Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Plan

Version 3

August 2023

Introduction to UKERC

The UK Energy Research Centre (UKERC) carries out world-class, interdisciplinary research into sustainable future energy systems.

It is a focal point of UK energy research and a gateway between the UK and international energy research communities.

Our whole systems research informs UK policy development and research strategy.

UKERC is funded by the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) Energy Programme.

Contents

1. Introduction and Aims

UKERC's Vision is to be the UK's centre of excellence for creating and applying knowledge to inform the energy transition and build a low-carbon, sustainable future. Our Mission is to enable the UK research community to conduct independent, interdisciplinary research to inform net zero decision making by exploring new questions, methods and agendas, and maximising impact through local, national and international engagement. We will not achieve these aims unless we commit to improving Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) across the consortium; actively reaching out to and involving diverse groups will ensure a sustainable future that benefits everyone, rather than a select few.

We aim to foster an inclusive culture that is fair, values diversity and maintains a working and social environment in which the rights and dignity of our staff, researchers, students, partners and stakeholders are respected. Although both promote fairness, it is also important to distinguish between equality and equity. Equality is providing the same support to everyone, regardless of individual need, and equity is providing differential support according to individual need. By engaging directly with underrepresented groups, we can develop EDI policies that are targeted and enable them to thrive.

UKERC'S EDI Plan was originally created in the first five months of Phase 4 by UKERC HQ. Its purpose is to match agreed policy with concrete action, enabling UKERC to uphold its EDI commitments. As UKERC is not a legal entity and is instead a research collaboration between 20+ academic institutions, each influenced by their own EDI policies as well as those of UKRI, the aim is to reinforce, support and go beyond those procedures if appropriate.

Version 1 of this document was reviewed by UKERC's Co-Directors and the Bartlett School of Environment, Energy and Resources' (BSEER) EDI Team in 2019 (BSEER is the department that hosts UKERC at UCL). Version 2, which was the first to be published on our website, was approved by the Co-Directors and UKERC HQ on 4 January 2022. We would like to thank CREDS for sharing valuable lessons with us regarding implementation of their own EDI Plan[1]. This document underwent another period of update and review by our Impact and EDI Officer and EDI Sub-committee, resulting in Version 3, during the summer of 2023.

We recognise that UKERC has some way to go on diversity and would therefore like to invite the wider community, particularly underrepresented groups, to provide feedback on this plan by publishing it on our website as a 'living document'. It is open to revision and we encourage stakeholders to get in touch with any feedback.

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[1] CREDS. (2019) Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Plan. Available at: www.creds.ac.uk/equality-diversity-and-inclusion-plan/ (accessed 14 July 2023).

The following sections outline our responsibilities regarding EDI and set out how we aim to uphold them with regards to recruitment, bullying and harassment, flexible and remote working, career progression, communications and monitoring and reporting. See our EDI Goals for 2023. Please note the glossary at the end of this document as it defines the terms and abbreviations used throughout.

2. Responsibilities

The Public Sector Equality Duty[2] provides an overarching legal framework and sets out responsibilities for organisations to follow, notably the duty not to discriminate based on protected characteristics outlined by the Equality Act.[3] These include age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, social or economic background, sex and sexual orientation. These characteristics are also intersectional, meaning that individuals fall into more than one category, further influencing how they might be treated.

The duty not to discriminate includes the treatment of all UKERC's stakeholders and we must prevent bullying and harassment where possible. As UKERC is not a legal entity, the legal duties sit with our academic partners as employers rather than with UKERC itself, but this does not lessen our moral obligations as managers, employees, collaborators and colleagues.

In order to nurture the interdisciplinarity of UKERC's research and activities, we need to actively support the welfare of everyone involved. We want to go beyond the legal commitments to safeguard EDI standards. UKERC research[4] has shown that the UK energy research community is insufficiently diverse and that the inclusion of, for instance, ethnic minority groups and women is inadequate, particularly at senior levels. We take our responsibility to address these existing inequalities seriously. For example, this led UKERC and the Research Councils to include improving diversity as a specific goal of our Whole Systems Networking Fund (WSNF).

