

## How do I champion equality, diversity and inclusion in public engagement?

Creating spaces where everyone can engage with science

*This guide will help you champion diversity and inclusion in your engagement work. It will explain some of the terminology around this topic, as well as providing tips for good practice when both organising and participating in engagement activities.*

### 1 | What is equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI)?

Equality, diversity and inclusion are all slightly different, although there is a collective common driver behind them that matters much more than the specific terms themselves.

**Equality:** Ensuring everyone has equal opportunities to engage with us.

**Why it's important:** In a democratic society it's important we make an effort to provide fair access to opportunities, especially if we don't want irrelevant factors coming into play.

**Note:** Some people might talk about equity, which is slightly different to equality. Equality can often be interpreted as 'treating everybody the same'. Equity recognises that different people will require different kinds of support in order to access the same opportunities.

**Diversity:** Ensuring people from a range of backgrounds are participating at all levels of our work.

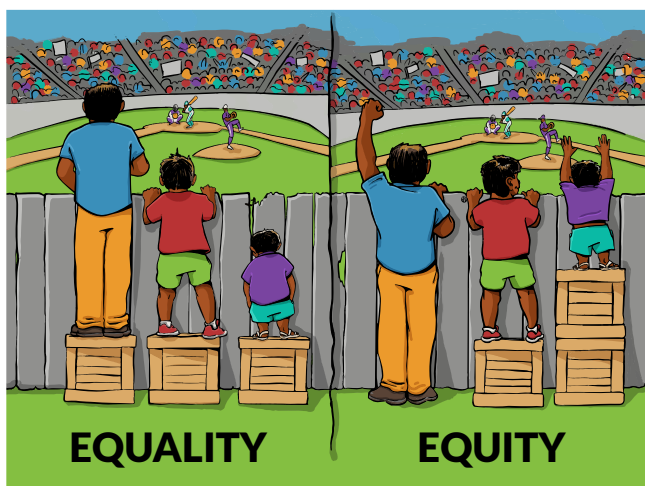
**Why it's important:** Aside from ethics and democracy, diverse teams are statistically known to perform better. This is likely due to a broader range of perspectives and knowledge that can be drawn upon.

**In practice:** As much as possible, we should ensure that our teams, our leaders, our audiences, reflect the population. It's also good to be aware that not all diversity is visible. Things like disability and sexual orientation among others may not be immediately apparent.

**Inclusion:** Not only are diverse people present but barriers to their participation are removed.

**Why it's important:** When people are not able to participate fully, we lose out on their valuable knowledge and skills. Diversity is only a box-ticking activity if there is no real inclusion.

**In practice:** Inclusion can be more difficult to put into practice as we are often unaware of the barriers we put in front of others, (also known as unconscious bias).



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## What is unconscious bias?

*Unconscious bias is our tendency to give certain people preference based on patterns we've been conditioned with. If from a young age we see that most scientists are white and male, we will have a subliminal assumption that white males are better at science. The fact this happens unconsciously makes it difficult to see this preference but research has shown it exists. Some studies have demonstrated that if given the same CV, we are more likely to shortlist and offer higher pay to applicants that have male and Caucasian-sounding names.*

## 2 | Privilege and intersectionality

### What is privilege?

When people are given preference over others based on a non-relevant characteristic, this is known as privilege. In the above example, white men have 'privilege' as they are more likely to be hired and offered more pay. While some of these advantages may seem subtle, when multiplied over time and across society, it has a large impact on our societal structure.

The vast majority of us will have privilege in some form or another and we will also be disadvantaged in some form or another. The ways in which areas of privilege or disadvantage interact is known as intersectionality.

### What is intersectionality?

Intersectionality is the idea that we don't experience the world based on one characteristic. For example, a black woman may experience a different form of sexism than a white woman. It's important to be aware of intersectionality so that when we tackle privilege we aren't ignoring any groups. E.g. when we tackle

misogyny in the workplace, we aren't just removing barriers for white women but for *all* women.

### Equality Act 2010

In the UK there are nine characteristics protected under the Equality Act:

Ethnicity	Marriage & Civil Partnership
Age	Gender Reassignment
Gender	Sexual Orientation
Disability	Pregnancy & Maternity
Religion	

The Equality Act 2010 prevents employers and service providers from discriminating, harassing or victimising individuals based on the above characteristics and will therefore apply to you when you organise public engagement activities. This is the minimum requirement, however at Imperial we aim to work in a progressive way, exceeding these expectations and championing EDI.

## 3 | Allyship

An ally is someone who champions for inclusivity of a group they are not part of. As the vast majority of us have privilege in some form, we can take advantage of our influence and be allies for each other, leading to a wider cultural shift. When engaging with the public, you will no doubt encounter many different groups in the same way you do at Imperial and it is just as important to maintain good relationships and be at the forefront of positive change. Below are some tips for being an ally that will help you sustain these good relationships:

**Don't interrupt** – Minority groups are more frequently interrupted and talked over. Make a conscious effort to hear others' input in full.

**Echo & credit** – It's not uncommon that an idea will be overlooked when a minority offers it but then fully supported when someone else mentions it later. When you hear a great idea, give your support and ensure the credit is given to its originator.

