

EIA ESCulab development fund

School/ Directorate
School of Life Sciences

Person Responsible
Angela Nicoll

Created
12th April, 2018

Last Review
12th April, 2018

Status
Screened

Next Review
12th April, 2019

Screening Data

What is the name/title of the policy/activity?

Gap funding application for the European Screening Centre, Newhouse (ESCN) to retain 6 expert researchers in the field of drug discovery

Describe the aim, objective and intended consequences of the policy/activity.

The European Screening Centre, Newhouse, (ESCN) which is staffed by University of Dundee staff, has been an integral part of a wider European project to catalyse EU drug discovery, through a major public private partnership, the European Lead Factory (ELF), established in 2013. It currently employs 21 members of staff from the University of Dundee.

Funding for the ESCN has been provided as part of ELF and is now due to end in May 2018 and all 21 members of staff will be facing redundancy. However, the unit has been exclusively invited to take part in a follow on project, ESCulab, which will provide funding from January 2019 for 6 experts in one particular field of science - biology. The aim of the application is to retain the unique skills of the 6 researchers, who have developed their knowledge and understanding of the programme throughout its life time. Without continued funding to retain them in the interim, they would be made redundant and undoubtedly move elsewhere. The consequences would be that ESCN no longer function and their role in the follow on project would be given to one of the partners outwith Scotland.

Who is responsible for the policy/activity and who implements it?

The funding application is being made by the European Screening Centre Newhouse, and will be used by that Centre to retain 6 expert researchers.

Who is effected by this policy?

The researchers involved with the Centre will be affected by the loss of their jobs, the Centre will be unable to contribute to the follow on project, ESCulab, and Scotland's competitive position in Europe in relation to drug discovery will be at risk.

Is there any indication that this policy is relevant to equality and the protected characteristics or that those with any of the protected characteristics will have a different experience in relation to the intended outcomes of the policy?

- Yes

At present ESCN has 21 members of staff , half of whom are women. They also have a mix in terms of the ethnicity of the team. All staff are likely to be made redundant with the end of the funding, however the opportunity to participate in the follow on project can allow for some staff (6 in total) to be retained. The individuals with the expertise required to continue this are a mix of men and women and mixed in terms of ethnicity.

Recommend this EA for Full Analysis?

Yes

Comments

The application for gap funding from May 2018 to January 2019 is to retain expert medical and science professionals in the area of drug discovery. The funding for all staff in the unit (21 in total) ends in May 2018, when most will be made redundant. However with the exclusive invitation for the unit to participate in a follow on project from January 2019, there is the potential for 6 of those staff members to be retained with gap funding.

There has been no competitive selection process for these 6 people because their skills dictate that they are the only people from the current team who can participate in the follow on project.

At present the 21 members of staff are an even mix of gender and it made up of a number of ethnicities, and includes BME staff. Two thirds of the group who will hopefully be retained are women and again a mix of ethnicities. The numbers are so small that no further detail cannot be provided.

The subject required for the follow on project is biology, one area of science where there are greater numbers of women.

Rate this EA

High

Impact Assessment Data

Is this policy relevant to the protected characteristic of Age?

- No

The ages across all staff members in the team has no relevance to the decisions taken to retain some and not others. Disciplines and funding availability are the reason for the choices made.

Is this policy relevant to the protected characteristic of Disability?

- Yes

It may have a relevance, however the numbers of people involved make it impossible to identify who has a disability. There is significant underreporting of disability across all staff in the University, however where staff do require reasonable adjustments to be in place, these are supported by the University.

Is this policy relevant to the protected characteristic of Gender Reassignment?

- No

The application for funding and the basis for selecting the staff hoping to be retained, is based on their very specific discipline of biology. Other staff in the unit don't have that knowledge or discipline and it is one that is key to the follow on project.

Is this policy relevant to the protected characteristic of Marriage and Civil Partnership?

