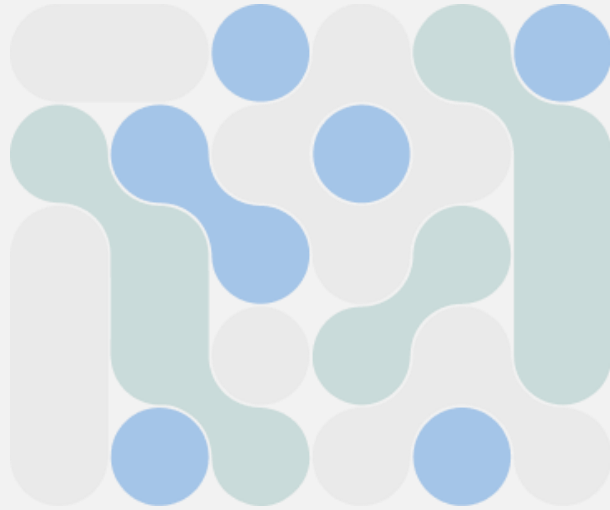# EDICa

EDICa Newsletter- Jan-Feb

EDI Caucus: Supporting UK research and innovation with evidence-based reviews of equality, diversity & inclusion practices.

For the Sway version of the newsletter, please click here
https://go.hw.ac.uk/EDICa/Newsletter/2025-02

The newsletter will always be written in plain English, however if you would like a version summarised in British Sign Language, let us know.

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Flexible Fund Announcements

We're delighted to announce five exciting new projects from the EDI Caucus' third and final round of Flexible Funding, which focused on the organisation of work and enabling workplaces in the UK's research & innovation ecosystem. Further information about our Flexible Fund can be found here: https://edicaucus.ac.uk/funded-projects/

'**Enhancing research capacity for Black nursing academics in UK universities**' led by Dr Yetunde Ataiyero with co-investigators Shenile Lindo and Prof Sarahjane Jones all from University of Staffordshire. With partners the Society for Black Academics and the Council of Deans for Health.

'**Divergent Minds in the Archive: Creative engagements with the archive as research workspace**' led by Dr Ria Cheyne of Liverpool John Moores University, with co-investigators Dr Ann-Marie Foster from Gray's School of Art, and Dr Lucinda Matthews-Jones from LJMU. With partners Glamorgan Archives, Gwent Archives, History UK, Imperial War Museum, Liverpool Record Office, Scottish Council on Archives, and Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums.

'**Disability Access in Laboratory Environments**' led by Dr Katherine Deane at the University of East Anglia (UEA), with co-investigators Prof Joanna Semlyen and Brendan Burrill of UEA, and Em Diserens of the Lightyear Foundation. This project is a collaboration across the Eastern Academic Research Consortium (EARC) which includes the universities of East Anglia (UEA), Sussex, Essex, and Kent. Partners also include The Royal Society, The Royal Society of Chemistry, The Institute of Biomedical Sciences, The Wellcome Trust, Catapult Cell and Gene Therapy, the National Association of Disabled Staff Networks (NADSN), and the EDI Sharing Hub funded by EPSRC.

'**Impact of Hybrid Working on Black Women Academics: Productivity and Visibility in Post-COVID Higher Education**' led by Dr Tinkuma Ejovi Edafioghor at The University of the West of England, with co-investigator Dr Ifeoma Dan-Ogosi also at UWE, with Alice Chilver at the Women's Higher Education Network.

'**Gender and mental health conditions in UKHE: Reorganising inclusion in contemporary academia**' led by Dr Hadar Elraz of Swansea University with co-investigator Dr Armineh Soorenian of the University of Sheffield. With partners Disability Arts Cymru, Disability Wales, Women in Academia Support Network (WIASN), Sheffield WAARC (Wellcome Anti-Ableist Research Cultures), Disabled Women in Academia Group, and the Anti-Ableism Swansea University Group.

See https://edicaucus.ac.uk/funded-projects/ for summaries of each of the projects, as well as previous funded projects.

Calls and updates

Call for participants to share around your colleagues, networks and institutions

Dr Chiara Cocco, EDICa postdoctoral researcher, is looking for researchers based in the UK (or have been in the past), who have experience of **pregnancy** (including miscarriage and fertility journeys), **breastfeeding** and/or **caring for a child under 2** during their research career. She is particularly interested in the experiences of those conducting non desk-based research (e.g., fieldwork, lab work) to learn how they negotiated being pregnant and/or caring for a young child with a career. She would like to interview people to hear how family planning has impacted career decisions and vice versa, with the aim of understanding how to make non desk-based research careers more accessible for those who also wish to have a family. To participate or find out further information, contact Chiara at C.Cocco@hw.ac.uk

EDICa seeks people who have sat on research funding panels - including panellists, chairs, conveners and observers.

As part of our study on the research process, participants can choose a one-hour online interview or to submit a 5-10 minute video or audio recording. Prompt questions will be provided to guide reflections on their experiences with funding assessment panels.

Contact edicaucus@hw.ac.uk to express interest and request more information.

Mentoring of early career researchers

Dr Stefanie Schneider, EDICa postdoctoral researcher, seeks 5-10 minute reflections - audio files or text - about *your experiences as an early career researcher and the types of support and mentorship you received.*

What obstacles did you encounter, positive experiences, practices you think should be more widely offered, guidance you retrospectively realised was missing or actually *was* helpful.

