RESEARCH COUNCIL EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY

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Policy statement

An organisation's success and competitiveness depends on its ability to embrace diversity and draw on the skills, understanding and experience of all its people. The potential rewards of diversity are significant: an organisation that recruits its employees from the widest possible pool will unleash talent and develop better understanding of its customers and stakeholders. It will also enable it to better spot and exploit opportunities.

Every person working in the Research Council has a personal responsibility for implementing and promoting the Equality and Diversity policy and principles in their day-to-day dealings with customers, with each other and with partners and collaborators outside the Research Council. Inappropriate behaviour is not acceptable.

This policy is agreed with the Trade Union Side and complies with legislation.

This policy applies to all employees of the Research Council of a permanent and temporary nature, and to Visiting Workers, students or those workers provided by a third party agency.

The UK Shared Business Services Ltd (SBS) provides HR services across the Research Councils. However some employees are deployed at establishments/facilities/vessels that do not access services from SBS. In these cases references to the SBS or System (Employee Self Service) will not apply and employees should refer to their Research Council HR team for assistance.

Whether a worker is deemed to be a worker or employee is not always clear under employment legislation. In cases where managers or individuals have any doubt as to whether the Equality and Diversity policy and procedure should apply, advice should be sought from the Research Council HR team.

1. Principles

1.1 As an equalities organisation, the Research Council is committed to eliminating unjustified discrimination, promoting equality of opportunity and good relations between employees and encouraging diversity throughout the workforce.

1.2 Our aim is that our employees will be truly representative of all sections of society and that all employees feel respected and able to give of their best. The purpose of this policy is to promote equality and fairness for all employees, job or funding applicants and other stakeholders and not to discriminate on grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy, maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, or trade union membership/activity.

1.3 The Research Council opposes all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination. All employees, whether part-time, full-time or temporary, will be treated fairly and with respect. Selection for employment, promotion, or any other benefit will be on the basis of skill, aptitude and ability. All employees will be helped and encouraged to develop to their full potential and the talents and resources of the workforce will be fully utilised to maximise the performance of the organisation.

1.4 The Research Council seeks to operate a fair and transparent pay and grading system where reward is based on objective criteria free from all forms of unfairness or bias. Where differentials cannot be substantively justified, the Research Council will take appropriate action to address them.

2. Definitions

- **Equality** is about creating a fairer society where everyone can participate and has the opportunity to fulfil their potential. It is mainly about fair treatment and compliance with legislation (Equality Act 2010) designed to address unlawful discrimination against those who share a protected characteristic.

- **Diversity** is about recognising and valuing difference in its broadest sense. It is about creating a culture and practices that recognise, respect, value and harness difference for the benefit of members of staff, stakeholders and members of the public.

- **Protected Characteristic** - these are the grounds on which discrimination is unlawful: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

- **Direct Discrimination** - the less favourable treatment of a person because of a protected characteristic.

- **Indirect Discrimination** - the use of an apparently neutral provision, criterion or practice which puts people with a particular protected characteristic as a disadvantage compared with others who do not share that characteristic, and applying the practice, provision or criterion cannot be objectively justified.

- **Discrimination by association** - discrimination against an individual who does not have a protected characteristic because of their association with someone who has a protected characteristic.

- **Discrimination by perception** - discrimination against an individual because of a perception that they have a protected characteristic.

- **Harassment** *- unwanted behaviour that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person; or is reasonably considered by that person to have the effect of violating their dignity or of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them, even if this effect was not intended by the person responsible for the conduct.

- **Victimisation** is when a person is subjected to a detriment because they have previously made or supported a complaint under the Equality Act 2010, or because they are

suspected of doing so. Protection against victimisation is not provided if the complaint is made maliciously or those supporting the complaint know it to be untrue or malicious.

- **Positive action.** The Equality Act 2010 allows positive action if employees or applicants who share a protected characteristic suffer disadvantage connected to that characteristic, or if their participation in an activity is disproportionately low. For example applications for jobs may be encouraged from specific sections of the community that are under-represented in the workforce as a whole or at particular levels, or a specific training course may be targeted at employees who share a protected characteristic in order to help them to develop skills to the required level to compete for jobs and promotion opportunities. In addition, if candidates for a vacancy, promotion or training course are equally qualified, positive action allows the selection of an individual with a protected characteristic over other candidates. Positive discrimination on the other hand is **unlawful** i.e. recruiting or promoting people solely on the basis of their protected characteristic.

  * Further information on harassment and bullying can be found in the Research Council Harassment and Bullying Policy.

3. Research Council commitment

3.1 The Research Council is committed to:

- Creating an environment in which individual differences and the contributions of all employees are recognised and valued.
- Providing a working environment that promotes dignity and respect for all. No form of intimidation, bullying or harassment will be tolerated.
- Making training, development and progression opportunities available to all employees
- Reviewing all employment practices and procedures to ensure fairness.
- Treating any proven breaches of the Equality Policy as misconduct and subject to disciplinary proceedings.
- Taking positive action where necessary to make sure opportunities are offered on a fair and equal basis.
- Taking positive action where necessary to redress any imbalances in the makeup of the workforce where these are considered to be potentially damaging for the organisation.

