

**EPSRC Ethnicity & Race Equality Initiative: university strategic dialogue with EPSRC partner universities – invitation to provide input, part 1**

**March 2021**

**Summary**

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| With this dialogue we aim to gather insights and experiences of our university partners to help us better understand the factors that influence the inclusion of ethnic minority researchers and doctoral students in our portfolio and across the landscape, as well as explore the role of university policies and interventions to enhance our understanding of ‘what works’ and where EPSRC can further support and add value.  The dialogue will be in two parts:   * Part 1: Information gathering stage * Part 2: Focused discussions informed by the information gathered in part 1. |
| **Key actions and dates:**   * **Part 1: Information gathering**   If you wish to take part in this dialogue, please provide answers to the questions on the form below focusing on your experiences in the engineering and physical sciences disciplines and **return by 14 April 2021 to** [**Inclusionmatters@epsrc.ukri.org**](mailto:Inclusionmatters@epsrc.ukri.org)   * **Part 2: Focussed discussion meetings** will follow in **April – June 2021**. |
| **Contact:**  For further information about this initiative please contact:  Dr Paula Bailey - Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)  [Paula.bailey@epsrc.ukri.org](mailto:Paula.bailey@epsrc.ukri.org) |

**Introduction**

Underrepresentation of researchers from Black, Asian and ethnic minority backgrounds in the engineering and physical sciences (EPS) remains one of EPSRC’s major equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) challenges, with ethnic diversity in our grant and doctoral student portfolio an area of concern.

Our aim is to ensure that the ethnic diversity in our funding portfolio and of those who engage in our peer review processes is representative of the EPS population and our award rates across different ethnicities show no disparity.

To enable us to build knowledge and gather insights to better understand the factors that influence the representation of Black, Asian and ethnic minority researchers and doctoral students in our portfolio we are seeking input from our research community.

This university dialogue focuses on the participation and experience of researchers in EPS disciplines. We want to understand how we can work in partnership with institutions to improve ethnic minority representation at all research career stages. Although this engagement is concentrated on the research perspective, we are aware of the wider context and holistic view that it is important for a university to consider, for example around undergraduate teaching and the Black, Asian and ethnic minority attainment gap and inclusion for technical and professional staff.

Later in the year we will also be opening ‘Have your say’ community surveys to obtain the views of our engineering and physical sciences academic researchers, postdoctoral researchers and doctoral students directly to better understand their lived experiences. We will share our findings with the community.

Alongside our engagement, we have also published [detailed ethnicity data](https://epsrc.ukri.org/funding/edi-at-epsrc/ethnicity-and-race-equality/)  for applications and awards of research grants, fellowships and our studentship portfolio as well as information on participation in peer review.

Our data highlights that ethnic minority researchers are underrepresented in our portfolio. That award rates for PI, Co-I and Fellowship applicants from White ethnic groups are consistently higher than those applicants from ethnic minority groups. Furthermore, whilst there has been an increase in the proportion of ethnic minority researchers participating in peer review, this is still not representative of the EPS academic population.

We will work together with colleagues across UKRI to share learning and knowledge as well as develop actions to address inequality and under representation in our portfolio.

**Aim of this dialogue**

With this dialogue we aim to gather insights and experiences of universities to help us better understand the factors that influence the inclusion of ethnic minority researchers and doctoral students in our portfolio and across the landscape, as well as explore the role of university policies and interventions to enhance our understanding of ‘what works’ and where EPSRC can further support and add value.

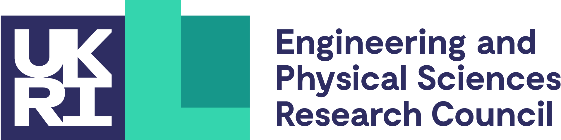
We intend to focus our exploration on:

* the barriers students from Black, Asian and ethnic minority backgrounds may face when accessing doctoral studies
* the attractiveness of a transition to an academic career for people from a Black, Asian and ethnic minority background
* the challenges facing Black, Asian and ethnic minority researchers as they progress their research careers
* the experiences of Black, Asian and ethnic minority researchers when accessing and securing research funding
* the effectiveness of current interventions and support for Black, Asian and ethnic minority researchers - particularly in relation to recruitment, career progression, enabling greater inclusion and addressing bias and prejudice.

We will use the results of this dialogue to inform a more focused discussion later in the year. This will be the first time we have held an in-depth conversation on race and ethnicity with our university partners.

**COVID-19**

The ethnic minority and race equality initiative is a priority project for us and, although we understand the challenging circumstances that we are now in due to the global pandemic, we consider it important to continue with community engagement to improve our understanding of the challenges that face our ethnic minority researchers and students, particularly where they are likely to be exacerbated by the current situation. We are aware that people will be juggling many different demands and we have therefore extended our engagement period to make sure we give the opportunity to engage with us to as wide a range of people that we can.



**EPSRC Ethnicity & Race Equality: university strategic dialogue**

**Part 1 – invitation to provide input**

This initial information gathering phase consists of a series of exploratory questions which have been co-created with our [EDI Strategic Advisory Group](https://epsrc.ukri.org/files/funding/edi/edi-sag-membership-pdf/) and focus on six areas for discussion:

1. Role of **leadership** and **governance**
2. Enabling greater **inclusion** and more inclusive environments
3. Broadening the talent pool – **attracting** diversity amongst EPS researchers
4. Career progression – **supporting** and **retaining** diversity in EPS research
5. Experiences in accessing and securing research **grant funding**
6. Use of **data** and **evidence.**

Please complete the questions on the form below focusing on your experiences in the engineering and physical sciences disciplines and **return by 14 April 2021 to** [**Inclusionmatters@epsrc.ukri.org**](mailto:Inclusionmatters@epsrc.ukri.org)

These questions form an important strand of our knowledge gathering which, when combined with the outcome of other lines of enquiry, will inform strategy development to address the underrepresentation of ethnic minority researchers in our research portfolio.

