Advisory Network's information has been exempted under section 40(2) of the FOIA as described above.

Further information on the ESRC's governance and structure can be found at <https://esrc.ukri.org/about-us/governance-and-structure/>.

Engineering & Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC)

Peer Review Panels

The EPSRC hold specially convened prioritisation panels with changing membership with each panel. They judge the relative quality of research proposals competing for funding and are responsible for placing the proposals before it in a funding priority order. From this list, the final decision is made on funding. Further information on the EPSRC's peer review panels can be found at <https://epsrc.ukri.org/funding/assessmentprocess/panels/>.

	2015/2016		2016/2017		2017/2018		2018/2019		2019/2020	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Ethnic Minority	95	10%	80	8%	100	10%	85	8%	105	12%
Not disclosed	80	9%	90	10%	80	8%	95	9%	55	7%
Unknown	70	7%	100	10%	100	10%	90	8%	75	9%
White	685	74%	685	72%	750	73%	785	75%	605	72%
Total	925	100%	960	100%	1025	100%	1055	100%	840	100%
# of Panel Meetings	137		113		128		123		103	
# with no Ethnic Minority represented	72	53%	67	59%	68	53%	66	54%	51	50%

EPSRC Council and Strategy Advisory Groups

The EPSRC Council is responsible both for advising the EPSRC Executive Chair and making decisions, as delegated to it by the UKRI Board, on scientific, research and innovation matters in its discipline specific area. The EPSRC Strategy Advisory Groups are made up of the Strategic Advisory Teams (SAT), the Strategic Advisory Network (SAN), and the Science, Engineering and Technology Board (SETB), who advise on research and training strategy, policy development, and identify and champion new research challenges for future investment.

Strategic Advisory Teams	2015/2016		2016/2017		2017/2018		2018/2019		2019/2020	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Ethnic Minority	10	6%	15	8%	10	6%	10	6%	10	7%
Not disclosed	10	7%	5	4%	..	..	0	0%	0	0%
Unknown	20	14%	15	9%	10	8%	10	8%	20	13%
White	100	73%	120	79%	130	85%	135	86%	130	80%
Total	135	100%	155	100%	155	100%	155	100%	165	100%

The EPSRC Council, SAN and SETB's information has been exempted under section 40(2) of the FOIA as described above.

Further information on the EPSRC's governance and structure can be found at <https://epsrc.ukri.org/about/governance/>.

Medical Research Council (MRC)

Research Boards and Panels

The MRC research boards and panels are comprised of a standing group of members which hold their own research budgets and review and manage scientific activity within their specialist areas. They are responsible for recommending the award of MRC research grants and fellowships. Each board or panel meets between one to three times per year and it is important to note that membership on the panel does not necessarily mean all meetings are attended by all members.

For the purposes of the data below all membership across all MRC boards and panels each year has been aggregated. Further information on the MRC's research boards and panels can be found at <https://mrc.ukri.org/about/our-structure/research-boards-panels/>.

	2015/2016		2016/2017		2017/2018		2018/2019		2019/2020	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Ethnic Minority	20	9%	20	10%	20	10%	20	10%	20	11%
Not disclosed	25	12%	15	8%	15	7%	10	5%	10	6%
Unknown	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
White	165	79%	170	82%	165	84%	160	84%	145	83%
Total	210	100%	210	100%	200	100%	190	100%	175	100%
# of Panel Meetings	27		27		27		27		24	
# with no Ethnic Minority represented	2	7%	3	11%	6	22%	3	11%	3	13%

MRC Council and Strategy Board

The MRC Council is responsible both for advising the MRC Executive Chair and making decisions, as delegated to it by the UKRI Board, on scientific, research and innovation matters in its discipline specific area. The MRC Strategy Board advises the Executive Chair and council on areas requiring high-level strategic input, including scientific strategies, prioritisation of funding and the distribution of budgets across the research boards and panels. The Strategy Board is also responsible for the development, implementation and evaluation of MRC's Strategic Plan and for allocating funding from the Strategic Budget.

Both the MRC Council and Strategy Board's information has been exempted under section 40(2) of the FOIA as described above.

Further information on the MRC's governance and structure can be found at <https://mrc.ukri.org/about/our-structure/>.