**Consider language** – How do your audiences describe themselves? What pronouns do they prefer? These small symbols of respect can be the difference between a great environment and a draining one.

**Welcome criticism** – If you are called out for unconscious bias, don't get defensive. Instead see this as an opportunity to learn. Thank the person for their correction as they are helping you avoid the same mistake in future!

**Intervene** – If you see others exhibiting unconscious bias or discriminatory behaviour, intervene. For example if you see someone has been interrupted, address this and encourage them to speak.

**Provide opportunities** – Are you organising an event? Make sure you have a diverse panel. Struggling to find people? Ask for recommendations. Similarly, consider challenging non-diverse events that you have been invited to take part in.

**Promote & encourage** – With future or new opportunities, recommend your contacts to get involved and encourage them to participate.

In summary, being an ally is partly about working on your own unconscious bias, partly about helping others address theirs and partly about supporting diverse groups into the spotlight.

## 4| Organising inclusive activities

**When organising an engagement event or activity you should consider:**

### **Potential barriers to attending**

- **Financial concerns** – Will it cost your participants money to travel to your activity? Will they need to pay for a babysitter or carer? If so, how can you address this?
- **Time-related concerns** – Some people have very little free time. Others may have specific religious practices that will clash with your activity. Be aware of this and aim to time your activity at their convenience.
- **Psychological concerns** – Attending an activity may be daunting for some, particularly those with mental health issues. Are there other methods to participate that may be less intimidating?
- **Physical concerns** – Some may have physical barriers to attending, such as the elderly or the disabled. Can you change your venue or format of the activity to make it more accessible for them?
- **Anonymity concerns** – Some people may not want details about themselves revealed due to fear of persecution in their home countries or stigma, such as LGBTQ+ people or those with specific diseases. How can you ensure their anonymity if they prefer it?

### **Potential barriers to participating**

- **Environmental concerns** – Some people are particularly sensitive to their environment, such as the neurodiverse. Bright lights or loud noises can be traumatic. Consider if you can change your activity to make it more comfortable for them.
- **Social concerns** – Those with privilege tend to (often unconsciously) dominate social situations. There is also the tendency for audiences to assume an activity is not for them if they are not the 'stereotypical' audience. Make your activity welcoming and open to stop this happening.
- **Accessibility concerns** – Some participants may struggle with terminology, particularly if English is not their first language. What resources can you prepare to facilitate their inclusion?
- **Catering concerns** – If you decide to cater your activity, consider dietary requirements such as allergies but also religious practices. A survey mailed out before the event can collect any dietary requirements.

## Top tips

*Speak to representatives of your target audience or professionals who work with them often. Get their advice in designing your engagement and let them look over your content. They will be able to screen not only for things that will not work but also particular terms or framing that may be objectionable.*

*Evaluate with your audience as you go. Give them plenty of opportunity to provide feedback and use this to tweak your practice.*

*And remember: your audiences are not defined by one characteristic and there may be multiple needs to address!*

## References and resources - Let us know of others!

- Imperial Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Centre: [www.imperial.ac.uk/equality/support-for-staff/resources/](http://www.imperial.ac.uk/equality/support-for-staff/resources/)
- Inclusive Learning and Teaching Resources by the Educational Development Unit: [www.imperial.ac.uk/staff/educational-development/teaching-toolkit/inclusive-learning-and-teaching/](http://www.imperial.ac.uk/staff/educational-development/teaching-toolkit/inclusive-learning-and-teaching/)
- Inclusive technology for students and staff with ICT: [www.imperial.ac.uk/admin-services/ict/training-and-resources/inclusive-technology/](http://www.imperial.ac.uk/admin-services/ict/training-and-resources/inclusive-technology/)
- Accessible Content Guidance for web and print: [www.imperial.ac.uk/staff/tools-and-reference/web-guide/training-and-events/materials/accessibility/](http://www.imperial.ac.uk/staff/tools-and-reference/web-guide/training-and-events/materials/accessibility/)
- Imperial brand and style guidance for accessibility: [www.imperial.ac.uk/brand-style-guide/accessibility/](http://www.imperial.ac.uk/brand-style-guide/accessibility/)
- Onsite access at Imperial campuses with Estate Operations: [www.imperial.ac.uk/estates-facilities/buildings/accessibility/](http://www.imperial.ac.uk/estates-facilities/buildings/accessibility/)
- Privilege walk: While this is not a perfect exercise, it does point out an important aspect of privilege and disadvantage known as intersectionality - [www.youtube.com/watch?v=hD5f8GuNuGQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hD5f8GuNuGQ)
- Women in STEM: [www.ecu.ac.uk/equality-charters/athena-swan/](http://www.ecu.ac.uk/equality-charters/athena-swan/)  
[www.wisecampaign.org.uk](http://www.wisecampaign.org.uk)
- Youth equity and STEM: [www.ucl.ac.uk/ioe/departments-and-centres/departments/education-practice-and-society/youth-equity-stem](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/ioe/departments-and-centres/departments/education-practice-and-society/youth-equity-stem)