For the duration of Phase 4, we aim to continue addressing inequalities by further developing awareness of bias, adopting measures to eliminate prejudice and by sharing good practice. By publishing a proactive EDI Plan that is kept up to date, UKERC provides a standard that may influence our participating institutions and the wider energy research community. The Director will send a letter to all UKERC partner institutions to introduce the plan and any updates, invite feedback and discussion and outline a requirement for each institution to provide regular updates of their own actions and progress towards addressing inequality and promoting an inclusive working environment.

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[2] Ministry of Justice. (2012) Public Sector Equality Duty. Available at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/public-sector-equality-duty (accessed 2 November 2021).
[3] UK Government. (2010) Equality Act. Available at www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents (accessed 3 November 2021).
[4] Julie Smith, Jess Britton and Basia Cieszewska. (2019) Power Shift. Available at www.ukerc.ac.uk/publications/power-shift/ (accessed 3 November 2021).

The delivery of the EDI Plan will be led by the Operations Manager, who will report on progress to the Co-Directors, Advisory Board and UKRI as required. Its implementation is the shared responsibility of all UKERC researchers and staff. Progress will be monitored by the EDI Champion and the EDI Sub-committee (made up of volunteers from across the consortium), and operational support will be offered by the Impact & EDI Officer and Engagement Officer. EDI will be a tabled item for Co-Directors' meetings at least once a year, in conjunction with the yearly EDI Plan review and report (see 'Monitoring and Reporting'). Academic staff named in the Collaboration Agreement are responsible for delivery of the plan at their individual institutions and for external staff that report to them (e.g. Flexible Fund projects).

To ensure that UKERC is aware of and proactive in addressing issues that arise within the consortium, we aim to foster a culture of reflection and accountability. Our EDI Champion and EDI Sub-Committee are heavily involved in the review of this document, our annual EDI goals and EDI initiatives like the WSNF. The EDI Sub-Committee meets quarterly and advises UKERC's Co-Directors and HQ staff on best practice.

3. Recruitment

Though the composition of UKERC's Co-Directors and their deputies is now more diverse than in the past, it still reflects the existing inequalities in energy research. This issue cannot be solved overnight, but it underlines the importance of diversity in our recruitment and career progression policies.

Since UKERC's formation, we have successfully recruited high calibre staff who identify as women into responsible positions at HQ, the broader research programme and the Advisory Board, which as of February 2021 is composed of seven women and 10 men. Although we have made progress towards gender equality, we are still yet to achieve gender balance among both the Co-Directors and Advisory Board members.

However, gender is only one aspect of diversity. For example, though we have recruited staff members who identify as members of ethnic minorities, they remain underrepresented at all levels both within UKERC HQ and the research programme. We also suspect that disabled and LGBTQ+ staff are underrepresented at UKERC, although these characteristics are often invisible and we do not yet have the data to confirm this.

UKERC HQ will continue to ensure that equality and diversity are considered in all recruitment processes. Recognising that there are multiple facets to EDI, we aim for our recruitment processes to be inclusive and ensure that wider aspects of unconscious bias are addressed.

It is important to note that, as UKERC is a consortium, we cannot enforce EDI in recruitment at our participating institutions; each one has its own policies regarding

elements like training and review panel composition. In these cases, we aim to encourage best practice.

4. Bullying and Harassment

Bullying and harassment of staff, researchers, students, contractors and external stakeholders is unacceptable and will not be tolerated within UKERC. We expect all institutions involved to promote a culture of respect, with zero tolerance for inappropriate behaviour. They should have clear procedures for making and handling bullying and harassment complaints, and we expect these procedures to be accessible and adhered to. We will promote awareness of UKERC's responsibilities in this area and intend to model good practice.

Where both the complainant and subject of any complaint are employed by the same institution, we expect the issue to be addressed within the procedures of that institution. Where the complainant and the subject of the complaint are in different institutions, the complaint can be made via the procedures of either or both employing institutions. In these cases, where the complaint arises from UKERC activities, UKERC's Director (or Co-Directors) may need to advise the concerned parties of the appropriate process and/or direct the concerned parties to contacts and policies at the relevant institutions. Responsibility for advice and support lie with the UKERC Director and named representatives in the relevant institutions (as named in the Collaboration Agreement). In their absence, or if they are involved, the Director or Operations Manager will ensure appropriate support. UKERC staff and researchers, including employees of other institutions who have relevant information, will be advised to give evidence through the appropriate process. With this exception, all matters relating to such complaints will be treated as confidential.