We know that minoritised researchers are less likely to be "in the know" for time-sensitive career opportunities. Mentors and champions play a crucial role in guiding early career researchers through a complex landscape with many different and often opaque routes that can lead to a rewarding career. Stefanie is conducting a study to understand what forms of support and mentorship early career researchers evaluate as helpful. This study seeks to establish what initiatives could break patterns of privilege and reach more early career researchers that are often left out.

If you have any questions or would like to participate, contact Stefanie at Stefanie.schneider@uws.ac.uk.

Evaluating AI's impact on equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in HR

Dr Siddhartha Saxena, EDICa postdoctoral researcher, seeks professionals from diverse backgrounds with experience in:

- Data Science and AI Applications in HR

- Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy and Implementation

- Human Resources (HR), particularly recruitment and workforce planning

- Algorithmic decision-making in HR processes

He is especially encouraging **women, neurodivergent individuals, and disabled people** to share their insights. Take the short eligibility survey here: Survey Link. Once you complete the survey, Siddhartha will reach out to schedule a 45 minute online interview if you qualify.

For any questions, please contact **Dr Siddhartha Saxena at** s.s.saxena@hw.ac.uk.

Narrative CVs in grant applications

One of EDICa's Flexible Fund projects, led by Dr Fasoli f.fasoli@surrey.ac.uk*, is seeking participants.*

Study Title: Experiences in Writing Narrative CVs

We are conducting a study aimed at understanding researchers' experiences of writing Narrative CVs and analysing the language used in such CVs. We are interested in identifying challenges and ways to support researchers in writing Narrative CVs as part of grant applications. The study is part of a project titled '*Breaking* Barriers in Research Funding Applications: Evaluating Narrative CVs and Co-Designing Solutions for Application Processes'.

What: The study involves completing a short online survey asking questions about yourself and the experience of writing a Narrative CV. **You will be asked to attach a Narrative CV you have written**. CVs will be anonymised and analysed for language features and used for a second study assessing reviewers' biases.

Who: We are looking for individuals who: a) are active researchers working in the UK, b) have applied and submitted a Narrative CV as part of their grant application.

Please click on this link: https://surreyfahs.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_bQ1jTOpqBCj8Dum. Make sure to have your Narrative CV ready to upload.

Incentive: Participants who provide a valid Narrative CV and complete the survey will receive a **£10 Amazon voucher**.

Delphi Study

At the start of the EDI Caucus, we conducted a Delphi Study, led by Dr Jos Collings, one of the postdoctoral researchers on the caucus. "The aim of the Delphi process is to arrive at an agreement or consensus that answers the primary research question. In this case, the question was 'What are the key priorities for creating an inclusive and equitable culture across the R&I ecosystem?'"

The report on this process and our findings can now be viewed here: https://edicaucus.ac.uk/delphi-study-report/

'Feeding the Research & Innovation Pipeline: Covid-19 and closing the awarding gap' - a final report

Dr Kamna Patel and her team, funded by the first round of flexible funding, have produced their final report. These findings will be shared at our symposium on 12 March.
https://edicaucus.ac.uk/mitigating-covid19/

You can view the final project report on our website here: https://edicaucus.ac.uk/report-on-feeding-the-research-innovation-pipeline-covid-19-and-closing-the-awarding-gap/

We copy the first two paragraphs here to tempt you to read further.

"This study investigates whether a 'good' degree outcome (First or Upper Second class) for racially minoritised graduates opens career pathways in research and innovation (R&I). The research is grounded in data from 2019/20 to 2020/21, a period when the undergraduate awarding gap between white and all other students significantly narrowed from 12.3% to 8.6%, the largest reduction in 16 years. However, this gap re-emerged in 2022/23 after COVID-19 mitigations introduced by universities during the height of the global pandemic were lifted, indicating that the changes were not embedded.

The study identifies two critical issues:

1. The dominant narrative that COVID-19 mitigations significantly narrowed the awarding gap risks obscuring other impacts of COVID-19 and new equality gaps for racially minoritised students.

2. The narrow focus on numerical awarding gaps risks overshadowing broader anti-racist interventions needed to dismantle systemic racism in higher education and to truly open career pathways for racially minoritised graduates."

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1 Between 2019/20 and 2020/21 the undergraduate degree awarding gap between white and all other students significantly narrowed from 12.3% to 8.6%. This did not correspond to an opening up of careers in research and innovation for racial minorities.

2 Black graduates are less likely to be in professional roles than other racial groups despite holding 'good' degree results; a situation pronounced in 2019/20, at the height of labour market uncertainty due to COVID-19.

3 Non-Russell Group institutions award the highest proportion of 'good' degree results, with racial minorities more likely to obtain a 'good' degree at a non-Russell group institution than at a Russell Group institution by an average of between 2-4%.

4 Existing pipelines for careers in research and innovation – such as scholarship schemes - overly privilege graduates of Russell Group institutions.

5 University choice for Black students can be a trade-off between increased chance of a 'good' degree outcome at non-Russell Group institutions but with fewer chances to access research and innovation pipelines, or, the converse, with additional racialised pressures of hypervisibility, isolation and demands of peer support and care.

