



University
of Glasgow

Inclusive Research Practice: What, how, why?

A pocket guide

FEBRUARY 2026

**WORLD
CHANGING
GLASGOW**

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

How we do research matters. That is one of our key UofG principles. We expect our research to be of high quality: robust, rigorous, ethical. We expect it to meet professional standards for integrity and responsibility.

Professional standards also apply to how we treat everyone involved in research – ourselves; the colleagues, partners and collaborators with whom we (co-)produce research; the communities and stakeholders we produce our research for.

‘Doing research’ should be experienced as fair, collegiate and respectful. Which means doing research in ways that encourage contribution, offer opportunity equitably, and value and reward different perspectives and experiences. Not as a ‘nice to have’ but as fundamental professional standard we hold ourselves to.

Inclusive Research Practice (IRP) is an approach we have developed to help us meet those standards. IRP focuses on practical steps and principles for undertaking, supporting, rewarding, celebrating and evaluating research.

This Pocket Guide gives a brief introduction to IRP at UofG.

Chances are this Pocket Guide will get you to see good things you already do in a slightly different light – and then help you do them on purpose. Or it might give you ideas for what you could be doing differently. Or both.

Read, do and enjoy!

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For more details, read our
Work in Progress paper
**Inclusive Research
Practice at UofG:
Our Approach.**



WHAT IS INCLUSIVE RESEARCH PRACTICE?

Research practice is everything any of us* do when we undertake, support, reward, celebrate and evaluate research and knowledge exchange.

Inclusive research practice (IRP) means doing research in a way that

- removes any unfair obstacles that make participating and contributing systematically more difficult for some people than others;
- actively seeks out, welcomes and engages different perspectives and voices, and understands and enjoys difference as an asset.

The approach is deliberately called inclusive research practice: inclusion is in the doing. It is not a destination to reach and move on from. Inclusion is made and re-made, done and undone, in how everyday work is carried out.

IRP builds on what we already do well. Using IRP as a shared approach provides language and tools to embed and extend what works, and to change what does not.

Lastly, IRP is not about prescribing how we do research. It is not a replacement for ethics review, and it is not about limiting the scope or quality of research.

IRP is about giving us* confidence that how we do research lives up to what we should expect of ourselves and what others should expect of us.

*us = academic staff, research professional staff, professional service staff, senior management, students, external partners...

KEY TERMS

Diversity measures variation. How many different expressions of a characteristic are present in a group? How prominent is each expression? Diversity is typically expressed in percentages, e.g. X% type A, Y% type B, Z% type C.

Diversity characteristics are individual identity characteristics that are relevant to experiences of inclusion and exclusion, discrimination, opportunity, advancement and outcomes.

Typical examples are the nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender identity, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

Other diversity characteristics are class/socio-economic background, caring responsibilities, geographical location, refugee status, language, experience of the care system or nationality.

Diversity data is numerical data about diversity

characteristics, typically expressed as summary statistics.

Inclusion is a perspective focused on how everything we do is experienced. Inclusion asks whether people experience how we do research as fair, participative, connecting, empathic, respectful of difference and equitably designed.

Equality and equity are principles for allocating opportunity, material resources, attention etc. The principle of equality states that everyone should be allocated the same share. The principle of equity states that allocations should result in fair or just outcomes.

Treating people equitably might mean allocating unequal amounts of opportunity, resources, attention or support to account for the different circumstances people find themselves in.

MAKING YOUR RESEARCH (MORE) INCLUSIVE

Make a start

When it comes to inclusion and diversity, many people fear making a mistake. But conscious inclusion doesn't mean getting it 100% right all the time, or making projects accessible for absolutely anyone who might want to engage with them. Read through the tips below and take things step-by-step.

Make it possible

Understand where you and your team are, and what you have yet to learn. Inclusion is about real people; if you promise something and don't deliver, it affects a person, not just a statistic. Be realistic about what you can achieve with your knowledge, budget and time. Get one thing right, then do the next.

Make it specific

Pick concrete activities to focus on, e.g. recruiting teams or participants; workspaces and schedules; decision-making and governance; communication formats and materials. Check how inclusive these aspects of your project already are and adapt them if needed. A concrete approach is much more effective than a general 'let's be more inclusive in everything we do.'

Make it affordable

Some inclusive practices cost money – for instance for access provision at an event. Budgeting early for inclusion, even just ringfencing a 'just in case' kitty, makes things easier down the line.

Make it relevant

Start with what's relevant to the substance and quality of your project. Digital accessibility might be key to one project while perspectives from Black communities might be more important in another. And you might not want to run a project on working parents without flexible working for the project team itself. Prioritise what's core to your project and take it from there.

Make it matter

Is there an aspect of inclusion your team particularly care about? Maybe you all come from different educational or cultural backgrounds? Or you all have reasons to look after your mental health? Make it a feature of your project: what does it mean for how you work together, engage with partners and participants, or present your outcomes?

Make it measurable

You don't need to go overboard with quantitative measurements or key performance indicators. But do agree at the start of a project or initiative how you will know if your ambitions for being inclusive have worked. Remember that inclusion is about experiences, so in most cases jumping straight to representation statistics ('15% of our participants were disabled.') will likely not be appropriate. Depending on the size of your project, you don't need a massive framework either. It could be as simple as a conversation with the project team at the wrap-up meeting. The key point is to create reflection, transparency and accountability.