5. Flexible and Remote Working

Due to its competitive nature, academia has a 'long hours' culture. This means that staff tend to stay at work for longer than their contracted hours. People with demands on their time outside the workplace, for example primary carers (who tend to be women) and those with disabilities or long-term health conditions, may find their career progression is negatively impacted as they cannot stay at work for as long as their colleagues. More broadly, a 'long hours' culture is not conducive to a work-life balance and affects everybody's wellbeing.

One of UKERC's Phase 4 objectives is to promote EDI across the energy research community and this extends to flexible working practices. All UKERC's partners have their own conditions of employment and if a staff member makes us aware of these we will honour them, for example by accommodating part/flexitime working and career breaks. We will highlight this at the point of recruitment in job adverts and descriptions. If staff require additional care arrangements to attend UKERC meetings

or events, we will (within what is permissible under the constraints of our grant) seek to reimburse any expenses that go beyond ordinary care. This will be done in line with EPSRC's guidelines[5] for supporting carers. Any requests for flexible working or access constraints relating to a disability will be given due attention by event organisers, as will the availability of those participating in important religious festivals. Additionally, in line with our Sustainability Policy, we will visit event venues to explore their suitability from an EDI perspective. Such visits will consider the historical context of the venue, whether it has an EDI policy, if it is fully accessible and celebrates diversity through their décor such as the art and images on display. To the extent possible, UKERC meetings will be scheduled between core working hours of 10:00-15:00 Monday-Friday.

Since 2020, work from home has been demonstrated to be productive and effective. Although each institution has their own policies, UKERC recognises the benefits of remote working and intends to continue supporting it. As an example, online meetings remove the need for travel, meaning our geographically dispersed Co-Directors can collaborate more frequently.

That said, remote working brings many challenges. Some examples include: 'Zoom fatigue'[6]; finding it harder to 'switch off', as the distinction between work and home life is blurred; feelings of intrusion, as we now get an intimate insight into people's homes; balancing conflicting commitments like childcare, especially when schools were closed; difficulty communicating through a screen, especially for those with disabilities, chronic conditions or who are neurodivergent.

To overcome these issues, UKERC intends to model best practice in remote working, for example: being mindful of event/meeting length and ensuring attendees take regular breaks; limiting hour-long meetings to 50 minutes; encouraging staff to log off at the appropriate time; allowing people to blur their backgrounds/use virtual ones; scheduling events/meetings at inclusive times, for example around the school run/holidays or religious festivals; encouraging staff to turn their cameras on when they are speaking or presenting so attendees can see their face. However, this list of actions is not exhaustive, and we intend to expand our understanding of best practice in remote working as it develops.

6. Career Progression

All of UKERC's institutions support the 'Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers',[7] also signed by the Research Councils. Progression in academia is highly competitive, and leading a project is hugely impactful for someone's career. However, UKRI financial rules state that only staff on permanent

[5] EPSRC. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Support. Available at www.ukri.org/councils/epsrc/guidance-for-applicants/equality-diversity-and-inclusion-support/ (accessed 14 July 2023).
[6] Vignesh Ramachandran. (2021) Stanford researchers identify four causes for 'Zoom fatigue' and their simple fixes. Available at https://news.stanford.edu/2021/02/23/four-causes-zoom-fatigue-solutions/ (accessed 14 July 2023).
[7] Vitae. (2019) The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers. Available at https://researcherdevelopmentconcordat.ac.uk/ (accessed 14 July 2023).

contracts are eligible to apply for grants as Principal Investigators. This means that staff on fixed-term contracts are often excluded from leading projects, and those who belong to underrepresented groups fall disproportionately into this category. We will therefore use the commitment to EDI within the Concordat and in this plan to seek improved job security and progression opportunities for those on fixed-term contracts.