6 A detailed portrait of life for racially minoritised students during COVID-19 illuminates the immense effort required to stand still and stay on track for a 'good' degree result.

7 A policy and operational focus on numerical awarding gaps risks an artificial separation of a 'good' degree from the racialising conditions of higher education.

8 Centring student-informed ideas of a 'good' degree and achievement in higher education, is more likely to surface racial inequity and shift institutional responses to reflect the realities of racially minoritised students succeeding in overwhelmingly white institutions.

KEY TAKEAWAYS | 6

COVID's impact on career progress of disabled researchers

The Flexible Funded project led by Dr Preethi Premkumar is disseminating their findings in various ways. You can check out their website here: https://www.discoveryproject.uk/home, which includes two poser presentations under the menu Impact. Click here to watch their 11-minute documentary. Or you could see them present at these conferences: Alter Conference, Minoritised Life Scientists Future Forum, British Society for the Psychology of Individual Differences (BSPID) - 15 conference and the Annual Conference on Equity in Education & Society – Institute for Educational & Social Equity. You can also see these findings presented at EDICa's symposium on 12 March. https://edicaucus.ac.uk/mitigating-covid19/

Background: The career progress of a researcher is challenged by heavy workloads, competition for funding and pressure to conduct groundbreaking research. Being minoritized places an additional strain to meet these demands. The aim of this study was to understand the predictors of career progress of academic researchers who are minoritized by disability, race, gender and caring responsibilities and the impact of the COVID pandemic on their career progress in researchers.

Methods: An online self-report survey was designed around themes including the decision for choosing a career in research, seeking career guidance, succeeding as an academic researcher, receiving support from the institution and experts in the discipline and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Hundred and twenty-eight participants completed the survey and represented academic researchers in the United Kingdom who identified with the abovementioned protected characteristics and those who had no protected characteristics.

Results: Researchers with sensory impairments or multiple disabilities received more support during the COVID pandemic than researchers who were not disabled. Researchers from a racially minoritized background perceived more benefits of the support for research than White researchers who were not British. Among disabled researchers, greater perceived support from the institution predicted a greater sense of career progress. Among racially minoritized researchers, seeking career guidance and choosing a career in research because of the stability it offered predicted career progress. Among women and those with caring responsibilities, the type of employment contract predicted a greater sense of career progress.

Conclusion: Factors such as receiving career support and perceiving the support received, stability offered by a research career and the type of employment contract, guides the perception of career progress for disabled researchers. Mentoring minoritized researchers can help minoritized researchers to perceive the success of their research and set concrete goals for career progress.

Workstream Updates

The Career- Life Cycle

EDICa has conducted the first Menstrual Health Champion training sessions with one of our test sites. Volunteers were trained in how to provide support on menstrual health in the workplace, following the model of the Mental Health champion. Our data has shown that not everyone is comfortable talking to their manager (male or female) about challenges with menstrual health, and they prefer a person not directly linked to their line management to discuss issues or receive advice, support or signposting to helpful resources. We are also aware it is not a manager's responsibility to know about all menstrual conditions, so the champion will also serve as a point of reference and support for managers. Often people are not aware of policies, even when they do exist; they may not know where to look or how to proceed. The champions are a bridge to internal and external resources. The training will also cover "red flag symptoms" that would need attention from a GP.

Another of our test sites is a large university developing a menstrual health toolkit. EDICa has begun a series of co-design workshops looking at what that toolkit might comprise of, and what are people's priorities. Common themes that come up have been provision of menstrual products consistently across all toilets, information on adjustments and support, and training for managers.

On 28th February, EDICa's Prof Kate Sang and Dr Chiara Cocco attended the launch of the menstrual health policy of Flotation Energy, a medium-sized 6-year-old Edinburgh-based renewables company with offices in Australia, Taiwan and Japan. The policy that Kate and Chiara helped to develop drew on data from EDICa, as well as their research from 2017 onwards, providing the scientific evidence basis for an inclusive menstrual health policy that provides information on menstrual health as well as guidance for employees and line managers.

Cysters

We've recently learned about a grassroots, community-led charity focusing on supporting people from marginalised or culturally diverse backgrounds experiencing menstrual, maternal and mental health challenges. One of their three mission pillars is to "work to dismantle the cultural misogyny surrounding menstrual, maternal, and mental health issues, as well as chronic illnesses." This can be a resource to refer employees from such backgrounds experiencing such challenges. Find out more here: https://cysters.org/

The Research Process

Workstream 2 continues its efforts to gather insights on the challenges and opportunities faced by assessment panels. This initiative is part of a broader effort to develop guidelines aimed at making the peer review process more inclusive. The workstream is now reaching out to the wider research and innovation community, **seeking individuals with experience in various roles within research funding panels, including panellists, chairs, conveners and observers, to participate in our study.** Participants have the option to engage in a one-hour online interview or to submit a 5-10 minute video or audio recording. For those choosing the recording option, prompt questions will be provided to guide reflections on their experiences with funding assessment panels. The contributions from participants will help build an evidence base on EDI issues encountered during the assessment phase of the research process and develop good practice guidelines. The collected insights will be shared with a consortium of funders, enhancing their understanding of how to more effectively integrate EDI principles into the peer review process.

