

The Oxford Action Plan for Equity and Inclusivity in Research Funding

Action area	Activities	Responsibility	Measures	Timescale	Notes/response to feedback received
Objective 1 – Internal funding schemes administered within Oxford are inclusive					
1. Internal funding Working Group	<p>Establish Working Group, accountable to RIC, to strengthen the EDI responsiveness of internal funding schemes. Specifically, to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Identify relevant funding schemes that are in scope for this work b) conduct an initial assessment of the EDI responsiveness level of those schemes c) develop and implement a plan to improve the EDI responsiveness levels of the schemes. <p>Using information collected in (a-c): Consult on, and develop guidance to improve the EDI responsiveness of internal and external funding schemes; monitor and evaluate the efficacy of the principles, and share good practice.</p>	Research Services Working Group (TBC) Divisions and Departments/Faculties and fund-holding units	<p>Working group established.</p> <p>Assessments completed.</p> <p>Guidance published and in use.</p> <p>Each scheme in scope progressed by one level on the scale.</p>	<p>Sept 23 Dec 24</p> <p>Dec 23 – Feb 24</p> <p>Mar 25</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>An initial transitional working group will be established and RIC will be asked to approve its constitution in November 2023.</p> <p>This programme will be led by RS by identified resource.</p>

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Objective 2 – Adequate data is gathered and analysed to identify the scale, nature, and areas of disparities in the characteristics of those applying for and securing research funding, and to inform and monitor progress with the action plan					
2. Diversity data	<p>Understand the diversity profile of applicants and awardees for research funding schemes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Develop mechanisms for gathering diversity data for internal funding schemes and awardees of external funding schemes b) Use the quantitative data to identify priority areas for action, and enable access to Departments, Faculties, and Divisions c) Assess possibility of benchmarking the diversity profile of applicants and awardees d) Develop analysis tools, enabling comparison with the characteristics of those eligible by Department/Faculty and Division e) Consider publishing an analysis report 	<p>Research Services IT Services HR analytics</p>	<p>Where applicable, improvements on baseline data</p> <p>All schemes to be at least EDI-specific</p>	<p>Dec 2023</p>	<p>Feedback: Concerns on data sharing protocols, methodological difficulties in pooling the data, difficulties with attribution and measurement of success, practicality and time scale.</p> <p>Response This project is already underway, and it is resourced via the broader DT project to develop research management data for REF and research quality. These concerns on data are noted and they will be addressed as part of this.</p>

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Objective 3 – Marginalised researchers have the resources, support, and adjustments required to ensure equitable access to research funding					
3. Toolkit	<p>The Working Group in consultation with RISN COP/ Divisional ARs, will develop best practice guidance to support the implementation of the action plan, and where appropriate, pilot opportunities for covering costs of applying for research funding arising due to marginalisation¹</p> <p>3.1. Support with costs of applying for funding</p> <p>a) Create guidance for researchers on external research funder opportunities for support costs, communicate it widely, and update it annually.</p> <p>b) Identify gaps in external provision, and explore/pilot a central mechanism for funding costs that are not funded externally.</p> <p>3.2 Practical support</p> <p>Provide accessible mechanisms for researchers to develop internal and external networks, mentoring and sponsorship:</p> <p>c) Update career conversation planner (Reviewee) and also update the Reviewer & Reviewee guidance to incorporate network development objectives</p> <p>d) Incorporate assessing and supporting the development of a researcher's network into Career Development Reviews at all career stages</p> <p>e) In consultation with target groups, develop an application support service and where appropriate (e.g. for disability) provide individualised support.</p> <p>3.3 Wellbeing</p> <p>f) With appropriate networks, promote awareness of University wellbeing schemes and encourage uptake.</p>	<p>Research Services RFC Divisions Departments/Faculties HR EDU Research Services RISN Facilitation & Finance and Research Culture CoPs POD / Researcher Hub Divisions Research Facilitation & Finance CoP Research Culture CoP EDU EDU Staff Networks / Advisory Groups Occupational Health Researcher Hub</p>	<p>Reviews with EDU Staff Networks / Advisory Groups confirm smooth access to enough funds for these costs</p>	<p>June 2024</p>	<p>Feedback received: the variation in internal and external funding schemes with different eligibility criteria, the various types of university funding pots mean that a consistent approach in supporting researchers will be harder to achieve. We need to be careful in managing staff expectations, have clarity on the mechanisms of funding costs and what can and cannot be funded. If guidance is produced it should be updated regularly and publicised.</p> <p>Response: Standardisation of the schemes might not be possible but we could look at common themes across types of grant. The working group might be key in helping with; mapping out existing schemes and prioritising key ones, and setting minimum expectations across divisions. The resourcing plan will be proposed following investigation and pilot.</p>

¹ Costs identified in the report are: parental leave, sick leave, differential visa costs for international travel, costs to cover reasonable adjustments for disabled staff, additional childcare costs for travel, additional carer costs for travel (for disabled staff), but this should not be considered an exclusive list, and solutions should provide for types of costs not previously identified.

