

LoT-NET ED&I Plan

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1. Introduction and aims

This Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I) Plan has been developed using the CREDS plan as a template. We aim to foster an inclusive culture within LoT-NET, which promotes equality, values diversity and maintains a working and social environment in which the rights and dignity of all our staff, students, partners and stakeholders are respected.

Action 1a: By April 2021, agree a final version of this Plan and publish it on the LoT-NET website.

In the following sections, we first set out our approach to our responsibilities for ED&I. We then have specific sections on recruitment, bullying and harassment, flexible working, career progression, communications, researcher-led activities, and monitoring and reporting.

2. Responsibilities

We recognise that we have legal responsibilities within the overarching legal framework in the Public Sector Equality Duty. These include a duty not to discriminate on the basis of protected characteristics set out in Equality Act 2010, i.e. age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. These extend to the treatment of the stakeholders with whom we work, as well as our project team. We also have a duty to prevent bullying and harassment. In many cases, legal duties sit with the employer, and therefore with our constituent universities rather than LoT-NET itself, which is not a legal entity. However, our duties as managers and employees are essentially unaffected by this.

As a matter of LoT-NET policy, we want to go beyond our legal commitments. We have moral responsibilities to our colleagues and stakeholders far beyond the legal minimum. In particular, we recognise that the energy research community is insufficiently diverse, and that this problem increases at more senior levels. We take seriously our responsibility to address existing inequalities within the research community. We aim to develop awareness of bias within the practices of LoT-NET and, more broadly, to adopt measures to address this and to share good practice.

The delivery of the ED&I Plan will be reported on its progress to the Principal Investigator and, as necessary, to the Advisory Board and UKRI. As LoT-NET is a collaboration of four universities, the delivery of the plan will be a shared responsibility of the Management Committee. The academic staff named as representatives of their institutions in the Centre Collaboration Agreement are responsible for delivery of the plan in their individual institutions.

The ED&I Working Group will advise the LoT-NET Management Committee on relevant issues, share good practice and take other agreed initiatives consistent with the aims of this plan. It will monitor the delivery of this plan, reporting on it annually beginning in 2021.

All staff within LoT-NET, as well as associated students and partners, are responsible for abiding by the content and spirit of this plan.

3. Recruitment

The composition of our Management Committee reflects the existing inequalities in energy research. There are also inequalities within our research teams and our Advisory Board. This is not an issue we can address quickly, but it emphasises the importance of diversity in our recruitment and career progression policies.

We will continue to ensure that equality and diversity are considered in all recruitment. Our constituent institutions are the staff employers and all have policies to promote this. All four of the institutions support the gender equality Athena Swan Charter and are accredited under it to at least the Bronze Award.

Gender inequality is important and relatively easy to monitor, but we recognise it is not the only ED&I issue. We aim for our recruitment processes to be broadly inclusive and to ensure wider aspects of unconscious bias are addressed.

Action 3a: Include a statement in job descriptions and adverts that applications are encouraged from specific under-represented groups (e.g. women and minority ethnic groups) and ensure that appointment panels are diverse.

4. Bullying and harassment

Bullying and harassment of staff, students, contractors and external stakeholders is unacceptable behaviour and will be treated very seriously. All of our institutions have clear procedures within which to make and handle complaints concerning bullying and harassment, and we will ensure these are followed. We will promote awareness of LoT-NET's responsibilities in relation to bullying and harassment, including by promoting good practice.

Where both the complainant and subject of any complaint are in the same institution, we expect the issue to be addressed within the procedures of that institution.

Where the complainant and subject of the complaint are in different institutions, the complaint can be made within the procedures of either or both institution. In these cases, where the complaint arises from LoT-NET activities, LoT-NET management may need to advise the complainant of the appropriate process. Responsibility for advice and support will lie with the LoT-NET Principal Investigator and the named representatives in the relevant institutions. In their absence, or if they are involved, the Work Package Leads will ensure appropriate support.

LoT-NET staff, including employees of other universities 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.

Action 4a: Ensure that all LoT-NET staff are made aware of the bullying and harassment procedures of their employing institution during induction, as well as being given information on the LoT-NET procedure and key contacts, as outlined above.

5. Flexible Working

All of our institutions have procedures to promote flexible working. We will follow these institutional policies, allowing staff to work flexibly, including through part-time work and career breaks. We will make this explicit at the point of recruitment, including in job specifications and job adverts. We will

seek to learn from best practice within the different institutions in the consortium, and amend our processes accordingly.

We will be responsive to the needs of parents and carers and seek to ensure a good home/work balance for all staff. We will promote the use of meeting times and practices that enable participation of people with caring responsibilities, including through remote access to meetings.

Action 5a: Ensure that staff have the technology, training and support to access meetings remotely.

Action 5b: Ensure the option for flexible working is available to the LoT-NET project team.

6. Career progression

All our institutions support the “Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers”, also signed by the Research Councils. We recognise that staff from under-represented groups are likely to be disproportionately on fixed term contracts. We will use the commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion within the Concordat and in this plan to seek improved job security and career progression opportunities for staff on fixed term contracts.

We will support career progression and project leadership on merit alone. The distinction between ‘investigators’ and ‘researchers’ in RCUK financial rules makes this problematic in practice. Many research staff on fixed term contracts are excluded from the opportunity to lead projects, with negative effects for equality. We will give early and mid-career researchers opportunities to lead packages of work. We will investigate providing mentoring support, at the application and management stages of the projects, especially to researchers who self-identify as members of under-represented groups.

7. Communications

We will ensure that equality and diversity issues are considered in the internal and external communications of the Project, including the website. This will include ensuring that stock images used across our outputs represent the diversity of the UK population, and that images associated with specific research topics are appropriate and inclusive. We will ensure a diverse range of LoT-NET staff and external stakeholders are involved as speakers and participants in events and as invited authors of publications such as blogs and newsletter highlights.

Action 7a: Monitor the diversity of speakers at events, publication authors, website contributors and images in all communications and take corrective action if and where needed.

8. Researcher-led activities

To improve the diversity of our activities and provide career development opportunities we have created an early career researcher (ECR) network which includes a programme of researcher- and student-led cross-institutional events. Our early career researchers also contribute to SIRACH events, LoT-NET’s dissemination network, which enables them to present their work to industry and develop collaborative partnerships. We will also encourage our early career researchers to chair project sessions and lead discussions, to progress their leadership skills.

9. Monitoring and reporting

If we request data on protected characteristics for analysis, the small number of individuals involved in LoT-NET would risk disclosure of data given in confidence and would render statistically significant conclusions very unlikely. Instead we will monitor data that is easier to access and more amenable to concrete action within LoT-NET. These include data on staffing, events and authors.

The EDI Working Group will report annually against the key issues set out in this plan. The report will be considered by the Management Committee and Advisory Board, and it will form part of the annual report to the Research Councils. We will consider any recommendations arising from these meetings and revise this plan accordingly.

Action 9a: Report annually on progress against these actions to the LoT-NET Advisory Board and EPSRC.