UKERC's Whole Systems Networking Fund (WSNF) is a unique research fund intended to improve EDI in energy research and investigate what can happen when research practices are made more equal, inclusive and diverse. The aims of the fund are as follows:
1. Improve EDI across the energy research space
2. Widen participation to share experience across disciplines and the four UK nations
3. Undertake collaborative research with non-academic partners to investigate policy-relevant challenges that could be solved through a whole systems approach
4. Offer career enhancement opportunities for Early Career Researchers (ECRs)

Our call for proposals ran from January to April 2022 under the call theme 'advancing Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) in energy research' which could be adhered to in several ways, for example through research topics, project partners, stakeholders involved, beneficiaries or activities conducted. As per Aim 4, we have allowed ECRs to lead projects as this is hugely impactful for their careers. To demonstrate our commitment to career progression, we have allowed ECRs to lead WSNF projects in Phase 4.

Our assessment process for proposals was two-stage. The first stage was a blind assessment process (best practice in EDI) whereby all identifying information was removed, meaning our screening panel only assessed the feasibility and quality of the ideas, not who submitted them. The second stage was non-blind, where the fund's Steering Group assessed each project plan, personal statement and EDI/impact statement submitted as part of each application, including personal statements with identifying information. We hope this process has supported career progression by removing assessor bias and shifting the focus away from years of experience, thereby levelling the playing field for ECRs. We have kept a record of what worked and what didn't to inform our future fund allocation. Further details of the successful projects can be found at: https://ukerc.ac.uk/research/wsnf/.

We welcome all projects funded by UKERC (WSNF, Flexible Fund and integrating projects) into the research programme and make them feel part of the consortium. This includes supporting project teams' career development through targeted activities. The consultation process highlighted the following as the most useful to ECRs: attending (and possibly presenting) at UKERC events, which creates networking opportunities; coaching and career advice from our experienced community of researchers; establishing peer support groups; running workshops

around key themes, for example how to write successful bids, research integration or interdisciplinarity. As a result, throughout 2023 we have run a combination of these activities and will continue to do so until the end of Phase 4.

Our ECR Committee meets three times a year. At this Committee, our ECRs share their experiences and highlight activities they would find beneficial to help us design opportunities that best suit their needs and interests. We are currently using CREDS' definition[8] of an ECR ('those active in energy research who have not previously led a project exceeding £100k') because there is no official standardised definition used by the academic community. As such the ECR Committee will further investigate possible definitions.

Another UKERC initiative which aims to improve EDI in energy research publications is our annual Inclusive Writing Retreat, an opportunity we open to all UK-based energy researchers, but especially those from groups underrepresented in energy research and publication authorship (including people from ethnic minority backgrounds, people who identify as a woman or as non-binary, those who identify as LGBTQ+, those living with a disability or long-term health condition as well as researchers from diverse socio-economic backgrounds). We also welcome researchers who would normally find it difficult to attend events and networking opportunities, such as those with caring responsibilities. The ultimate aim of the event is to create opportunities to develop the writing skills and confidence of attendees, so that they make the most of authorship opportunities within the sector.

7. Communications

We will ensure that EDI is considered in all Centre communications, both internal and external.

For example, we will use images that represent the diversity of the UK population, are inclusive and relevant. Image captions will be provided in publications, as will alt-text for images used on the website and on social media (e.g. in tweets). All online and published materials will be compatible with screen readers for those with visual or hearing impairments and we will add an accessibility statement to the website. We will try to ensure author diversity (of publications, blogs, newsletter and website contributions) as much as possible. In terms of events, we will use accessible venues and try to ensure speaker and stakeholder diversity as much as possible.

UKERC's Communication Strategy will set out how we plan to account for EDI in our communications and the dissemination of research outputs in more detail.

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[8] CREDS. (2019) CREDS Flexible Fund: Early Career Researcher Call. Available at www.creds.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/CREDS-flexible-fund-call-November2019.pdf (accessed 14 July 2023).

