UKERC 2024-2029
Speaker Policy and Guidance

1. Speaker Policy

Overview

As a leading energy research centre, we recognise that the credibility, quality, and societal relevance of our work depend on engaging a broad range of voices. We are committed to ensuring that the experts and speakers we platform better reflect the diversity of the communities affected by energy systems and policy.

This policy sets out our approach to increasing diversity among speakers at all events, including conferences, panels, roundtables, webinars, and advisory forums.

We actively encourage recommendations of experts from underrepresented groups and emerging leaders in the energy sector. Where we fall short, we will reflect, learn, and improve.

Our commitment

We will:

- Proactively seek speakers from underrepresented backgrounds across gender, ethnicity, race, disability, socioeconomic background, geography, career stage, and sector.
- Avoid all-male or otherwise homogeneous panels wherever possible.
- Recognise diversity as including lived experience, disciplinary background, and professional pathway, in addition to demographic characteristics.
- Ensure our speaker selection processes are transparent, fair, and evidence-informed.

Putting it into practice

Panel composition:

- We will not convene single-gender panels except in exceptional circumstances with documented justification.
- Event organisers must demonstrate reasonable efforts to identify diverse candidates before confirming speakers.
- For flagship events, we will aim for meaningful gender balance and visible ethnic diversity across the programme.

Speaker Sourcing:

- We will use diverse speaker databases and professional networks.
- Event organisers will consult internal and external advisory groups for recommendations.
- We will avoid repeatedly drawing from the same small pool of established experts.
- Emerging leaders and early-career researchers will be considered alongside senior figures.
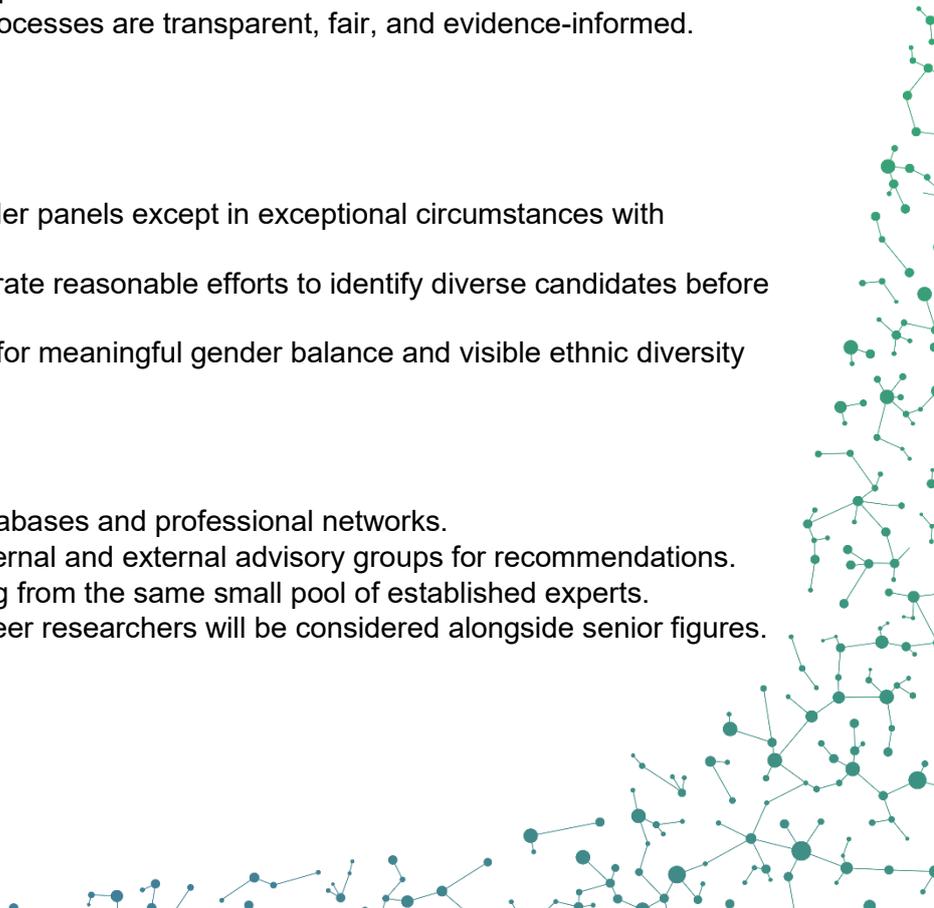
Invitation Process:

- Invitations will be extended early enough to accommodate speakers with caring responsibilities or accessibility needs.
- We will offer flexible participation options (e.g., virtual participation where appropriate).
- Accessibility requirements will be requested and accommodated wherever reasonably practical.

