



COMPOSITION OF INSTITUTE BOARDS AND COMMITTEES: Equality and Diversity

The main criteria for appointment to institute boards and committees should continue to be based on merit and the relevant skills required for the committee concerned. However, where possible, the representation of members from minority group backgrounds should also be taken into account. This guidance aims to promote equality and diversity in committee structures, provides equality and diversity advice for those involved in the appointments process and outlines a number of measures that can be taken to achieve a more diverse and inclusive committee membership profile.

<p>Over-arching BBSRC diversity strategy</p>	
<p>BBSRC seeks to create an inclusive culture in which discrimination is eliminated, individuals are valued and respected and everyone is afforded opportunities they need to thrive.</p>	<p>The critical factors here are for BBSRC and the institutes for which it is the main sponsor to promote equality in the appointments process and in so doing eliminate discrimination against those who share one or more of the following 'protected characteristics' (as defined by the Equality Act 2010): race, religion or belief, age, sexual orientation, disability, sex, maternity or pregnancy, marriage or civil partnership or gender reassignment.</p> <p>In addition, committee membership provides valuable management experience, which contributes to an individual's development and long-term potential.</p>
<p>BBSRC diversity strategy aims</p>	
<p>These aims are set out in the BBSRC diversity strategy for 2010 to 2013:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the BBSRC HR Strategy and the Strategic HR Capabilities work stream. • Promote equality between all groups and in the services BBSRC provides. • Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and unfair treatment. • Create an inclusive culture throughout BBSRC in order to attract, develop and retain high quality staff from different backgrounds. 	<p>These aims support the over-arching diversity strategy and, therefore, should be considered in the appointments process.</p>
<p>Equality and diversity definitions - the following definitions are provided as an aide memoire to assist those involved in the appointments process and committee members in developing future participants.</p>	
<p>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 employees, stakeholders, contractors and members of the public.</p>	<p>Individually, those appointing members of committees should be aware of their personal prejudices and attitudes and ensure that these are set aside.</p>
<p>Equality aims to support the benefits of diversity by creating fairness for all through anti-discrimination legislation.</p>	<p>A brief summary of the Equality Act is set out below.</p>
<p>Discrimination can be 'direct' or 'indirect' or 'perceived' or by 'association': Direct discrimination is treating someone less favourably than another because of a</p>	<p>For example, a female of equal standing may be prevented from seeking membership of a committee.</p>

<p>protected characteristic they have or are thought to have, or because they associate with someone who has a protected characteristic, which cannot be justified.</p>	
<p>Indirect discrimination applies to all protected characteristics and occurs when a condition, rule, policy or practice applies to everyone but disadvantages people who share a protected characteristic without any justifiable reason.</p>	<p>For example, the number of people from a minority group that can meet the selection criteria for a committee may be considerably smaller.</p>
<p>Associated discrimination occurs when an individual is treated less favourably without any justifiable reason owing to their association with another person.</p> <p>Perceived discrimination is direct discrimination against someone because others think they possess a protected characteristic. It applies even if that person does not actually possess that characteristic.</p>	<p>For example, an employee's partner might be disabled and this is taken into account in decisions affecting the employee's promotion.</p> <p>For example, an employee is age 45 but looks very much younger and is prevented from representing his organisation at an important conference because his line manager believes he looks too young.</p>
<p>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.</p> <p>Positive discrimination on the other hand is unlawful i.e. recruiting or promoting people solely on the basis of their protected characteristic.</p>	<p>Therefore, if candidates for an appointment are equally qualified, positive action allows the selection of an individual with a protected characteristic over other candidates.</p>
<p>Relevant employment legislation</p>	
<p>The Equality Act 2010 combines previous legislation (such as the Sex Discrimination Act and the Race Relations Act) Like the previous raft of legislation it replaces, it provides protection against discrimination for employees who share any of the protected characteristics (listed above).</p>	<p>All protected characteristics (sex, race etc as above) should be disregarded in the appointments process and in doing so fair treatment and equality should be promoted.</p>