8. Monitoring and Reporting

To ensure diversity at UKERC is improving, in September 2023 we will carry out a consortium-wide collection of equality monitoring data to establish a baseline for progress review. All data will be monitored within the constraints of GDPR. As we are starting from scratch, we first intend to capture the diversity of our staff from UKERC HQ and the research programme. Once processes have been established, we will extend this to speakers/panellists at our events, authors/contributors to our communications and other collaborators and partners across our activities. However, these latter groups are more difficult to capture, as they are fewer in number which means the anonymity expected from an equality monitoring form is compromised; as such, we will investigate the possibility of storing this data securely and accessing it only when anonymity can be assured (e.g. annually). Clear measures of UKERC's success in delivering on its EDI commitments will include the observation of more diverse cohorts, committees, speakers and increasing levels of community satisfaction.

In addition to this quantitative approach, we would like to create opportunities for diverse people to share their experiences. The Impact and EDI Officer will carry out a series of focus groups and interviews with people from across UKERC to hear their experiences and gain input on what would enhance our EDI practice. The outcomes of these interviews and the UKERC EDI survey will be synthesised into a report authored by the Impact and EDI Officer and others at UKERC HQ and shared on our webpage in January 2024 to demonstrate our commitment to transparency, accountability and open conversation.

To ensure an active and ongoing commitment to EDI and to ensure that EDI at UKERC is formally monitored, the following structure is in place:
- the EDI Subcommittee ensures that EDI issues are brought to the attention of some of the consortium's most senior members, to gather their insight and guidance. They also share EDI concerns with us as they arise.
- as highlighted under 'Responsibilities', the EDI Champion's primary role is to hold UKERC accountable to the pledges made in this plan.
- the Impact and EDI officer is a permanent member of HQ staff who supports the implementation of EDI initiatives.

These individuals will play key roles in monitoring and reporting. Each year, relevant HQ staff and the EDI Champion will conduct a systematic progress review of this plan and its goals (see document here), updating its content and ensuring actions have been met. We will consider developing Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to identify which actions have been most effective, what we can build on and what can we do differently; this will enable our plan to be strategically adaptive. The EDI Plan review will feed into our annual reporting to the funders.

9. Version Information

This document was inspired by CREDS' EDI Plan. It has been modified to suit UKERC as a result of stakeholder engagement activities (both internal and external) in 2019 and reviewed in 2021 and 2023. It is a 'living document' and we intend to update it regularly based on feedback from the wider community.

Version Number	Completion Date	Approval Date	Approved By
3	14 August 2023	3 October 2023	EDI Sub-Committee

10. Glossary

Bullying: seeking to intimidate, coerce or harm someone perceived as vulnerable.

Community: UKERC's community encompasses those engaged with UKERC, i.e. its researchers who are spread across 20+ institutions, HQ staff, Advisory Board members and expert advisors on the Research Committee and WSNF Steering Group. When we refer to 'wider community' or 'energy research community', we add those engaged in energy research outside of this group.

Diversity: the practice of including or involving people from a range of different age groups, social and ethnic backgrounds, genders and sexual orientations.

ECR: Early Career Researcher.

EDI: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

Equality: treating everyone in the same way, regardless of individual differences or needs.

Equity: providing specific support that takes individual differences or needs into account.

Ethnic minority: people who identify as belonging to a group that has different national or cultural traditions from the majority of the population.

GDPR: General Data Protection Regulation, the toughest privacy and security law in the world drafted and implemented by the European Union (EU).

Harassment: aggressive pressure or intimidation.

Inclusion: the practice of providing equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalised.

Intersectional: relating to intersectionality, i.e. the interconnected and often overlapping nature of social categorisations, and how it applies to a given individual or group. For example, for an individual who identifies as Black and LGBTQ+, their race and sexuality intersect. This intersection affects the way the world sees them and how they are treated.

LGBTQ+: Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer/questioning and other sexual orientations and gender identities.

Long hours culture: staff tend to stay at work for longer than their contracted hours, i.e. there is a social expectation to do so even if there is no official rule.

Marginalised groups: people that are treated as insignificant or peripheral.

Protected characteristics: specific aspects of a person's identity defined by the Equality Act 2010. The 'protection' relates to protection from discrimination.

Neurodivergent: describing mental or neurological function that is considered atypical. For example, someone with autism is considered neurodivergent.

Wellbeing: the state of being comfortable, healthy and/or happy.

WSNF: Whole Systems Networking Fund, UKERC's research fund specifically dedicated to improving EDI in energy research.