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| **Name of Institution** |  |
| **Name of primary contact(s) for ethnicity and race related dialogue (part 2)** |  |
| **Contact email for primary contact(s)** |  |

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| Role of **leadership** and **governance** | |
| **Question** | **Response** |
| 1. Does your organisation have a specific ethnic minority / race equality policy or commitment? |  |
| 1. How do you ensure your commitment to EDI, and in particular to ethnic / race equality, cascades throughout your organisation? |  |
| 1. Where do you see your specific challenges are? |  |
| 1. Are there any approaches/activities that work well for supporting undergraduates that would transfer to postgraduates? |  |
| 1. What do your international researchers cite as their greatest challenge when settling into the UK university environment?    1. What support is available to assist international researchers new to research in the UK? |  |
| 1. Do you have targets for the representation of ethnic minorities on your organisation’s strategic boards and/or in senior appointments? |  |
| 1. Due to the current COVID-19 pandemic and from an EDI perspective, what do you envisage the longer-term impacts will be on academic researchers, post doctoral researchers and doctoral students from Black, Asian and ethnic minority backgrounds? |  |
| 1. If applicable: how effective has the Advance HE: Race Equality Charter been in addressing your challenges? |  |
| 1. How do you see your EDI strategy developing in the future - what would you like to be able to do but haven’t been able to do so far? |  |
| 1. How might Universities and EPSRC work in partnership in this area?    1. What do you see as EPSRC/UKRI’s role? |  |
| Enabling greater **inclusion** and more inclusive environments | |
| **Question** | **Response** |
| 1. How are you enabling an inclusive environment for all your staff and doctoral students? |  |
| 1. It is well reported that researchers and doctoral students from ethnic minority backgrounds are more likely to feel marginalised and isolated at their place of work in academia. What measures have you put in place to help people from ethnic minority backgrounds feel more included? Of these measures which have been the most effective and why? |  |
| 1. Do you have any specific wellbeing polices and/or practices in place? |  |
| 1. How do you ensure that opportunities (e.g. appointments, promotions, applying for grant funding etc.) are open to everyone? |  |
| Broadening the talent pool – **attracting** diversity amongst EPS researchers | |
| **Question** | **Response** |
| 1. Do you have any specific measures or interventions in place to **attract** researchers (academic/post doc) and doctoral students from ethnic minority backgrounds into research careers?    1. How is the university encouraging a more diverse representation from underrepresented ethnic groups in applications to recruitment opportunities?    2. What has been the most successful/ effective measure and why? |  |
| 1. How do you ensure fairness and objectivity in decision making within your recruitment processes and promotion panels?    1. Do you consider other metrics such as ‘academic citizenship’ aspects as well as numbers of publications and the amount of grant investments? |  |
| Career progression – **supporting** and **retaining** diversity in EPS research | |
| **Question** | **Response** |
| 1. What targeted support, if any, do you provide ethnic minority researchers/ doctoral students to aid with their career progression and promotion opportunities? |  |
| 1. How is the university encouraging a more diverse representation from underrepresented ethnic groups on its strategic advisory groups and that of other organisations e.g. EPSRC Strategic Advisory Teams (SATs), learned societies committees and special interest groups etc? |  |
| 1. What are the main issues raised by your Black, Asian and ethnic minority doctoral students and researchers? How are you responding to these? |  |
| Experiences in accessing and securing research **grant funding**  **Please see annex 1&2: University and EPSRC ethnicity data for applications, awards and award rates[[1]](#footnote-1) by financial year for your university** | |
| **Question** | **Response** |
| 1. What are the most common difficulties cited by your ethnic minority researchers when considering or making research funding applications? |  |
| 1. Do you consider that there are any barriers that ethnic minority researchers encounter when accessing and securing research grant funding? If yes, what are they and how does the university help mitigate against these?    1. What support does the university offer to researchers applying for grants – e.g. providing training, mentoring, guidance and/or other support?    2. Of the measures you have put in place which have been most successful/ effective and why? |  |
| 1. Does the university specifically consider people from underrepresented ethnic groups when selecting (internal pre selection process) people to apply for funding opportunities?    1. If yes, how do you do this?    2. Have you used positive action? |  |
| Use of **data** and **evidence** | |
| **Question** | **Response** |
| 1. How do you capture the lived experiences of your ethnic minority doctoral students, postdoctoral researchers and academic staff? e.g. surveys, focus groups, support networks etc. |  |
| 1. What diversity data do you collect and monitor? e.g. ethnicity and nationality, socio economic -qualitative and quantitative data.    1. Is your ethnicity data disaggregated to individual ethnic group categories (e.g. Asian – Bangladeshi)?    2. How does this data feed into the design of future interventions? |  |
| 1. Can you assess the impacts of your interventions in your data? |  |
| 1. How do you measure the effectiveness of your activities? Have you held any internal evaluations/ focus groups/ workshops with staff on your ethnicity and race equality initiatives, whose outputs you are able to share? |  |
| Other comments | |
| **Question** | **Response** |
| Is there anything else that you would like to share with us? |  |

1. Success rates are now known as Award rates. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)