- No

This has no relevance to either the project or the selection of people to continue into the follow on project.

Is this policy relevant to the protected characteristic of Pregnancy and Maternity?

- Yes

It may be relevant in terms of the nature of the work being undertaken and the risk that any research we have to the unborn child. That is unknown, however the University and the ESCN have in place risk assessments that would identify any risk should a member of staff become pregnant.

Is this policy relevant to the protected characteristic of Race?

- Yes

It is relevant in so far as the wider team has a mix of ethnic groups. The group of 6 who are the subject of the funding application are also mixed in terms of their ethnicity and have been identified because of their particular field of science, namely biology.

Is this policy relevant to the protected characteristic of Religion and Belief?

- No

The funding will be used to retain staff on a skills basis and to allow a follow on project to remain in Scotland. Religion and belief are not a factor in this application.

Is this policy relevant to the protected characteristic of Sex?

- Yes

There is an under representation generally of women in the STEM subjects. The ESCN has a gender balance at present, however the funding is to retain only 6 of the original team. The skills required for the follow on project are related to the discipline of biology. As a result the gender balance is in favour of women in the team of 6 and that reflects wider research that shows biology, both in Schools and University undergraduate and post graduate study, attracts more women than men.

Is this policy relevant to the protected characteristic of Sexual Orientation?

- No

The sexual orientation of the staff in ESCN has no bearing on the funding application.

Taking account of the findings so far, is there a possibility that the implementation of this policy would result in a different experience or a detriment for those with protected characteristics?

- No

The evidence relating to the protected characteristics indicate that the overall team is gender balanced and has a diverse make up in terms of ethnicity. The application for funding is for a small selection from that team does not have any relation to the protected groups. However in terms of the make up of the small group, their academic and research discipline is biology. Biology is one area of STEM subjects where there are more women than men, certainly in the early stages of study at school and university. That is also the case until individuals step into a senior managerial role, where the representation is less.

The individuals which this fund would support are all biologists and the overall gender balance is greater in terms of women. There is a diversity in the ethnicity of the group, however the low numbers involved prevent us from giving more detail on these and other protected characteristics.

The funding therefore has a positive impact on the protected groups of sex and race, retaining valuable expertise to allow the follow on project to remain in Scotland and encouraging women to remain in the STEM subjects.

Based on your findings so far, what recommendations or changes (if any) would you make in relation to the policy and how it is implemented?

In terms of the funding application, the overall impact of the application will be positive in relation to sex and race. The recommendations are that this application is necessary for the University of Dundee and Scotland to remain at the forefront of drug discovery and also to continue to encourage women and people from minority ethnic groups into STEM studies and work.

In terms of recommendations the application should reflect the role it plays in promoting equality and wider participation in STEM subjects.

Where you have recommended actions/changes to the policy, what are the timescales for completion of these

18-04-2018

What monitoring arrangements do you have in place to identify changes in any impact or relevance?

The application will be submitted to the Scottish Funding Council for a decision. There will be no monitoring of the application, however if the funding becomes available, it would be desirable for the monitoring of the staff numbers in terms of diversity continued to reflect a diverse group.

Comments

The funding application is relevant to the protected characteristics of sex and race. Its approval would see the continued employment of experts in the field of biology and drug discovery. The group the funding applies to is made up of men and women, with greater numbers of women. This contributes to the national strategy of increasing the numbers of women into STEM subjects and industries, whilst retaining a highly important and successful service in Scotland. In terms of race, the people involved have a mix of ethnic identities and nationalities.

Organisation Sign-off Data

Having read the EIA, do you approve its findings and recommendations?

- Yes

What are your reasons for approving/not approving the EIA?

N/A

If you have approved the EIA, do you agree with the monitoring arrangements in place?

- Yes

N/A

Where you have not approved the monitoring process, what other steps do you require to be taken?

N/A

Comments

N/A

Next Review Date

2019-04-12

Outstanding Actions

No outstanding actions