



Equality Diversity and Inclusion: Report to CREDS Executive on the implementation of the EDI Plan

May 2020

Introduction

The CREDS EDI Plan exists because we recognise that the energy research community is insufficiently diverse, for example the CREDS consortium is 70% male. The aim of the plan is therefore "to foster an inclusive culture within the Centre, 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." The Plan was developed by the CREDS EDI Working Group, agreed by the CREDS Executive in April 2019 and then published on the [CREDS website](#).

The Plan consists of a number of actions under different headings, against which this reports progress so far (as of Spring 2020).

Recruitment

The Plan included four actions specifically related to recruitment:

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).

Action 3b: By April 2019, ensure that staff involved in recruitment and selection have undertaken equality and diversity training, including training in unconscious bias.

Action 3c: Ensure that appointment panels are diverse.

Action 3d: Monitor recruitment data, the diversity of Centre staff and the delivery of commitments related to adverts, training and panel composition (ie actions 3a, 3b and 3c) and report the figures annually to the Centre Executive and Advisory Board.



In Autumn 2019, Nick Eyre wrote on behalf of the EDI Working Group to the 15 CREDS institutions, reminding them of these actions and giving them a questionnaire to fill in on recruitment practices and numbers. All the universities responded, from which we learnt that 8 universities had recruited for positions in CREDS.¹

Findings from the questionnaire

7 institutions reported on recruitment practices:

- 3 institutions (43%) had a statement in job descriptions and adverts encouraging applications from specific under-represented groups.
- 6 institutions (86%) had staff involved in recruitment and selection undertake equality and diversity training, including training in unconscious bias.

Two types of recruitment exist within CREDS:

- Competitive recruitment: job adverts, interviews etc
- Non-competitive recruitment: staff being redeployed onto a CREDS project from a previous role

Of the 45 posts for which there has been recruitment to date, half were recruited competitively and half non-competitively. We collected gender statistics for both types of post.

Competitive recruitment, 22 posts – gender statistics

For researcher positions, the M/F split of applications was 74%/26% and of appointments was 80%/20%. The higher proportion of males recruited is consistent with the higher proportion applying for these posts.

For non-researcher positions (i.e., administrative support and knowledge exchange roles), the number of recruitments was smaller. The M/F split of applications was 37%/63% and of appointments was 0%/100%. Throughout the recruitment process, women are in a very significant majority, which is the opposite of the position for researcher posts.

Non-competitive recruitment, 23 posts – gender statistics

The M/F split of appointments for staff redeployed onto CREDS was 61/39%. These are predominantly researcher posts although we do not have data on the exact split between researchers and non-researchers hired in this way.

¹ 'recruited for positions in CREDS' refers to staff not named on the CREDS bid but recruited since the start of CREDS.



Further work

Since the end of the 2019 survey period, CREDS has funded two new Challenges, one of which explicitly concerns equity issues. The selection panel had a 50:50 female:male composition. The outcomes in terms of staff recruited will be surveyed in the next annual review. Similarly, we will report on the Early Career Research Call at that point.

To gain a different perspective, in addition to the institutional survey described above we are undertaking a survey of CREDS staff, to obtain their experiences of the recruitment process.

Reflections on recruitment

The high proportion of redeployed staff in CREDS is interesting, since EDI aspects of recruitment generally focus on competitive recruitment. Redeployment should not be considered negatively, as it is a key part of mitigating the precarious nature of research employment. However, for these 23 staff already inducted into their institution but new to CREDS, it is necessary for them to be informed of CREDS specific policies such as the support available for early career researchers and options for joining meetings remotely to allow for caring responsibilities.

Bullying and harassment

Although bullying and harassment policies and their enforcement are the responsibility of each institution, CREDS has its own procedure for if the problem involves multiple CREDS institutions.

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

Responses from universities that had recruited staff indicate that 3 institutions (43% of respondents) made staff aware of the bullying and harassment procedures of their employing institution during induction. Regarding the CREDS cross-institutional provisions, we are not aware of any cases referred. It is not possible to know whether this is because staff do not know about this provision, or because no one has reported any cases of bullying or harassment.

Action 4a therefore requires implementing properly so that all CREDS institutions give information to new staff on institutional procedures, and so that all staff are informed of the CREDS cross-institutional procedure.



