

UK Research and Innovation
Polaris House
Swindon
SN2 1FL

By email: ceo@ukri.org

27 April 2022

Dear Professor Dame Ottoline Leyser,

The EMS, IMA, LMS, RSS response to the draft UKRI Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

We are writing on behalf of the Edinburgh Mathematical Society, the Institute of Mathematics and its Applications, the London Mathematical Society and the Royal Statistical Society to express our view on the draft UKRI Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategy in addition to that already submitted through your public consultation.

Together, as professional bodies we represent over 18,000 members working in mathematics, statistics and data science across academia and industry. A substantial part of our mission is to promote diversity in the fields of mathematics, statistics and data science.

We believe that the draft UKRI Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategy as it is currently written is incomplete and lacking detail on how it will address UKRI's equality, diversity and inclusion objectives. In response to this we have developed [a series of recommended actions](#) to address the concerns raised in the strategy, that set out what UKRI should do to achieve its strategy ambition, its cornerstones, and its strategic objectives.

As we have [previously argued](#), regardless of UKRI's intentions, the way that grant submissions are often assessed by reviewers focuses on the perceived quality of the PI rather than the quality of research. There is evidence in the literature that this particularly disadvantages women and minorities. Panels of diverse people assessing applications in the peer review process are useful and should be continued, but they alone are not sufficient to address this issue. UKRI first needs to place greater emphasis in its instructions to reviewers on assessing the quality of research proposals independently of the background of the researcher making the proposal, and to ensure that the language used in reviewer instructions is not gendered. But, taking a diversity by design approach to the problem, we would also very much recommend UKRI considering PI-blind initial screening as a way to ensure that when reviewers are asked to comment on the quality of the proposal, and to assign a numerical rating to it, they are thinking first about research quality, and not about the researcher's background or experience

We believe there are further steps that could be taken by UKRI to fully understand the current experiences of researchers in the UK. For-instance, UKRI could share the data that they have collected in a way that would allow the research community to examine the current funding system and interrogate hypotheses that have been proposed to explain the observed inequalities. Our organisations, especially the RSS, have significant expertise in this area and we would be very happy to work with UKRI to take this recommendation forward.

We have developed ten recommended actions in total that we believe will enable UKRI to support a more diverse community of mathematicians, statisticians and data scientists.


We propose the recommended actions appear in the draft of the action plan, and in the revised version of the draft strategy. The actions have been designed to fit within the parameters of the SMART framework. This framework ensures that actions are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timebound

We would be grateful to receive your response to the points raised in our recommended action. We would be very happy to meet with you to discuss these issues and our proposals if it would be helpful to you.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Eugenie Hunsicker
Honorary Officer for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, Royal Statistical Society



Dr Snezana Lawrence
Fellow, Council Member, and Diversity Champion of the Institute of Mathematics and its Applications



Professor Sara Lombardo
Chair of the London Mathematical Society Committee for Women and Chair of the EPSRC Strategic Advisory Team
for Mathematical Sciences



Professor Rachel Norman
President, Edinburgh Mathematical Society