Please contact us to express your interest and request more detailed information about this study at: edicaucus@hw.ac.uk

The Organisation of Work

Using virtual reality to showcase enabling workspaces

EDICa is working with the company Animmersion who specialise in developing virtual reality training and simulations in the workplace. In January and February we visited several well-established UK-based institutions, whose buildings combined older legacy built-environments and recently renovated spaces. Across these sites, EDICa researchers walked around with users of the locations to get an understanding of what works and doesn't work for different kinds of people. One of Animmersion's developers attended and took footage to feed into the VR design.

During the visits, we experienced many examples of good and bad design which can impact on different kinds of users. For example, in one entrance area we had to navigate waist-height clear glass barrier gates with no signage and which, we were told, present challenges for many people; while elsewhere, we visited a lecture theatre with tiered seating that had steps presenting an optical illusion effect, disorienting for some users (see photos). In the photos, you'll see a door that is made of the same wood panelling as the wall, making the door remarkably camouflaged and difficult for people with visual impairments to find. One building, opened within the last 5 years, is split across multiple levels and has poor signage (confusing to many users), and poor disabled access, making it difficult to navigate.

Accessibility may be a consideration for new buildings, but in many instances we have seen less than appropriate execution of accessible design.

One institution we visited was headquartered in what could best be described as a large Victorian mansion, where users/estate managers experience challenges that many UK institutions will be familiar with. When renovating buildings that are Grade Listed, it can be extremely difficult to improve their accessibility while keeping the character and beauty of the building, and complying with legal considerations.

We were able to visit archive and collection environments, where due to requirements that are necessary for the upkeep of specific objects and materials, many buildings can be a significant challenge to all five senses! (Sadly, the smell of the residual Victorian pest control and the aroma of century-old whale oil cannot yet be transmitted into virtual reality technology.) This is also the case for temperature-controlled environments. EDICa has talked with people who work in labs that must be kept at 4°C, requiring the use of special clothing and regular breaks. In some museum collections, the humidity is carefully controlled, and food and drinks rightly banned from the area, requiring staff and volunteers to take regular breaks in neighbouring buildings. Collections must be carefully protected from living insects, that could devour historic specimens or items (see photos). Staff and visitors must leave outer clothing and bags in lockers, and doors must swing shut fairly quickly, and this impacts on accessibility and privacy for some people. As a positive response to these restrictions, we have seen the trialling of a canvas bag for visitors to discretely carry medical or menstrual supplies with them from the lockers up to the collections area.