Flexible working

The Plan contains two actions on flexible working:

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

Both Whole Centre Meetings since publishing the Plan have enabled people to join online, although uptake has been low: two staff requested live joining access to WCM 5 and none for WCM 6. The meetings are also recorded and made available on Microsoft Teams after the meeting. Feedback from one online participant was that accessing recordings is more useful than joining online live, since one reason people do not come to WCMs is because they have other commitments at the same time. The EDI Working Group should discuss this further.

Action 5b: Ensure induction procedures in each institution include information on flexible working.

This was asked in the questionnaire, with 3 institutions (43% of respondents) reporting that the induction process included information on flexible working.

Career progression

There are three actions relating to career progression:

Action 6a: By April 2019, establish a working group to investigate policies on career progression and job security for staff on fixed-term contracts, and make recommendations as to best practice within our institutions.

It was decided to delay this action due to resource constraints within the core team. We will consider when to consider it again, since it will affect CREDS staff.

Action 6b: By 2021, allocate at least 30% of the Flexible Fund (c. £750,000) for researchers to lead projects.

The EDI plan, recognising that fixed term contracts limit leadership opportunities, committed to reserving at least 30% of the Flexible Fund (£750,000) over the five years of the Centre to allow researchers to lead projects from this fund.

This is all being allocated in one funding call, currently ongoing. The call included a number of support mechanisms:

- **A webinar:** Held on 26th September 2019 and attended by 49 people in which the Director went through the call and answered questions. His presentation, a recording of the call and a written transcript of the answers to the questions were added to the [CREDS website](#).



- **Mentoring circles:** These were the result of a suggestion from the EDI working group and represent an innovative form of support. 66 people in groups of up to 10 were offered mentoring support in the form of at least 2 group calls from 7 mentors, all members of the CREDS Executive. In many cases, there were also short individual mentoring sessions.
- **Questions:** The ability to email specific questions to two members of the CREDS Core team and group mentors.

The call will be further evaluated to determine its effectiveness in helping ECRs run projects as PIs.

Action 6c: By December 2019, establish an informal mentoring scheme for researchers applying for and leading projects.

We have undertaken training for CREDS ECRs: all ECRs from CREDS were invited, and 10 came, to a training day in Oxford on 'How to write a good funding proposal' on 23rd October 2019. They were also given information about other funding opportunities available to ECRs and listened to a talk from an ECR who had just successfully applied for a £1 million grant. These were [put on the website](#) and mentioned in the CREDS Consortium Update (our internal consortium newsletter) and CREDS Newsletter (our external newsletter for the wider Energy Demand Research Network and other interested stakeholders) so that they were disseminated to a wider audience.

We have also:

- Added a [designated ECR resource area](#) to the CREDS website
- Set up a series of capacity building and engagement events for ECRs that will run through the lifetime of CREDS (see below).

Communications

The Plan promises to ensure that equality and diversity issues are considered in the internal and external communications of the Centre, including the website. This remit covers speakers, publications, website contributors and images as follows:

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.

- Blog authors have a good gender split: 40% of blogs were written by men, 40% by women and 13% joint (total number of blogs: 30).
- Publication authors are split as follows: 72% male, 28% female. Although not all the authors are affiliated with CREDS, this split broadly reflects the male/female ratio within CREDS.



- Since the EDI policy was established, we have agreed that images on the website should not generally contain people.
- In ensuring diversity of speakers at events, a concern has been raised multiple times: those from under-represented groups can be over-burdened with public-facing activities, especially if they are senior. This then leads to the question of whether more junior staff should be asked to take on these roles, especially as in general junior researchers are more diverse than their seniors.

Researcher-led activities

Action 8a: By October 2019, draw up a plan for an ECR/graduate researcher-led programme of cross-institutional events, drawing on the views of ECRs in the Centre.

The October 2019 an ECR training workshop in Oxford also consulted ECRs on the work they'd like to do together during CREDS. They came up with an ambitious programme of cross-institution and cross-disciplinary events over the next 3 years, including:

1. Developing ED (Energy Demand) Talks – TED Talk-style presentations of the work they are doing. This will involve training in presenting their work and working with video. The results will be put on the CREDS website and possibly on YouTube.
2. Stakeholder Engagement workshop – an event for ECRs to meet and engage with some of the key policy and business stakeholders in their areas of work.
3. Carbon coaching – a public-facing event where ECRs engage with people to help them reduce their carbon emissions
4. An academic writing retreat (with mentoring and peer support)
5. An ECR-led academic conference (possibly online)
6. A proposal writing retreat (with mentoring and peer support)

The CREDS Core team is working out how best to support the ECRs doing this work but it expected that the next event will happen in the early summer of 2020.