3.2 The Research Council shall take all reasonable steps to ensure that:

- no employee is treated less favourably than another in relation to their employment/appointment/engagement because of their membership of any protected characteristic group;
- no job requirement, criterion or practice that has a disproportionate and detrimental effect on one section of the workforce shall be applied unless it can be justified in relation to the job;
- if an applicant or employee has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities, then the Research Council shall make any reasonable adjustments to prevent the individual being put at a substantial disadvantage;
- harassment of any type is not tolerated, and where it occurs that it is stopped as soon as possible and appropriate disciplinary action is taken;
- appropriate equality-related monitoring is undertaken that progresses the Research Council's equality aims and ensures that employees are treated fairly, whatever their protected characteristic(s);

- the Research Council will take all reasonable action to ensure that terms and conditions of employment/appointment/engagement are not offered on discriminatory grounds and are in accordance with this policy.

4. Employee Accountabilities and responsibilities

4.1 All employees have a responsibility to:

- Treat others with dignity and respect at all times.
- Cooperate with measures introduced by the Research Council that promote equality and diversity and prohibit discrimination.
- Not commit any acts or behave in a manner that would contravene this Equalities and Diversity policy.
- Not instruct, induce or attempt to induce or pressurise other employees to act in breach of this Equalities and Diversity Policy.
- Advise the Research Council if they are aware of any discriminatory conduct, either against themselves or any third party that contravenes the spirit of this policy.

5. Recruitment

5.1 No vacancy will be advertised or publicised (internally or externally) in a way which discourages applications from any sector of the population.

5.2 All applications will be considered on merit. Each individual will be assessed so far as practicable against a set of objective, transparent and non-discriminatory criteria which will be directly related to the demands of the particular vacancy.

5.3 All interviews will be conducted in accordance with the terms and spirit of this policy. The questions asked of candidates will be closely related to the selection criteria and will be asked in order to elicit information which will give a fair assessment of that particular applicant's ability (technical and non-technical) to perform the tasks required by the vacancy.

5.4 No one sector of the population will be deliberately disadvantaged or discriminated against in relation to the terms of employment offered or applied to them. When aware of the need to do so, the Research Council will make reasonable adjustments to its arrangements for interviews and to conditions of employment for disabled applicants to ensure so far as practicable that existing arrangements or conditions of employment do not place such applicants at an unjustified and significant disadvantage relative to other applicants.

5.5 In accordance with the Research Council's Redundancy Policy, the Council may consider applications from employees whose jobs are at risk of redundancy in advance of opening up recruitment. Equally, if employees are being redeployed for health and safety reasons these cases may be considered before advertising any post more widely.

5.6 All job applicants will be asked to supply information on gender, ethnicity and disability for monitoring purposes. However this information will be detached from application forms prior to shortlisting and will not be seen by those involved in the selection process.

6. Training

6.1 The Research Council will expect all employees to attend training so that they are fully aware of their responsibilities regarding Equality and Diversity in the workplace and have the knowledge and skills required to carry them out.

7. Equal pay

7.1 The Research Council will work in partnership with the Trade Union Side (TUS) to:

- Incorporate equal pay principles when undertaking job evaluation.
- Monitor the impact of pay policies and pay decisions and ensure their consistency with equal pay principles.
- Undertake periodic equal pay reviews, in accordance with Equality & Human Rights Commission Code of practice on Equal Pay.
- Provide guidance to managers and all employees involved in recruitment on pay, reward, benefits and equalities issues.
- Make available to employees' information about how their pay is determined.
- Keep employees informed of pay and reward policy developments.

8. After leaving employment

8.1 The Research Council will not unlawfully discriminate against any individual after their employment/ appointment/engagement has terminated.

8.2 All employees are reminded that they are expected to treat former employees in accordance with the spirit of this policy. Informal "references" or opinions about former employees must not be made or given to third parties on behalf of the Research Council under any circumstances. All requests from third parties for information about former employee MUST be discussed with the Research Council HR team.

9. Complaints

9.1 The Research Council will not tolerate discrimination or harassment by or of any of its employees. Discrimination and instances of harassment by or of employees because of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership and pregnancy and maternity or Trade union membership or activity will be treated as a disciplinary offence (link to disciplinary policy).

9.2 Any employee who has committed a breach of this Equalities and Diversity Policy may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including summary dismissal in accordance with the Research Council's Disciplinary Procedure (link to disciplinary policy).

9.3 Any employee who receives treatment they believe to be discriminatory should raise the matter through the Research Council's Grievance Procedure. Complaints with regard to harassment will be dealt with using the Research Council's Harassment and Bullying Procedure (link to harassment and bullying procedure).

9.4 The Research Council will take steps to ensure that any employee who has in good faith complained and/or taken action according to the above procedures will not receive less favourable treatment than any other individual.

9.5 Any acts or omissions by way of retaliation or intimidation against any employee making a complaint or assisting such a complainant will result in the alleged perpetrator being subjected to disciplinary action up to and including summary dismissal.

9.6 Any employee who maliciously makes or assists in an unfounded complaint will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including summary dismissal.

10. Policy Review

10.1 This policy will be regularly reviewed to incorporate any legislation changes. The TU may request that a policy is reviewed.

11. Amendment History

Version	Date	Comments/Changes