These visits are informing our design and development of virtual reality scenes to show enabling workplaces by questioning the poor design elements we have experienced, and incorporating enabling features, such as the fully adjustable desk and fume-hoods we saw in a recently built chemistry lab.
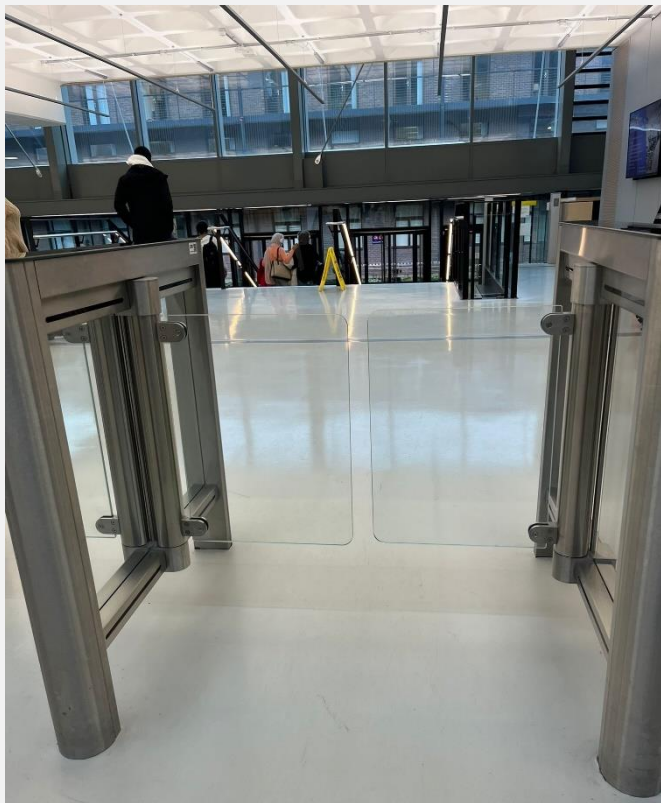
Captions can be viewed clicking on the invisible icon in the top left corner of the image.
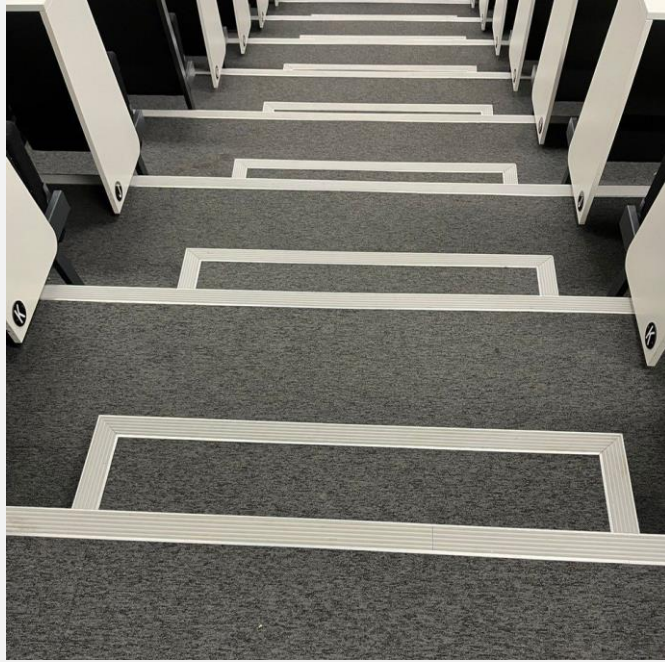
1 - display of items for high school visitors
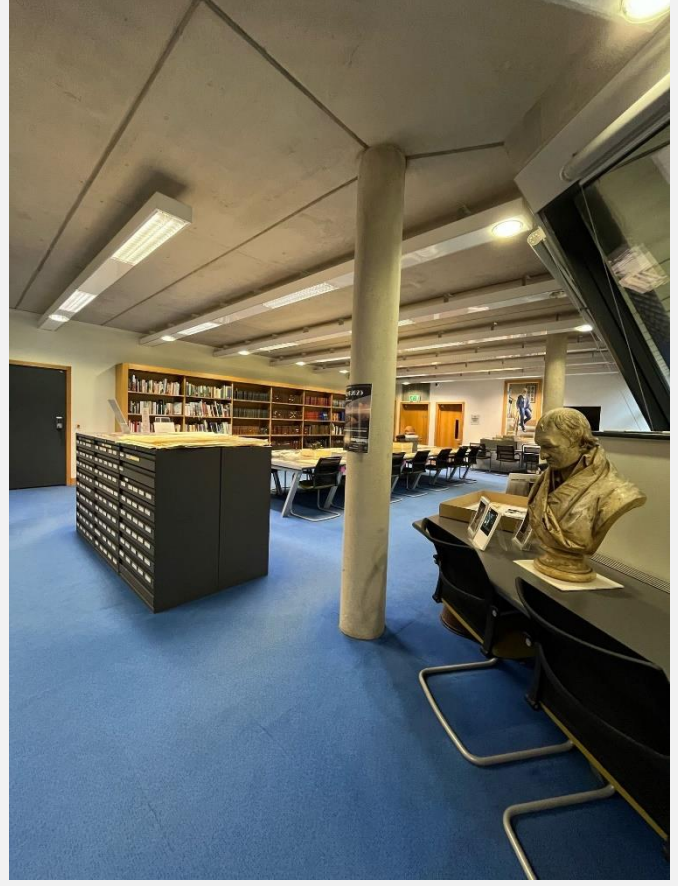
2 - a reading room

3 - university entrance requiring swipe card access, 4 - steps down tiered seating classroom

5 - a camouflaged door

6 - entomology "Box of Doom" showing why live insects can't be allowed in the collections.

7 - mineralogy lab, with mineralogist using an abrasive solution to grind a sliver of a sample to the appropriate thinness to analyse

8 - EDICa's Chiara Cocco experiencing Animmersion's virtual reality technology

EDICa Seminars

Symposium: Mitigating the effects of Covid-19

As the Flexible Fund Round 1 projects come to the end of their funding, we are hosting a symposium where the projects will share their findings. EDICa funded four projects in the first round. Three will be presenting on **12 March 13:30-15:30 on Zoom**. (You can watch the fourth project in the February recorded seminar: https://go.hw.ac.uk/EDICa/Seminar/MentalHealth.)

The theme of the first round of funding was to look at how to mitigate the effects of Covid-19 on the research & innovation sector. In this symposium you will hear from the following projects:

Project 1 led by Dr Kamna Patel – **Feeding the research and innovation pipeline: Covid-19 and closing the degree grade awarding gap for Black and other minoritised students.**

Project 3 led by Dr Beldina Owalla – **Understanding the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the career life cycle of early career researchers in academia.**

Project 4 led by Dr Preethi Premkumar – **The Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the career progress of disabled researchers in intersection with race, gender and caring responsibility.**
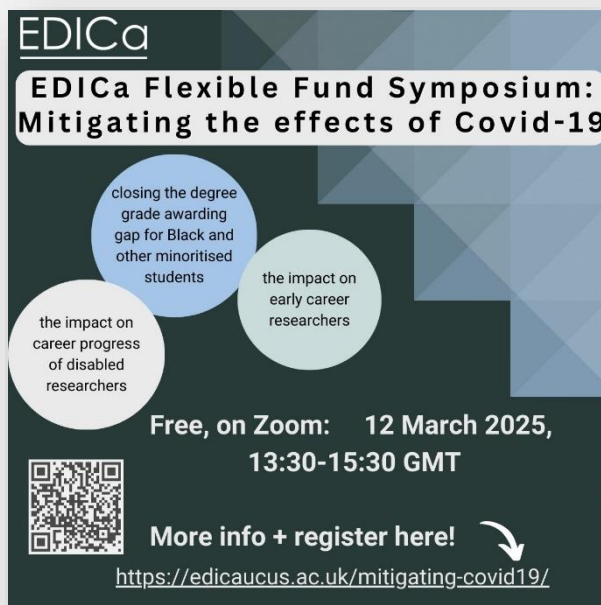
Register here to attend: https://go.hw.ac.uk/EDICa/Seminar/Covid-Mitigations   Let us know ASAP if you need BSL interpretation. You can read more information about the projects and the presenters here: https://edicaucus.ac.uk/mitigating-covid19/

A recording of the symposium will be published on our YouTube channel.