Other CREDS initiatives relevant to EDI

- CREDS also facilitates the Energy Demand Research Network (EDRN), for energy demand researchers beyond its consortium. As such it runs events and EDI has been central to the planning of these. For example, we try to ensure diversity and a gender balance amongst speakers and promote ECRs where possible. In addition, venue selection criteria have been developed to check the environmental and social performance of venues, including their commitment to EDI (covering such things as the art on the walls, whether they are active in their local communities and how they promote EDI within their own organisations). This improves the EDI impact of the money CREDS spends on events.



- CREDS runs the Visitor International Programme (VIP) scheme. This is not part of the EDI strategy but is a key opportunity to bring in people from outside to influence our thinking.
- The gender pay gap is not part of the CREDS EDI action plan, as CREDS does not determine salaries. However, the aforementioned questionnaire asked CREDS leads whether their institutions had taken steps to raise awareness of the gender pay gap and support action to address these. 4 respondents (57%) were unaware of any such steps. We do not know whether this is institutional inaction on the issue itself or on information dissemination. This is something the EDI Group can follow up.

Recommendations

Having collected various data on the implementation of the Plan, the first task going forward is to try to deliver it as well as possible before introducing any further actions.

The Plan is showing signs of success in terms of the proportion of staff involved in interviewing having undergone EDI training, early career development and attracting a good gender mix in the CREDS blog, though it is necessary to take care, where the gender mix in the consortium is unbalanced, not to overburden the women in the group. The consortium has taken steps to keep EDI visible in the consortium (sessions at the WCM, items on the website, meetings) and has an active voluntary working group made up of both men and women (mostly women). It has also taken EDI seriously in its event planning and in internal and external communications. We recommend that good practice in these areas is continued.

Implementation of the Plan has been less successful in terms of the proportion of institutions which inform new staff about various policies including flexible working and bullying/harassment. Now that we have this information, we recommend that the Director should contact CREDS institutions with these results and that we review the situation again in future years.

There are also some aspects of the Plan which have not been implemented within the expected timeframes. We recommend that these are placed on the next EDI meeting agenda for review and put into the action plan.

Given the data collected so far, there are several aspects of the Plan which we recommend require attention:

1. Should CREDS provide an EDI induction for all staff irrespective of their institution or of whether they were competitively recruited or internally redeployed? This could take the form of a recorded webinar.
2. Internal redeployment and naming researchers on proposals are a significant feature of university procedures. On the one hand, this helps researchers with short, insecure contracts keep a job and their institution retain talented staff, reduce redundancies and strengthen proposals. On the other hand, it may mean it takes longer to increase diversity. This issue cannot be resolved by CREDS but can be highlighted.



3. Where staff are competitively recruited, EDI procedural requirements are generally followed, but this alone is not producing rapid changes in the diversity of our staff. We recommend that the CREDS working group should discuss how to follow up appropriately, in order to ensure that we can report to funders and help our institutions in moving these issues up their agenda.
4. It is positive to get more input from under-represented groups in the energy research community in different fora and activities. On the other hand, we need to take care to avoid of over-burdening under-represented groups. CREDS has found this an issue in getting reviewers, speaker and funding selection panel members.
5. We need to reconsider how CREDS can help promote good practice regarding job security for staff at the end of their fixed-term contracts.
6. What else can be done to increase diversity? The full answer to this question is complex and mostly involves institutions beyond CREDS itself. However, there are things we might do within our consortium to diversify our community in the medium to long term. These might include: further support to ECRs, where diversity is somewhat greater than in the energy research community as a whole; considering how we champion EDI in our relationships with business, third sector and policy stakeholders; and how we promote diversity in our non-academic communications. We recommend that the EDI Working Group gives consideration to priorities we should address within CREDS.
7. What are the implications for funding? CREDS has taken significant actions on EDI so far. The Executive has allocated some funding to EDI, most significantly to fund the work on this report. However, those undertaking the work on EDI are volunteers and undertaking the work on top of their existing research and other commitments, which is unsatisfactory. We recommend that the EDI Working Group is asked to consider the level of work required to undertake the CREDS EDI Plan and report this to the Executive.

This briefing should be referenced as:

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About CREDS

The Centre for Research in Energy Demand Solutions (CREDS) was established as part of the UK Research and Innovation's Energy Programme in April 2018, with funding of £19.5M over five years. Its mission is to make the UK a leader in understanding the changes in energy demand needed for the transition to a secure and affordable, low carbon energy system.

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