Equality Impact Assessment

Title of policy being assessed	Research England Institutions Engagement Strategy
Policy Owner	Kim Seth
Directorate	Insight and Engagement
EIA lead	Jill Downey
EIA team	Insight and Engagement Team
EIA Commenced	June 2019
EIA Completed	September 2019
EIA due for review on:	October 2020
Publication date	October 2019

Question	Response
1. Name of policy/funding activity/event being assessed	Research England Institutions Engagement Strategy (referred to below as the strategy)
2. Summary of aims and objectives of the policy/funding activity/event	1. Gather real-time nuanced intelligence from universities to guide our actions and influence policy development. 2. Use our engagement with universities to augment evidence on the health and dynamism of the research and innovation system in England. 3. Demonstrate that public funds are being used appropriately and highlight the contribution our funding makes through the intelligence we gather through engagement with universities. 4. Ensure that our engagement is inclusive and that analysis is objective.
3. What involvement and consultation has been done in relation to this policy? *(e.g. with relevant groups and stakeholders)*	• 12 months of engagement visits to HEIs, including conversations trailing the strategy, as well as gathering intelligence of relevance to the strategy.

	• Feedback and challenge from RE Executive and RE Council in June and September 2019. • Strategy-specific workshops with RE Research, Knowledge Exchange, and Insight and Engagement Teams. • Preparatory and follow-up conversations with Naren Barfield, RE Council member with strategic responsibility for engagement. • Institutional Engagement Managers team planning and intelligence gathering.
4. Who is affected by the policy/funding activity/event?	The internal stakeholders are primarily RE's Executive Team, research and knowledge exchange policy leads and Council, all of whom are users of the intelligence gathered through engagement. Wider stakeholders across UKRI include the other Research Councils, Innovate UK and the UKRI Strategy Team, with whom engagement intelligence will be shared. External stakeholders are the English universities in receipt of RE funding: engagement with these institutions is the direct subject of the strategy. Sector representative groups are also indirect stakeholders.
5. What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the actual impact of the policy/funding activity/event?	The strategy covers three academic years from 2019-20 to 2021-22, during which it will be reviewed annually. Ongoing monitoring of the delivery of the strategy will be aligned to UKRI-wide monitoring and evaluation processes, currently in development. The Insight and Engagement Team will gather and analyse information gleaned from engagement activities,

using key evaluative questions as a framework to track the progress of the strategy, assess its impact and measure its success. The IEMs' visit notes and notes from Engagement Forums are key documents. The Insight and Engagement Team is currently developing a framework to collate this information thematically.

The key indicator of positive impact will be the use of engagement intelligence to inform the development of future higher education policies. Arrangements are in place to gather feedback from the RE Executive and policy leads so that the impact of engagement on their workstreams can be evaluated.

Institutions Engagement Managers will regularly collate informal feedback from universities in their respective portfolios, which will also add value to the process of monitoring impact.

Protected Characteristic Group	Is there a potential for positive or negative impact?	Please explain and give examples of any evidence/data used	Action to address negative impact (e.g. adjustment to the policy)
Disability	Not directly	The strategy is focused on engagement with institutions, rather than individuals, and so does not have a direct impact on groups with protected characteristics. However, inequalities inherent in the HE system are recognised, as set out below, and our approach to engagement will reflect	Although there is no adjustment to the strategy, our approach to engagement will pay due regard to the range of equality issues affecting the HE sector, including low representation of women and ethnic minorities in senior leadership positions, and career
Gender reassignment	Not directly		
Marriage or civil partnership	Not directly		
Pregnancy and maternity	Not directly		
Race	Not directly		

		that awareness. As the primary purpose of our engagement is to gather intelligence that informs policy-making, the strategy may indirectly have a positive impact on some protected groups. This type of positive impact cannot be directly or solely attributed to the strategy, but we hope that our engagement may contribute to policy improvements in higher education.	pathways for young researchers at early stages in their careers. We will share intelligence about under-represented or disadvantaged groups in university research communities in order to shape and develop future higher education policy.
Religion or belief	Not directly		
Sexual orientation	Not directly		
Sex (gender)	Not directly		
Age	Not directly		

Context for the table above:

Although RE's engagement of universities, as set out in the strategy, does not have a direct impact on people with the protected characteristics listed above, we recognise that there are inequalities inherent in higher education, reflective of our wider society. The under or over-representation of some protected characteristics in research communities and in university leadership is of particular interest to RE. Examples include where women are under-represented in STEM research or in senior leadership positions, where personal or family circumstances prevent researchers from delivering the expected outputs, or where there are barriers to the development of research careers for younger people or other cohorts.

These issues will continue to be part of the conversations we have with universities as part of our engagement strategy. They will subsequently form part of the intelligence that we distil from our engagement activities, which will be used by colleagues to influence and shape policy-making. Over the long term, it is possible that the intelligence gleaned through engagement will contribute towards improved policies and practices in research environments, making a positive difference for individuals with some protected characteristics.

In addition, we recognise that different types of institutions have different equality profiles. For example, universities with a strong focus on region and community may have larger proportions of BAME, mature or part-time students or students from deprived backgrounds and lower socio-economic classes. The strategy commits to a flexible approach, which means that our

engagement of different types of institution will be tailored. Factors when determining our engagement approach include the research intensity and capacity of an institution, its size and specialism, how new a university is, its history, and research track record.

In light of the above, we commit to paying due regard to equality, diversity and inclusion issues, which will be covered as part of core business during our visits to HEIs. When engaging with the sector, we will endeavour to meet with senior staff who represent diversity, at least in terms of gender and ethnicity.

Therefore, while it does not directly impact, either positively or negatively, on individuals with protected characteristics, the strategy does pay due regard to inequalities in higher education and the diversity of the sector itself, and has the potential to indirectly influence policies that could in future have a positive impact on individuals with protected characteristics.

Evaluation:

Question	Explanation / justification
Is it possible the proposed policy or activity or change in policy or activity could discriminate or unfairly disadvantage people?	The strategy will not discriminate or unfairly disadvantage people with protected characteristics. However, in light of the context described above, we recognise that different types of institution will have different experiences of RE's engagement activities, based on our tailored approach and the different levels of research intensity across the sector. If the IEMs encounter issues beyond their expertise, they will consult with others on how to proceed.

Final Decision:	Tick the relevant box	Include any explanation / justification required
1. No barriers identified, therefore activity will **proceed**.	X	Please see the context described above.
2. You can decide to **stop** the policy or practice at some point because the data shows bias towards one or more groups		
3. You can **adapt or change** the policy in a way which you think will eliminate the bias		

4. Barriers and impact identified, however having considered all available options carefully, there appear to be no other proportionate ways to achieve the aim of the policy or practice (e.g. in extreme cases or where positive action is taken). Therefore you are going to **proceed with caution** with this policy or practice knowing that it may favour some people less than others, providing justification for this decision.		

Will this EIA be published* Yes/Not required (*EIA's should be published alongside relevant funding activities e.g. calls and events:	Yes. The aim is to publish this EIA in October 2019, alongside the Institutions Engagement Strategy.
Date completed:	September 2019
Review date (if applicable):	October 2020

Change log

Name	Date	Version	Change
Jill Downey, Institutions Engagement Manager	August 2019	1	Version 1 was drafted with input from RE staff and Naren Barfield (RE Council member, strategic engagement lead).
Jill Downey, Institutions Engagement Manager	September 2020	2	Version 2 reflects input from RE staff and RE Executive.
Jill Downey, Institutions Engagement Manager	September 2020	3	Version 3 reflects final comments from RE Council.