EDICa

EDICa Flexible Fund Symposium: Mitigating the effects of Covid-19

closing the degree grade awarding gap for Black and other minoritised students

the impact on early career researchers

the impact on career progress of disabled researchers

Free, on Zoom: 12 March 2025, 13:30-15:30 GMT

More info + register here!
https://edicaucus.ac.uk/mitigating-covid19/

Recording: Mental health in the research & innovation ecosystem: understanding the lived experiences of women.

On 19 February, EDICa hosted a seminar on two projects looking at mental health in the research & innovation ecosystem. The first project was funded by EDICa's first round of Flexible Funding.

Prof Dulini Fernando, Dr Krystal Wilkinson and Prof Elina Meliou shared findings from their project, **"The work and career experiences of women with mental health issues in STEM research and innovation"**.

Dr Hadar Elraz presented findings from her project, funded by the British Academy/Leverhulme Small Research Grant: **"Work intensification, gender and mental health in UKHE: Women academics' lens".**

You can watch the recording of this session on our YouTube channel and our website. https://go.hw.ac.uk/EDICa/Seminar/MentalHealth A BSL interpretation has been requested from Heriot-Watt University's interpreting team, and will be published on the same platforms when completed. (Due to the shortage of interpreters in the UK, we follow guidance to offer interpretation on request for live events, and then ensure that interpretation is added to a recording when the team have capacity.)

Coming soon! Lunchtime seminars on methodology

EDICa will shortly launch a new series of webinars during the UK's lunch time, which will focus on different types of research methods. This series aims to foster a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between technical issues and social factors in practice, policy, and academic inquiry.

A cornerstone of this series is its focus on the integration of cutting-edge quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Leading social scientists explore innovative approaches to empirical inquiry, offering insights into the logic and applicability of diverse research techniques. These include statistical modelling, ethnographic studies, case-based research, longitudinal analysis, and participatory action research.

These seminars 45 min to hour-long seminars will be hosted on Zoom and, when permitted by the guest speaker, recorded and published on our website.

To ensure you hear the latest, subscribe to our mailing list:
https://go.hw.ac.uk/EDICa/Subscription

Spotlight on the field

Parents & Carers Networks

UK PACT is the National Organisation of Parents and Carers Networks Together in Higher Education. They're still starting up, with a website in development. But they have a YouTube channel https://www.youtube.com/@UKPACT where you can watch their launch from 16 November 2024 as well as previous talks they've hosted. On the 15th January was a talk "Following fathers' wellbeing through paternity leave journeys" by doctoral student Jess Hobbs at Birkbeck College.

They have a toolkit designed to help chairs and participants in Parents and Carers Networks, which will be placed on their website once live. The current co-chairs are Dr Mark Gatto, Asst Prof in Critical Organisation Studies at Northumbria University, whose main research interest is the gender inequity experienced by working parents, and Dr Ana Lopes, Senior Lecturer in Work and Employment at Newcastle University, whose research focuses mostly on the areas of gender, work and employment relations.

UK PACT aim to form and strengthen a UK-wide network for Parents & Carers groups in higher education initially, but hopefully broadening beyond into the private and government sectors. If you are involved in a Parents & Carers network and would like to hear about future events they are hosting (next one tentatively scheduled for 21 March), then please reach out to mark.gatto@northumbria.ac.uk or Ana.Lopes@newcastle.ac.uk .

Enough is enough: Identifying and overcoming acts of anti-Black performative allyship in the peer-review process

This is a long article, and challenging for the lay reader, but we'll pull out the main themes for the busy reader. Even if this is not your field, we showcase this article to also show an example of peer-review bias which may be relevant to other disciplines.

Rice et al. come from the American perspective, and focus on their discipline of "management and organisation studies" which they abbreviate to MOS throughout the article. Their article provides "insights as to how anti-Black performative allyship in the peer-review process obstructs the advancement of Black scholarship" in this discipline, MOS. To do this, they use critical race theory (CRT), which has sadly become a bogeyman in some parts. It's important to look at how they explain CRT:

"CRT is an important framework needed to analyze the relationship between power, race, and racism in American structures and institutions, the erasure of marginalized people's experiences, and the perpetuation of racial inequality, particularly in the United States (Crenshaw et al., 1995). Specifically, we draw on four primary propositions of CRT: (1) racism as ubiquitous and enduring in society; (2) white supremacy as the engine of racism; (3) the role of interest convergence in perpetuating racism; and (4) the importance of centering the voices of marginalized populations to uncover and overcome racism."

What is this performative allyship? They lay out three ways this is done in MOS.

1. Black scholarship predominantly being published "via special issues, editorials, and commentaries while being unlikely to appear in regular issues in leading MOS journals". The authors contend it keeps Black scholarship in this niche, and it's pointed out that special issues depart from the normal peer-review process.