Make the most of it

Becoming more inclusive means learning new things, about others and ourselves. That's what research is about – enjoy it!

HOW DO WE DO INCLUSIVE RESEARCH PRACTICE?

There are lots of ways to 'do inclusion' in research. What we focus on can adapt to the priorities of a project, Subject, School or College, or our personal values. Here are just four examples of IRP that's already happening at UofG.

RKE Roles

Research and Knowledge Exchange roles such as Research Coordinator, Dean of Research or Impact Manager are often not very visible as career steps. To show 'who does what in RKE', the College of Arts & Humanities opened its Research & Knowledge Exchange Committee to visitors. Up to three colleagues – any grade, any career track – can join each meeting, with full access to Committee papers.

The College of Social Science shares RKE role information alongside PDR Guidance. Brief profiles encourage colleagues to talk about whether an RKE role might fit their career (or that of their mentee) in annual PDR conversations.

Go to gla.ac.uk/inclusiveresearch for more information.

Infrastructures and equipment

Research Funders increasingly request information about who uses the infrastructure and equipment funded by their grants. Are access requirements met? Do infrastructures and equipment benefit diverse groups of users? The College of Science and Engineering and the College of Medical, Veterinary and Life Sciences want to know that, too. Their cross-College project is setting up processes for recording diversity data. Analysing user demographics can help spot access gaps and catalyse improvements that make a difference to how we do research.

IRP in Impact Projects

Applications for impact funding have to explicitly address equality, diversity and inclusion. But how to do that meaningfully? How to do more than comply with UofG policies but to also not aim for the moon on a stick, especially in projects with limited budgets?

UofG colleagues developed guidance that helps identify concrete, relevant and achievable actions. Like engaging in-depth with one under-represented or under-served group through targeted engagement or internships. Or making one process – recruitment, communication, events – properly inclusive. Ask your Impact Manager for the latest version of the guidance when you develop an application.

Bringing in new perspectives

Where there's evidence that individuals from certain groups are under-represented, we can run targeted initiatives to bring new perspectives and voices into our research community. Our James McCune Smith PhD Scholarships, for instance, fund Black UK students and the Glasgow Engineering Futures Fellowships' first cohort was focused on women.

Our Centre for Doctoral Training in Diversity-Led, Mission-Driven Research (DiveIn) goes one step further. It uses diversity as an organising principle for research on global challenges and enabling technologies. Through specifically designed interventions, DiveIn actively leverages diverse talents and perspectives – from students and supervisors to partners, research participants and mentors – to drive innovation and world-leading research.



The first DiveIn cohort in action.

WHY INCLUSIVE RESEARCH PRACTICE?

There are many reasons for making our research more inclusive. Some might resonate more with you than others.

- One of our UofG values is **Inclusive Community**. It commits us to valuing diverse perspectives and contributions and aiming to provide fair opportunities and rewards for all. Making all things research inclusive helps us fulfil those commitments.
- Different perspectives and experiences lead to more **innovative, creative and better quality outputs**. The ability to think differently and to find new solutions is crucial to research. IRP helps us harness these positive impacts on our research processes and outcomes.
- Our UofG Research Strategy commits us to fostering an inclusive environment and to **attracting, developing and retaining outstanding people** from diverse backgrounds. IRP is an effective delivery lever for achieving the strategic aims we have set ourselves for research.
- Biased stereotypes about what 'successful researchers' look and sound like, and structural features – e.g. degree fees, precarious employment, inaccessible research spaces – continue to make careers in higher education disproportionately more difficult for, for instance, women, disabled people, people from minoritised ethnic or working-class backgrounds. That's not **fair or morally just**, especially given how much research is publicly funded in the UK.

- Research funders and the Research Excellence Framework require us to demonstrate that **we are doing our bit** to make research in the UK fairer, more equitable. As a practical approach to doing research, IRP helps us demonstrate how we meet these requirements.

- IRP gets us to see research – its people, processes, outcomes – in **a new light**. It encourages us to experiment with our established thinking, to mix things up a bit. IRP offers us opportunity to exercise key research strengths: curiosity and the desire to learn, discover and improve our understanding.

For these reasons inclusive practice has become a **professional standard for doing research**. IRP 'just makes sense' to do.

Good quality research is research that is produced to high standards, and inclusive practice is one of them.

It really is as simple as that.

...AND WHY A BUTTERFLY?

Images of ‘visible diversity’ are not always helpful. Inclusion is both beautiful and fragile, so a butterfly felt a good fit. And there is the butterfly effect – small acts can drive big changes.

But mainly it’s just a striking image that will hopefully help you remember where you put this brochure.



To find out more, visit gla.ac.uk/inclusiveresearch.

To request the information included in this brochure in an alternative format, please email: dorusruth.eikhof@glasgow.ac.uk.

Please cite as: Doris Ruth Eikhof and Chris J Pearce (2026) Inclusive Research Practice: What, how, why? A Pocket Guide. Glasgow: University of Glasgow.

Published by the University of Glasgow, Scottish charity registration number SC004401.