UKRI consultation on Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy
Response from the Chartered Association of Business Schools

28th March 2022
UKRI consultation on EDI strategy – Chartered ABS response

Q5. As a document, how accessible is the draft EDI strategy?

The content and wording of the draft EDI strategy was easy to understand

Answer: Agree

Comment: The document was generally found to be sufficiently accessible in terms of language used and links for further information and explanation, though it was remarked that one might expect a document of this sort, with the purpose it has, to be even more accessible. There is a lot of additional information about which there is some expectation that the reader would have prior knowledge or would at least be willing to take the time to read, for which non-specialists might not have the time.

The format and layout of the draft EDI strategy made it easy to read

Answer: Disagree

Comment: In terms of layout, it was noted that the pdf version is just a copy of the webpage, which results in the text and headings looking rather uninviting. Some members felt that the inclusion of a few tables or diagrams throughout the text would make the document more welcoming.

Q6. Did you use assistive technology to read the EDI strategy? If so, were there any issues?

Answer: No.

Q7. Is the EDI strategy's proposed ambition clear? If not, please provide brief details on what was unclear.

Answer: Yes

Comment: The EDI strategy’s proposed ambition is clear, though how UKRI intends to measure these ambitions is not always as clear.

Q8. What do you like most about the EDI strategy's proposed ambition?

Comment: The inclusive language of the stated ambition is pleasing to see, and it is appreciated that it correctly emphasises the potential impact of research on society at large, acknowledging UKRI’s role in funding/investing in this. We also note that the way the ambition is articulated comes across as a genuine push for positive change underpinned by a desire for social justice; it communicates that UKRI recognises and takes seriously its role as a potential leader of change in the sector.

Q9. How do you think the EDI strategy's proposed ambition could be improved? Are there any significant gaps?

Comment: The proposed ambition could be more explicit about actions to be taken or how things will change more concretely. The ambition could mention real, identified funding gaps in terms of underrepresented demographics of researchers or otherwise state the current problems before setting out a concrete strategy to address these problems. The area of neurodiversity did not get attention, and the recognition of neurodiversity within the community could be viewed as the next step in fostering an equal, diverse, and inclusive research culture.
Q10. Thinking about UKRI today, how well is UKRI exhibiting the behaviours set out in the cornerstones?

Cornerstone 1: We will foster an inclusive, equitable, just and diverse research and innovation system by championing and focusing on systemic and structural change.

Answer: Neither agree nor disagree.

Comment: In general, our members felt that they were not sufficiently familiar or did not have enough information to determine whether UKRI is exhibiting the behaviours set out in the cornerstones. It was felt that the links to UKRI activities regarding EDI were insufficient to determine whether it truly exhibits the relevant behaviours.

Cornerstone 2: We will be open, transparent, and inclusive in our approaches by listening, influencing and working in partnership.

Answer: Neither agree nor disagree.

Comment: In general, our members felt that they were not sufficiently familiar or did not have enough information to determine whether UKRI is exhibiting the behaviours set out in the cornerstones. It was felt that the links to UKRI activities regarding EDI were insufficient to determine whether it truly exhibits the relevant behaviours.

Cornerstone 3: We are committed to leading, taking action and being innovative. We will use evidence, data and learning from ourselves and others to inform our actions and how we work.

Answer: Neither agree nor disagree.

Comment: In general, our members felt that they were not sufficiently familiar or did not have enough information to determine whether UKRI is exhibiting the behaviours set out in the cornerstones. It was felt that the links to UKRI activities regarding EDI were insufficient to determine whether it truly exhibits the relevant behaviours.

Cornerstone 4: We expect every individual in UKRI to be inclusive in all that they do, and we will hold ourselves to account for our actions as individuals, as leaders, partners and as an organisation.

Answer: Neither agree nor disagree.

Comment: In general, our members felt that they were not sufficiently familiar or did not have enough information to determine whether UKRI is exhibiting the behaviours set out in the cornerstones. It was felt that the links to UKRI activities regarding EDI were insufficient to determine whether it truly exhibits the relevant behaviours.

Q11. Are the proposed EDI strategic objectives clear? If not, please provide brief details on what was unclear.

Answer: Yes

Comment: The information is all there, but it could be presented in a more user-friendly fashion, with less chunky text and more tables. The inclusion of success measures with an accompanying timeline by which these would be achieved would be welcome. More concrete examples would contribute to the overall clarity of the strategic objectives.
**Q12. What do you like most about the proposed strategic objective 1?**

**Comment:** The inclusion of incentives is promising and we appreciate the recognition of the importance of system-level change to achieve the stated objective. Further, the importance of ensuring that the system-level change is sustainable is important, and we commend UKRI’s emphasis on sustainability with respect to this objective. Overall, this objective is clear, ambitious, and promising.