2. MOS typecasts and primarily confines Black scholarship to the study of racial differences. The authors argue that while this is important, it should not be the sole scholarship published on the Black experience. "It's akin to boiling women's studies down to articles only on the differences between the genders." Reviewers kept asking authors to collect a sample of white employees for comparison; a study couldn't be looking at the Black experience on its own. Rice et al. provide examples of reviewer feedback in their article: "*MOS journal reviewer: Although a focus on Black professionals is appreciated, given the generic nature of your model I do think that a comparison group of White professionals is warranted.*" The authors note the reviewer said "White", not a more "diverse" sample.

3. Finally, the authors argue that "when MOS journal editors and reviewers provide statements, editorials, and workshops professing their desire to increase the amount of Black scholarship, yet take no substantive action to fundamentally disrupt the system that has historically refused the entry of Black scholarship, these actions represent the hallmark of performative allyship."

When Black scholars are critiqued for their small sample sizes or a sample size comprising of one minoritised group, they point to a slew of other studies using small sample sizes of marginalised communities - refugee employees, transgender employees, and women employees. "We find that research centering Black employees is not viewed in line with research that centers other marginalized employees. MOS would be strengthened by a sustained focus on centering the workplace experiences of Black employees, as well as other marginalized employees, as this work collectively represents deviations from white supremacy."

The authors explain that research design and methods are critiqued when it's about Black employees more than when its a mainstream topic featuring predominantly white samples. A study pairing field and experimental studies with white samples was accepted (reviewer said "*I know you supported your model across two studies, so you do have strong evidence for it.*") whereas the same design for Black scholarship was deemed insufficient. ("*The research results reported are too premature for publication. More work is needed to substantiate the conclusions in your manuscript.*") The authors argue that this stems from "anti-Black bias in the peer-review process."

The authors touch on the mental and emotional labour associated with working in Black scholarship, which disproportionately falls to the minoritised group when allies don't play their part. "Anger, hopelessness, and consistent bouts of asking ourselves 'Is this worth it' or 'Should we just give up' is our shared reality as we see our community being silenced, marginalized, and deemed unimportant in our field of study." The authors equate all-white peer reviewers to all-white juries which have been shown to convict Black defendants significantly more often than when there is a single Black juror. And they desire MOS journal editors and reviewers to "stop moving the goalpost with respect to Black scholarship."

Unfortunately, chances for such reflections, arguments and debate are fast dwindling in the USA right now. See our next piece below.

Ripples from across the pond

A lot has changed in the United States of America since our last newsletter, and it has been disheartening to watch from afar and hear voices from those in the research & innovation sector there. The ties between the UK and the USA in research are close. We summarise here some of the ripples, but it will not be an exhaustive list and the situation changes so rapidly that this newsletter section will soon be out of date.

- At the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), around 880 works have had their jobs terminated in late February. NOAA had 12,000 staff, including 6,773 scientists and engineers. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cdell8n14x2o

- More than 4000 jobs cut in the National Park Service impacts conservation in sensitive areas and scientific research.
https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/national-parks-trump-administration-job-cuts-b2704394.html

- Words are being banned in science communication and articles, including many that have different meanings in different contexts, like "bias". (We were going to link to the report published by the US Senate Committee on Commerce, Science & Transportation, but it's too extreme. Please do your own search if you must.)

- "The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention took down publicly available health information, such as HIV datasets, and withdrew research papers that were being considered for publication in scientific journals for review."
https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-cdc-orders-pullback-new-scientific-papers-involving-its-researchers-source-2025-02-02/

- The US Department of Defense has cancelled a number of grants under the Minerva Research Initiative, which used social science to study things like violent extremism, disinformation and threats from climate change.
https://www.science.org/content/article/pentagon-guts-national-security-program-harnessed-social-science

- This article raises the alarm over what is happening at the National Archives, following the firing of the Archivist of the United States:
https://action.everylibrary.org/we_should_all_be_paying_attention_to_what_s_happening_to_the_national_archives Dr Colleen Shogan was the first woman ever appointed to the position, and sadly is the shortest-serving following her dismissal.

- The National Institute of Health (NIH) has been embattled for the last two months, with uncertainty still reigning as judges blocked some of the administration's orders. The NIH "employs thousands of in-house scientists, but a good 80-85% of its $47billion budget funds outside research... The NIH funds more than 60,000 of those proposals annually, supporting more than 300,000 scientists at more than 2,500

institutions, spread across every state."
https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2025/02/nih-grant-freeze-biomedical-research/681853/

- Diversity, Equity & Inclusion - DEI - was the first to come under attack, but there are backlashes under way to companies who are complying with executive orders to end all DEI initiatives. This article from 2 March provides a review of where DEI is in the US: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c24110m30ddo

- DEI in universities and colleges is in turmoil as soon institutions comply, some rebrand activities, but some aspects of the executive orders have been challenged in court, resulting in orders being temporarily blocked. https://www.highereddive.com/news/surge-dei-cuts-wave-colleges-ohio-state-upenn-iowa/741191/

- Pressure has also been felt by some of the learned societies based in the USA. The American Society for Microbiology came under fire from its members when it removed references to diversity and equity on its website. Profiles showcasing microbiologists from under-represented groups also temporarily vanished from the site. https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-025-00372-0