Audience Inclusion

We recognise that representation is not only about speakers. We will:

- Consider accessibility (venue, cost, format, timing).
- Use inclusive language and communications imagery.
- Ensure moderation practices support inclusive discussion and equal participation.

This policy will be reviewed annually to reflect learning, sector best practice, and feedback from participants and partners.

2. Accessibility Guidance for Speakers

At the UK Energy Research Centre we are committed to making our events accessible and inclusive for all participants. As a speaker, you play an important role in helping us create an environment where everyone can engage fully.

We ask that you consider the following guidance when preparing and delivering your contribution.

For further information, including about neuro-inclusive meetings and events, please see here.

Preparing Accessible Slides

- Use clear, high-contrast colour combinations (e.g. dark text on a light background).
- Avoid relying on colour alone to convey meaning (e.g. in charts or diagrams).
- Use large, readable fonts (minimum 24pt recommended).
- Keep text concise and avoid overcrowded slides.
- Use plain English where possible and explain technical terms or acronyms.
- Provide alt-text or brief descriptions for complex visuals when sharing slides in advance.
- Share slides ahead of time where possible so they can be circulated to participants who may benefit from previewing content.

During Your Presentation

- Speak clearly and at a moderate pace.
- Use a microphone where provided, even in smaller rooms.
- Verbally describe key visual content (e.g. "This graph shows energy demand rising steadily between 2010 and 2025").
- Avoid saying "as you can see here" without explaining what is shown.
- Repeat audience questions before answering, particularly in hybrid or recorded sessions.
- Avoid interrupting or speaking over others in panel discussions.
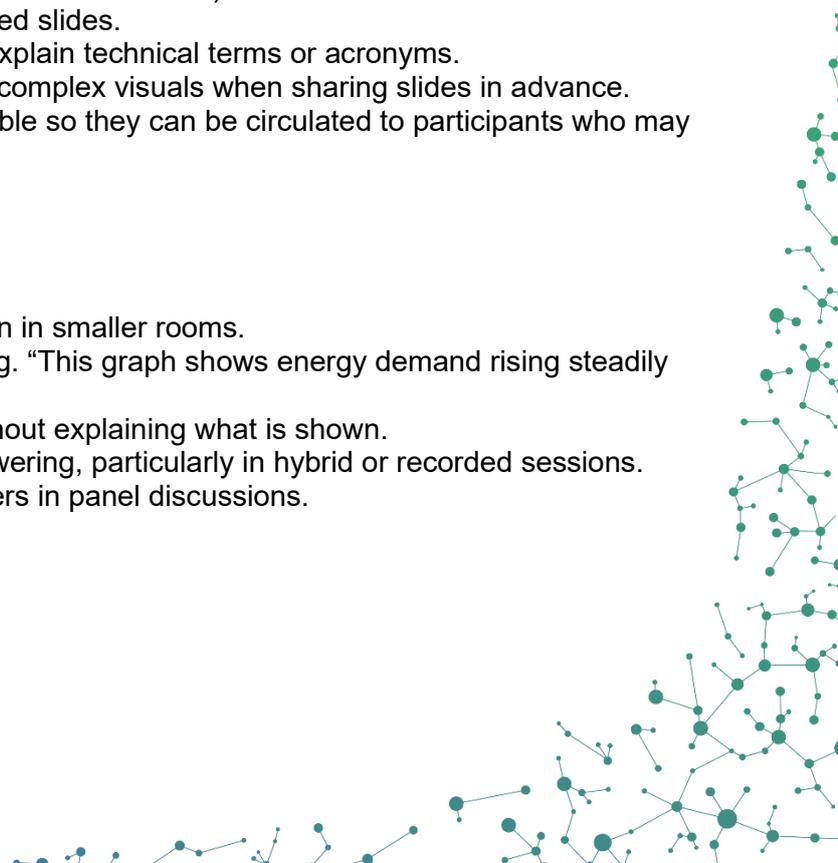
Inclusive Communication

- Use inclusive language and avoid assumptions about identity, background, or experience.
- Be mindful that participants may join from different regions, sectors, or levels of familiarity with the topic.
- Where possible, include a range of examples or perspectives in your remarks.

Hybrid and Online Participation

For virtual or hybrid events:
- Ensure you are in a quiet space with good lighting and stable internet.
- Use a good-quality microphone where possible.
- Keep your camera on (if comfortable doing so) to support lip-reading.
- Allow brief pauses to accommodate live captioning or interpretation.

Accessibility is a shared responsibility. By following this guidance, you help ensure our events are welcoming, accessible, and engaging for all participants.

This document was last reviewed by UKERC Operations Manager 25 February 2026.