**Q13. How do you think this proposed objective could be improved? Are there any significant gaps?**

**Comment:** Some objective outcomes could be more detailed, and in particular the inclusion of measures of success or progress would be very welcome. Discussion around diversity and inclusion in the kind of knowledge and innovation that is funded would be a welcome addition to the objective, as the research community might also start to focus on breaking down hegemony of thought in addition to hegemony of people.

**Q14. What opportunities can you see for you or your organisation to work with UKRI in achieving this proposed objective?**

**Comment:** We would be interested in working more closely with UKRI in a number of different contexts, from collaboration on existing Social Justice and Sustainable development goals, to partnerships for workshops or seminars on topics such as BAME leaders in innovation.

**Q15. What do you like most about the proposed strategic objective 2?**

**Comment:** We commend the emphasis on inclusion and appreciate the acknowledgment of the importance of funding and finance in promoting inclusion. This objective is particularly crucial and of paramount importance to the entire endeavour.

**Q16. How do you think this proposed objective could be improved? Are there any significant gaps?**

**Comment:** As with previous answers, this section would benefit from more concrete proposals and specific examples. For example, how does UKRI plan to increase the diversity of people who form their governance and accountability structures?

**Q17. What opportunities can you see for you or your organisation to work with UKRI in achieving this proposed objective?**

**Comment:** We and our members would be interested in collaborating with UKRI to share best practices in promoting diversity. The Athena SWAN initiative has generated a great deal of best practice interventions which could be incorporated into the UKRI strategy. There is also a lot to learn of what not to do. A particular issue with Athena SWAN was that it was specifically set up for Sciences, but did not directly translate easily to other areas. UKRI would do well to keep this in mind.

**Q18. What do you like most about the proposed strategic objective 3?**

**Comment:** We appreciate UKRI’s recognition that it should be a role model for the sector on these principles. UKRI clearly plays an important role in this endeavour and it is fundamental that UKRI sets a good example to have any credibility as a leader.

**Q19. How do you think this proposed objective could be improved? Are there any significant gaps?**
Comment: We appreciate and recognise the importance of leadership roles in achieving the stated goals, and the principles of inclusivity should be embedded across all levels of UKRI staff. Priority 3b begins with ‘Everyone who works for UKRI has a role to play...’, before addressing leaders and managers exclusively. To be clear, while leadership roles are essential in making progress towards the stated goals, and it is important that we are able to hold them to account, we should also be wary that the disproportionate focus on leadership might imply a commitment to overly hierarchical views of higher education.

Q20. What opportunities can you see for you or your organisation to work with UKRI in achieving this proposed objective?

Comment: We would be very happy to work with UKRI in promoting opportunities for our members from all backgrounds to work with UKRI, and we would welcome being able to engage speakers for our conferences in respect of the EDI agenda within research and innovation. We also invite UKRI to make use of our guide (here), created in collaboration with the British Academy of Management (BAM), on how to run more inclusive events. The guide can inform UKRI’s practice for their own meetings and could underpin dissemination/pathways to impact for funded work.

Q21. What do you like most about the proposed strategic objective 4?

Comment: The recognition of the importance of data and evidence is essential to UKRI’s mission and that this is communicated in a satisfactory way. As a sector, we need data to fully understand and appreciate where the key inequalities lie, and the progress made in addressing this. This strategic objective sets out a path to acquiring the required data to ensure that progress towards realising the stated goals is well-informed.

Q22. How do you think this proposed objective could be improved? Are there any significant gaps?

Comment: While the path set out in the strategy is helpful, there should be more tangible measures set out in the proposal. UKRI should emphasise the importance of accompanying cultural change in collecting the data if individuals are to feel comfortable and confident in sharing their experiences of discrimination or otherwise prejudicial treatment. As always, this cultural change must also be sustainable. We need to recognise the current state of data collection on issues of EDI, as we must understand and acknowledge where we are on this objective before we are able to move forward. Finally, a commitment from UKRI to keep administrative burdens on institutions to a minimum would be welcome.

Q23. What opportunities can you see for you or your organisation to work with UKRI in achieving this proposed objective?

Comment: We and our members are interested in the possibility of collaborating with UKRI on the development of key performance indicators and measures of success.
About the Chartered ABS

The Chartered ABS is the voice of the UK’s business and management education sector and our members consist of 120 business schools and higher education providers across the UK, as well as affiliate stakeholders, corporate members and international partners. Our membership is diverse in terms of type of institution, geographic region, the staff they employ and students they teach. The UK’s business and management education sector represents 1 in 5 university students and contributes £3.25bn to the UK economy. Its management students go on to lead global businesses and its entrepreneurs contribute to our dynamic economy. Its research has an impact across society and helps to turn our capacity for invention into viable businesses.