- At the National Science Foundation, the freezing of grants has been challenged in court. "There is no clear timeline for how long the judges' temporary holds will last, but even if they are lifted in an appeal, the NSF could have a hard time legally terminating grants, because their funds are appropriated by the US Congress, meaning they are protected by law, says Deborah Pearlstein, a specialist in law and public policy at Princeton University in New Jersey." https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-025-00365-z

Reflections: Dr Ludmila Praslova reflects in her article for the Harvard Business Review "The False Dichotomy of Merit and Inclusion". Summary: "In merit-based systems, fairness should be manifested in all aspects of organizational life. But while the ideal of a merit-based society is attractive, research shows that bias in promotions and reward distribution is just as prevalent as bias in hiring, exacerbating and multiplying rather than reducing unfairness in the span of our careers. In the world we live in, true meritocracy, where everyone plays on an even field, requires the removal of many unfair barriers. It requires inclusion. By removing systemic barriers, organizations can create environments where inclusion enhances meritocracy and merit mechanisms enhance inclusion, ensuring that talent and effort genuinely determine success."
https://hbr.org/2025/02/the-false-dichotomy-of-merit-and-inclusion?autocomplete=true

Increasing diversity in STEM academia: a scoping review of intervention evaluations

ABSTRACT

"Lack of diversity is a significant issue in academic STEM, whether from a social justice, economic, or scientific quality perspective. In this scoping review, we synthesise peer-reviewed evaluations of diversity interventions in academic STEM from high-income countries between 2011 and 2023. One hundred and eighty-four intervention evaluations are identified through database searches (Scopus, Web of Science Core Collection, and IBSS) and forwards and backwards citation searches of included articles. Interventions are predominantly conducted in the US and targeted at women and ethnic or racial minorities. Other dimensions of diversity such as disability, socio-economic background, and sexual orientation are rarely addressed. The most common type of intervention is one that provides support-related services, followed by diversity training such as bias awareness workshops. Those seeking policy-level change are seen less frequently. Evaluations are heterogeneous in outcomes studied and designs. Interventions were overwhelmingly positioned as successful, with considerations of failures or unintended consequences rare. The findings from this review emphasise the need for holistic evaluations of diversity interventions that provide transparency between intervention and evaluation goals and processes. If institutional commitment to diversity is sincere, it is vital that resources and incentives for such evaluations and their dissemination are reliably available and that measures are taken to discourage evaluations acting as 'any change is good' box-ticking exercises."

Spotlight on accessibility

Zoom vs Teams? Accessibility of online video conference platforms

In preparation for EDICa's end-of-project conference on 20 November, the support team have been investigating which technology platforms and what audio/visual technology will best support an inclusive hybrid event. We met with Heriot-Watt University's BSL interpreting team to hear from the experts, and here we share what we learned.

Zoom is definitely preferred over Microsoft Teams. So much so, that we were told some deaf people just won't attend events held on Teams, and some interpreters won't take on a job if it's going to be on Teams. For some, it's because of really bad past experiences. It is acknowledged that Teams has been trying to improve, and that some of the causes for this preference may no longer be relevant, and some apply when it's a "meeting" as opposed to a "webinar", which have different functionality. We'll run through the reasons why Zoom trumps Teams.

- Zoom prioritises the video; Teams prioritises the audio. If you've been on Teams and someone's video has frozen but you can still hear them, that's an example of prioritising audio. This is not good when you rely on video for your communication and that interpreter has frozen for the last 5 seconds.

- Ability to hide participants who don't have their video on. You know those lurkers who are there in spirit and definitely listening and not multitasking, but have their video turned off? In Zoom there's an option to hide those so you don't see these black squares cluttering up your screen. It helps visually to reduce the clutter to focus on those with cameras on, and that all-important interpreter tile.

- Landscape vs portrait. Sign language requires lateral space. Zoom enables the user to put the tiles into landscape, whereas Teams is portrait.

- For people relying on dial-in, including visually impaired people, dialling into Zoom and navigating the raise-hand, mute and other functions is more familiar. EDICa also discovered the dial-in option wasn't included when the invitation came from EDICa's

team calendar. We host Zoom meetings for the workstream that has a visually impaired member.

In 2023, EDIS (Equality, Diversity & Inclusion in Science & health, funded by Wellcome Trust) produced a guide to working with British Sign Language interpreters, which also includes external resources: https://edisgroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/A-Guide-to-Working-with-British-Sign-Language-Interpreters.pdf

EDICa co-investigator Dr Marion Hersh and two colleagues reviewed a number of video conference platforms in a journal article written in 2022 and published at the beginning of 2024, providing recommendations to developers on how to improve the technology. "Zoom was both the most commonly used and the most frequently preferred (56.1%) tool, with MS Teams second in usage and a trailing second in preferences (15.9%). It was considered to have better captioning, but otherwise to generally be a poor second to Zoom."

Hersh, M., Leporini, B., & Buzzi, M. (2024). A comparative study of disabled people's experiences with the video conferencing tools Zoom, MS Teams, Google Meet and Skype. *Behaviour & Information Technology*, *43*(15), 3777–3796. https://doi.org/10.1080/0144929X.2023.2286533

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