Natural Environment Research Council (NERC)

Peer Review Panels

The NERC convenes non-standing panels from the membership of its Peer Review College and other UK and International experts as required. Panels meet ad hoc according to the requirements of the scheme for which they are assessing. Further information on the NERC's assessment process can be found at <https://nerc.ukri.org/funding/application/assessment/> and information on the Peer Review College found at <https://nerc.ukri.org/funding/application/peerreview/>.

	2015/2016		2016/2017		2017/2018		2018/2019		2019/2020	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Ethnic Minority	15	3%	35	5%	25	4%	35	5%	25	6%
Not disclosed	40	8%	75	11%	55	9%	50	8%	35	9%
Unknown	65	12%	120	17%	105	17%	80	12%	30	7%
White	420	78%	460	67%	445	71%	495	75%	315	78%
Total	540	100%	690	100%	625	100%	660	100%	405	100%
# of Panel Meetings	42		48		43		41		35	
# with no Ethnic Minority represented	31	74%	31	65%	29	67%	26	63%	22	63%

NERC Council and Science Committee

The NERC Council is responsible both for advising the NERC Executive Chair and making decisions, as delegated to it by the UKRI Board, on scientific, research and innovation matters in its discipline specific area. The Science Committee advises on the development of NERC's integrated science strategy and the funding of new programmes and initiatives.

Both the NERC Council and Science Committee's information has been exempted under section 40(2) of the FOIA as described above.

Further information on the NERC's boards and committees can be found at <https://nerc.ukri.org/about/organisation/boards/>.

Research England (RE)

Research England Development (RED) Fund Panel

RE was established on 1 April 2018 as a new committee alongside the other existing eight committees which are all brought together under UKRI. Data for RE is, therefore, not available before 1 April 2018.

RE are responsible for funding, engaging with and understanding English higher education providers, with the majority of funding assessment and decisions being conducted through the Research Excellence Framework, more information on which can be found at <https://www.ref.ac.uk/>.

Identified within the scope of this request is the RED Fund panel, which is required to make recommendations to the Research England Executive Chair for funding bids of £501,000 to £5 million. More information on the RED Fund can be found at <http://re.ukri.org/funding/our-funds-overview/research-england-development-red-fund/>.

The RED Fund panel's information has been exempted under section 40(2) of the FOIA as described above.

RE Council and Research Excellent Framework (REF) Panels

Research England's Council is responsible both for advising the RE Executive Chair and making decisions, as delegated to it by the UKRI Board, on scientific, research and innovation matters in its discipline specific area.

The RE Council's information has been exempted under section 40(2) of the FOIA as described above.

Ethnicity data for the REF panels is publicly available at <https://www.ref.ac.uk/publications/analysis-of-ref-2021-panel-membership-ref-201907/>.

UK Research and Innovation Future Leaders Fellowship Scheme (Cross-Council)

Peer Review Panels

The Future Leaders Fellowships (FLF) is a cross-UKRI scheme which began in 2018. Assessment takes place using a two-stage process. Proposals are first assessed via peer review, with subsequent Panel meetings held to shortlist then interview candidates.

	2018/2019		2019/2020	
	#	%	#	%
Ethnic Minority	20	5%	40	8%
Not disclosed	20	5%	25	6%
Unknown	20	5%	45	10%
White	305	85%	355	76%
Total	365	100%	465	100%
# of Panel Meetings	4		4	
# with no Ethnic Minority represented	0	0%	0	0%

Further information on the FLF scheme can be found at <https://www.ukri.org/funding/funding-opportunities/future-leaders-fellowships/>.

If you have any queries regarding our response or you are unhappy with the outcome of your request and wish to seek an internal review of the decision, please contact:

Head of Information Governance

Email: foi@ukri.org or infogovernance@ukri.org

Please quote the reference number above in any future communications.

If you are still not content with the outcome of the internal review, you may apply to refer the matter to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the review procedure provided by UKRI. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: <http://www.ico.gov.uk/>

If you wish to raise a complaint regarding the service you have received or the conduct of any UKRI staff in relation to your request, please see UKRI's complaints policy: <https://www.ukri.org/about-us/policies-and-standards/complaints-policy/>

Yours sincerely,


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