

Panel selection and guidance

Shameless self promotion blog plugging...

My Research Professional/Funding Insight article on running internal sift panels, though without a specific EDI focus.

♡ 0 1

Anonymous 5/17/24 1:47PM

Also potentially relevant... this article on breaking bad news refers to internal applicants in demand managed schemes as well as broader feedback advice.

<https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-023-00157-3>



Cash for Questions: Research funding, policy and development
| Adam Forristal Golberg

The art of the sift | Cash for Questions: Research funding, policy and development

What good looks like

What are the characteristics of a fair, efficient, and effective selection panel?

♡ 0 4

Anonymous 5/20/24 11:15AM

remote (more people can attend but some people are strongly against remote) and not before 10am or after 3/4pm

Anonymous 5/20/24 11:17AM

consider accessibility needs of applicants and panel members

Anonymous 5/20/24 11:21AM

That the panel have exactly what they need to make fair decisions without overburdening the applicant at too early a stage

Anonymous 5/20/24 11:34AM

As we all acknowledge we're dealing with a leaky pipeline, and therefore know our limited pool of applicants is already facing challenges, perhaps thinking closely about the metrics we're using to assess those candidates also needs to change? Speaking of a 'ranking order' - which metrics are being used (and how is EDI affecting those metrics, contextualising them, etc.) say around researcher productivity/types of outputs, etc.?

What bad looks like

What are the characteristics of an unfair, inefficient, and ineffective selection process? And more importantly, what are the consequences of this?

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Anonymous 5/20/24 11:18AM

No assessment criteria provided in advance - candidate/panel members don't know what each is looking for

Anonymous 5/20/24 11:19AM

Not getting the right balance between time for candidate to prepare a high quality application and enough time for reviewers to prepare for the subsequent meeting

Anonymous 5/20/24 11:30AM

Panel members with old fashioned views that go against all the research culture work currently happening (difficult when they are people who are experts or have experience being on external panels or are part of the senior management of the institution and have decision making power)

Anonymous 5/20/24 11:32AM

process changed during a first stage panel that radically reduces the chances of having a wide array of applicants

↩️ **Balanced and Fair Panels**

How can we ensure a fair panel when we can't represent all protected characteristics or all academic (sub) disciplines on every panel?

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Anonymous 5/20/24 11:20AM

Panels can be driven very much by availability. All the best intentions in the world can go out of the window due to this. Not sure there is an easy answer!

Anonymous 5/20/24 11:21AM

Balanced and fair can mean something different with different types of large calls emerging e.g. AHRC Mission, EPSRC Prosperity Networks/Places. Balanced may also mean non-academic or place-based representation in demand management?

Anonymous 5/20/24 11:23AM

Bringing together a wider range of backgrounds e.g. Business development professionals, policy team can broaden the perspectives and characteristics of the available staff and add to the broader view of a panel

↩️ **Beyond the 'Usual Suspects'?**

Do we stick with the Deputy College Vice Faculty Pro-Chancellor Provost School Dean(s) for Research (and sometimes Knowledge Exchange)? What about previous winners? What about ECRs? How do we brief, prepare, and empower new panel members?

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Anonymous 5/20/24 11:12AM

Could the British Academy's Early Career Researcher Network help feed in here, around the benefits (and potential risks) of involving ECRs?

Anonymous 5/20/24 11:13AM

For the FLF selection panels and also as reviewers we have included FLF awardees and FLF reviewers (people who sit on UKRI FLF sift or interview panels) - this isn't always possible across all faculties though. I have also had AMS Springboard awardees (ECRS) on our Springboard selection panel and as internal reviewers

Anonymous 5/20/24 11:14AM

Do all members of the panel need to be discipline experts? That could help with male dominated Schools/depts?

Anonymous 5/20/24 11:14AM

what if the institution isn't very diverse? do you go for representation? you often end up over burdening a small number of people if your overall pool is not very diverse

Anonymous 5/20/24 11:15AM

We do go to the Usual Suspects, but give them the opportunity to delegate and we have had Directors of Research being delegated to. If we have 12 interviews for the FLF, we don't always have the same people in all 12 interviews - but everyone who interviews sits on at least 4 interviews to ensure consistency.

Anonymous 5/20/24 11:16AM

when possible we also ask academics who are closed to the particular funder and that helps sometimes to get a more diverse panel

Anonymous 5/20/24 11:19AM

We have used ECRs as committee observers. Found improved behaviour of panel

Anonymous 5/20/24 11:21AM

Perhaps if externals cannot be brought in (given, for fairness, they should be remunerated), could internal EDI champions be involved (whether academic or Professional Services)?

Anonymous 5/20/24 11:22AM

Would it be feasible to add external panel observers to not put the burden of challenging potential bias in panel decisions on those academics in the panel with protected characteristics?

Anonymous 5/20/24 11:36AM

we try to make sure that the usual suspects do not sit on both faculty and institutional sifts (if we so use a two-stage process).

Anonymous 5/20/24 11:37AM

An important point, particularly difficult to expand panels in a smaller institution

Anonymous 5/20/24 11:40AM

We've utilised both EDI professionals and RD professionals with an EDI hat on on our panels to ensure that the panel view EDI as an important consideration in the process. However it can be a challenge to ensure we are not overburdening our small EDI team, or ensuring that our RD professionals feel well equipped to have that hat on.

