Gender Analysis in Research and the Irish Research Council: An RFO’s Perspective

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Gender-Net Strategic Seminar
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The Irish Research Council supports excellent research & recognises creative individuals with innovative ideas, thus enabling a vibrant research community that enriches Irish research, the economy & society.
Irish Research Council Deliverables

• Skills & Talent
• Knowledge & expertise to ‘Shape society’
• An internationally competitive research community
• Policy advice
From early stage to advanced career researchers...
Two strands of IRC Gender Strategy & Action Plan:
1. Gender equality in research.
2. Integration of sex/gender dimension into research content.

Launch by EU Commissioner for Research & Innovation, December 2013.
Gender Equality In Research

IRC Gender Strategy Objective: “...encourage and implement initiatives which promote equality between women and men at all stages of the researcher career.”

Results of gender-blind applicant assessment since 2013:

Postdoc: data for all disciplines

Postdoc: data for STEM only
From IRC Gender Strategy and Action Plan:

“The Council will also only fund excellent research, and excellent research fully considers whether a potential sex and/or gender dimension is relevant to the research content and fully integrates sex/gender analysis where relevant, thereby ensuring maximum impact, societal benefit and optimising innovation in Irish Research.”
Engaging with National and European Initiatives on Gender Equality & IGAR
Integrating Gender Analysis into Research: IRC Funding Applications

Question 11.1:
Does your proposed research programme involve any of the following?
• Humans or animals as the research focus
• Human or animal samples and/or data
• Humans involved as end consumers, users, patients, or in trials

If you have answered **YES** to one or more of these questions above, your proposed research may have a potential biological sex or social gender dimension.

Question 11.2:
If you answered **NO**:
• Explain why there is no potential biological sex and/or gender dimension in your proposed research.

If you answered **YES**:
• Indicate how potential biological sex and/or gender issues will be handled.
• [Note the points in ‘Checklist for sex/gender in research content’ in the Irish Research Council’s GUIDE FOR APPLICANTS.]
Integrating Gender Analysis into Research:
IGAR Awareness & Training

For Applicants:

Guidelines for Applicants: includes ‘Biological Sex/gender dimension’ section for help in answering this question.

IGAR Training Workshops: led by Katrien Van der Heyden (Yellow Window Management Consultants) and facilitated by IRC.

- Targeted to PGs, PDs, and applicants to international funding programmes.
- Targeted Research Offices to disseminate learnings among their own communities.
Integrating Gender Analysis into Research: IGAR Awareness & Training

For Assessors:

 IGAR Training & Guidelines:
 ✓ “Do you understand the concept of biological sex and social gender as they impact research content?”
 ✓ Refer Assessors to Toolkit Gender in EU-funded Research and Gendered Innovations case studies.
 ✓ Appendix “Guidance on the Sex/Gender Dimension Statement.” (2 pages)
 ✓ Gender-blinding in all assessment processes.

 IGAR Criteria in Assessment:
 ✓ Evaluation criteria includes assessment of applicant’s consideration of gender dimension.
Integrating Gender Analysis into Research: IGAR Awareness & Training

Internal IGAR Proofing:

**Monitoring Mechanism:**
- Application system designed to facilitate annual analysis of gender dimension applicant responses, in order to maintain and improve quality.

**IGAR Awareness:**
- Council staff fully buy into value of gender dimension, given its thorough integration in major calls and processes.
Integrating Gender Analysis into Research: IRC Application – Responses to Gender Dimension Question

- Varying quality of answers, as regards depth of consideration: some thoughtful, others simplistic or superficial.
- Some common problems: focusing only on males; treating both genders equally, regardless of research focus.
Responses to Gender Dimension Question: Examples of Promising Practice

Project Title: “A Recombinant Approach to Cell-Matrix Interactions and Vascular Tissue Engineering”

Area of Research: Engineering – Medical and Biomedical Engineering.

Response:

“The sex variable is especially relevant in the proposed study… it has been found that stem cells from male and female donors have differing levels of response to various types of stimulus … gender can also influence the experiments described in this proposal, as the development of the marrow derived stem cells used in this study will be influenced by factors such as the diet and physical activity of the donor … influenced by gender roles. Therefore, by including a sex and gender dimension we will add significantly to the impact of the proposed research and address a gap in knowledge in the area of tissue engineering research.”

✓ Cells to be sourced from male and female donors; sex variable analysed in balance with other variables; sex variable findings to be included in manuscript submission, presentation, and publications.
Responses to Gender Dimension Question: Examples of Promising Practice

Project Title: “Mapping Marginal Space: Developing Tools for Managing Marginal Archaeological Landscapes”

Area of Research: Study of the Human Past – Archaeology.

Response:

“Significant consideration was given to the issue of gender when preparing this project application. Archaeology has often been proposed as an unbiased view of the past … material culture and property are often deemed to be truly representative of past societies. However, this is not always the case … Many groups are excluded from the past on account of their status as property (slaves) or due to their inability to own property (women). Most (if not all) past societies were male-dominated, and this favours the survival of objects which represent this masculine status quo.”

Applicant also considered gender bias in access to the project outputs, noting that “access to spatial and non-spatial data can be restricted by social structures like copyright, privacy and access laws, which may contain gender biases.”
Thank you for listening