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Objective 4 – Specific training needs identified in the report are met					
4. Leadership	<p>Ensure that decision-makers, academic leaders, PIs, and support staff directly and indirectly involved in the processes and decisions for accessing internal and external funding schemes are equipped and supported to act equitably and inclusively.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Assess the adequacy of available training provision and how well it equips participants in supporting the goals of inclusivity in research funding. (see Appendix 1) b) From (a) develop an appropriate training programme and require that relevant leaders do it. c) In consultation, identify expected standards for inclusive leadership, and the support and resources necessary for academic leaders and PIs to meet them d) Develop assessment tools for inclusive leadership competencies and effectiveness (e.g. for PDRs, 360-evaluation, self-assessment, reverse-mentoring). 	<p>This could be delivered as part of a broader project linked to the Wellcome Trust and research culture work.</p> <p>Other players include: CDO POD / Researcher Hub EDU Staff Networks / Advisory Groups Divisions Departments / Faculties</p>	<p>All relevant leaders directly involved trained, the majority of leaders indirectly involved undergoing training</p> <p>Improvements Staff Experience Survey</p>	<p>Jun 2025</p> <p>Jun 2026</p>	<p>Feedback Received: % targets were too high; resources for training is limited, there are some existing training programmes that are ongoing, the time scale is too short, the target group of trainees too broad.</p> <p>Response: We have removed % targets, narrowed the target leadership group to “leaders involved in research funding processes and decisions.” This objective will also include identification of developing suitable training package.</p>
Objective 5 – Convene sector-wide discussions to discuss collaborative approaches to addressing barriers to equitable access to funding					
5. Sector-wide commitments	<p>Convene UK research funders and universities to determine and agree practical commitments to transform equity and inclusivity in research funding nationally.</p> <p>Includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Designing, planning, organising, and delivering a national forum of Universities and funders. b) Securing in-principle agreement from participants in (a) on a public statement comprising a small set of specific, measurable, and time-bound commitments c) Identifying the means (existing or new) by which organisations will be held accountable for the agreed actions, including hosting of the material around the statement and sustainability mechanism for the initiative. 	<p>Research Services, with support from external consultant</p>	<p>Forum-delivered statement of commitment, signed off by participants.</p>	<p>March 2024</p>	<p>Feedback received: Consider how external rules are being applied internally.</p> <p>Response: This will be considered as part of objective 1. And a resourcing plan is in place for both objectives.</p>

Appendix 1 – Principles for Equitable and Inclusive Internal Selection

The following principles cover both informal and formal internal selection.

In due course, they will be supported by guidance on *how* they may be implemented.

1. Opportunities and methods of application are published to all eligible employees in good time
2. Requirements, processes, systems, and any associated events are as universally accessible as possible
3. Complexity of requirements and processes is minimised
4. There are no limiting and potentially exclusionary requirements
5. Flexibility is offered and permitted where appropriate, including reasonable adjustments
6. Disadvantages created by deadlines that conflict with or come soon after school or religious holidays are avoided and mitigated for
7. Applicants are not required to disclose sensitive personal information to access adjustments or allowances
8. Neither requirements nor processes benefit attributes unrelated to the conduct of the project
9. Inclusive and fair assessment criteria are agreed prior to issuing the call, used throughout evaluation, and made transparent to all applicants
10. Selection is based solely on the assessment criteria
11. Applicants' 'potential' to deliver the project is valued using broader considerations
12. Assessors have all completed the training in (objective 4) within the next 2 years, or a similar funder-led training on avoiding bias in selection
13. Steps are taken throughout selection to prevent bias from impacting decisions
14. Enough assessors participate to prevent bias effectively, and panel composition includes gender and ethnic diversity

There may be occasions in which diversion from some of these principles is required due to external constraints (e.g. an external research funder publishes a scheme with internal selection requirements at very short notice). In this case, the diversion should be highlighted to the Divisional EDI Officer and Head of Research to enable the identification of any patterns with funders or schemes.