Anonymous 5/20/24 11:50AM

I wasn't in this break-out but thought I would share here anyway. We have a 'restricted bids committee' which has 36 members. The members of this committee are Heads of Schools plus others nominated by the School office. For any particular internal selection, three reviewers are selected from this committee based on the discipline area of the call but also other factors. We aim to not have a single gender panel, but don't consider other protected characteristics as much. The committee members are listed on the website (but applicants are not told which three have reviewed the applications)

Anonymous 5/20/24 11:59AM

Interesting. Guess you come from a large institution!

Anonymous 5/20/24 12:02PM

If ED&I professionals or 'champions' are brought into panels as part of the decision-making, is there a danger that quality considerations could be trumped by diversity ones?

Anonymous 5/20/24 12:08PM

Perhaps we need to challenge how 'quality' is being defined by our panels/in our institutions (it is set up in the above comment as necessarily antagonistic to 'diversity'/in some inverse relationship, when really being mindful of the context for an applicant's 'track record'/leadership/'potential' [whatever your metrics are] is the 'diverse'/inclusive approach to look at their 'quality'; i.e. the means and not the end)?

Anonymous 5/20/24 12:12PM

I did not mean that they were necessarily antagonistic but choosing someone based on the quality of their application (in its context) is not the same as choosing based on diversity considerations

↳ Briefing panel members

How do we brief an internal selection panel about their role as individuals and as a panel? How do we brief them to support the best possible decision-making? How do we ensure that EDI considerations are the heart of decision-making?

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Anonymous 5/20/24 11:19AM

We do try and brief them - send guidance for the call, questions in advance etc. However, how do we make sure they had read what we send is also an issues!

Anonymous 5/20/24 11:25AM

Panel members from certain characteristics can be helpful but there's a risk of them feeling like a token or add-on. And it doesn't mean that they will possess inclusive attitudes of themselves (Braverman effect). So the focus should be more on reasonable adjustments for characteristics within the demand management process e.g. interview Qs sent to neurodiverse applicants, BAME applicants partnering with major funder panel members

Anonymous 5/20/24 11:30AM

EDI considerations and SUPPORT needs to be made at department and research group stage to increase the quality of applications from a variety of people going into the competition from the start.

Anonymous 5/20/24 11:41AM

Asking or expecting panel members who have certain protected characteristics to hold primary responsibility for monitoring EDI considerations and/or raising issues with bias etc. risks placing a disproportionate responsibility on them, and potentially causing issues for them professionally/interpersonally.

Anonymous 5/20/24 11:48AM

Building capacity in engaging with EDI, so that it isn't necessary to lean exclusively on EDI professionals (internal or external), or on staff with protected characteristics, is beneficial, and it can also offer a ripple effect, over time, where people increasingly apply those considerations in their work more widely.

⇒ Structuring the Panel Meeting

How do we structure selection panel meetings for efficiency, efficacy, and fairness/EDI?

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Anonymous 5/20/24 11:10AM

It will also depend on availability of people, especially considering timelines.

Anonymous 5/20/24 11:11AM

We aim for diverse/representative panels but you can only go with who is available and willing so this really limits our ability to do this

Anonymous 5/20/24 11:12AM

Make it remote, to help facilitate speed/efficiency and inclusivity?

Anonymous 5/20/24 11:16AM

Reviewers provide scores in advance - could see "initial" ranking average/std/variance across reviewers. But the discussion order was then randomised, scores reflected on and ranking only looked at again at the very end - EDI profile of the candidate pool was only looked at after the ranking had been made

Anonymous 5/20/24 11:53AM

We use remote review and email circulation/discussion rather than formal meetings. We have a clear framework for scoring and providing feedback for the reviewers to follow and we remind them to be mindful of EDI. The reviewers have to have completed unconscious bias and EDI training, and update this at regular intervals (in line with University policy)

⇒ Radical alternatives

How do we feel about using full or partial randomisation instead of (or as part of) a selection panel? Has anyone tried it? If so, for which schemes?

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Anonymous 5/20/24 11:16AM

I'd be wary of doing full randomisation - there would need to be some sort of quality check first

Anonymous 5/20/24 11:22AM

Politically poisonous! Potential impact on careers, promotion means actually perceived as unfair.

Anonymous 5/20/24 11:31AM

British Academy are currently doing this with their Small Grants scheme and they have reported that more PIs with protected characteristics have been awarded grants as well as universities who have not previously been awarded many Small Grants seeing an increased number of awards. Not tried this at my institution but does show it can be effective

Anonymous 5/20/24 11:36AM

NERC have done this (we think) for their latest Pushing the Frontiers call (for those that scored a 9)

⇐ Anything else?

Any other thoughts or comments or suggestions or ideas that don't fit elsewhere

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Anonymous 5/20/24 11:10AM

clear guidance for panel members eg not using journal impact factors/H-index/number of papers etc and valuing wide range of outputs. Unconscious bias training/guidance too?

Anonymous 5/20/24 11:11AM

Perhaps routinely ask for R4RI/narrative CVs could help here as part of any internal sift?

Anonymous 5/20/24 11:35AM

separate scoring sheets for panel members. Helps to identify the outlier scores and try to find out more.

⇐ Any questions for other participants?

What are you wrestling with at the moment?

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