<p>Measures to achieve a more diverse membership profile - the following is drawn from recognised best practice and incorporates previous guidance aimed at creating an inclusive committee culture.</p>	
<p>If a 'local' Appointments Board is not favoured, introduce formal monitoring of the composition of institute committees – monitoring should cover all forms of appointment whether based on a formal application process, invite or expressions of interest based on the skills and competences required for the primary purpose of the committee. Any formal process should include the general aim to promote equality and where appropriate improve the representation of minority groups.</p>	<p>Integral to this might be undertaking an equality impact assessment of the appointments processes in place at the institute.</p> <p>Monitoring the composition should be regularly reported to a high level committee (e.g. the Executive Board) to ensure that membership profiles are representative of minority groups where possible.</p>
<p>The main criteria for appointment to committees should continue to be based on merit and the relevant skills required but the representation of minority groups should be taken into account.</p> <p>Positive action can be used to good effect to improve the composition of committees. However, caution should be exercised to ensure that individuals from certain minority groups are not overburdened by repeatedly selecting them on committees to drive up representation.</p> <p>Set targets for minority group representation.</p> <p>Participation on committees should be recognised and reflected in the objective setting process.</p>	<p>Positive action does not mean that the main selection criteria are ignored. In this context, positive action should result in the selection on equal merit of a committee member from a minority group over a majority group candidate.</p> <p>Targets should be realistic and proportionate to the organisation structure.</p> <p>Acknowledging the additional work and responsibility of committee membership should encourage participation by individuals from all groups.</p>
<p>Use mentoring programmes (this can include informal mentoring of talented staff by committee members) and other learning and development opportunities to encourage those from the under-represented groups to seek committee membership.</p>	<p>Mentoring can enable individuals gain the wider perspective and the necessary skills and confidence to seek membership of committees.</p> <p>Role models and mentors can raise awareness of the issues and obstacles that can affect individuals from minority groups, particularly if drawn from similar groups.</p> <p>Early career mentoring of identified talent can also provide a framework within which to map and plan career choices.</p>

<p>Invite less senior or non-committee members to observe committees in operation and / or create opportunities for individuals to present to committees on special projects or relevant issues.</p> <p>Encouraging membership of or participation in 'junior' committee structures (e.g. user groups) similarly enables individuals gain experience of the committee process.</p>	<p>These measures provide individuals with experience of how committees operate, build confidence, which in turn may encourage their interest and participation in the future.</p>
<p>The role of Chairs of committees can contribute to the adoption of an inclusive committee culture and whether individuals from all groups willingly seek to participate in committee structures.</p> <p>For example, attention should be given to new members, which might include coaching newcomers, team building exercises and the use of tailored induction programmes for all.</p> <p>Sufficient notice should be given for meetings, which should be timed to start and finish accordingly to ensure that individuals who work flexibly or those with caring responsibilities are able to attend.</p>	<p>Chairs are encouraged to be sensitive to relevant diversity issues and take account of the experience, standing and assertiveness of members and those making presentations or other contributions. Specifically, Chairs should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • encourage full participation from all attendees • ensure that contributions are welcomed and valued • identify actions that make participants feel part of a successful team. <p>Well timed meetings should encourage staff that work flexibly or have caring responsibilities to participate in committees.</p>
<p>Training</p>	
<p>On appointment, all members of committees should be required to undertake diversity awareness if they have not already done so.</p>	<p>It is also recommended that members undertake related training courses such as Overview of Employment Law, Effective Recruitment & Selection, if they have not already done so.</p>
<p>Any specialist training relevant to the operation of the committee should also be considered.</p>	
<p>Sources of further Information</p>	
<p>BBSRC Diversity and dignity at work policy set out in Section A3 of the Employment Code, including related guidance notes BBSRC Diversity Strategy and BBSRC Equality Scheme are both accessible via the BBSRC website at http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/organisation/policies/employment/index.html</p>	