# Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) DIGIT-Lab Principles

## October 2021

This working document outlines the principles, strategy and ambitions relating to EDI for DIGIT-Lab. It is important to emphasise that this is a working document and that all principles and strategy will be regularly reviewed to reflect on progress and the dynamic environment that DIGIT-Lab’s exists in.

## Our EDI Principles

Our EDI principles will guide the DIGT-Lab EDI strategy. The principles are taken from examples of best practise (namely the Alan Turing Institute’s EDI Strategy 2021-2024).

* DIGIT-Lab will embed equality, diversity, and inclusion in everything that we do.
* DIGIT-Lab will create an inclusive culture and environment that values differences by seeking to understand the challenges and barriers to equality to eliminate discrimination.
* We will educate ourselves and our community and raise awareness in all areas relating to equality, diversity, and inclusion, ensuring our commitment to EDI is understood by all.
* We will challenge behaviour at all levels which goes against these principles, and support and enable our community to do the same.

This set of principles will apply to:

* Academics
* Professional service staff
* PhD students or any other student involved with DIGIT Lab
* Temporary Staff
* Event/ workshop/ Conference participants
* Academic and Digital Fellows.
* DIGIT Lab board and committee members

Our *EDI Principles* are informed by and designed to ensure DIGIT Lab complies with its obligations under UK equality legislation. The Equality Act 2010 brought together and harmonised equality legislation protecting staff and students with protected characteristics (age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; sex; sexual orientation; religion and belief). Furthermore, the Equality Act introduced a Public Sector Equality Duty in 2011 which places a general duty on Higher Education Institutions to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation foster good relations and advance equality of opportunity. We will also follow the Athena Swan Charter, an award held by The University of Exeter. The Athena SWAN charter is a framework developed in 2005 and is open to higher education institutions committed to the advancement and promotion of the careers of women in science, engineering, technology, maths and medicine in higher education and research as well as those in professional service roles. It also recognises work that addresses gender equality more broadly and not just the barriers to progression that affect women. Furthermore, we also will incorporate the developments and implementation of EDI as outlined in the research conducted by EPSRC’s Inclusion Matters projects.

## Why?

DIGIT Lab is a 5-year research programme working with Large Established Organisations to accelerate their digital transformation. This transformation requires change beyond technology – to embrace the people, the skills, the way of thinking and the culture to work in, in a completely different way for a digital world. Similarly, the DIGIT Lab project itself will demand a cultural transformation that goes beyond legal compliance in its approach to equality, diversity, and inclusion. Without implementing EDI principles into everything DIGIT-Lab does, we limit our potential and it will not be the best project it can be. We will reach out to the breadth of talent available recognising that to be internationally leading we must draw from as wide a talent pool as possible and are also willing to critically assess our own working practices.

In our research proposal, we made a number of statements about EDI. Specifically, that we will develop an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy and that we would take leadership through developing an EDI committee that will meet quarterly and will report progress on delivering the strategy to the DIGIT Management Board and Independent Advisory Board. We also emphasised that we were keen to develop a mix of researchers and that we would use some simple approaches to supporting disadvantaged groups. For example, within our funding we have included a small amount for a Network Carers’ Fund of £25k to cover caring costs incurred through attendance at events outside of normal working hours. We also stated that we would adopt approaches such as reciprocal mentoring: linking junior researchers with senior researchers where each partner takes turns to act as the mentor.

We also recognise the importance that EPSRC places on EDI. It is one of the priorities for EPSRC and the Research Council has the ‘ambition to create a research environment which fully supports equality, diversity and inclusion for all’ both in the short and long term. EPSRC also states that it aims to support a diverse and inclusive research environment where there is equal access to opportunities and has a stated objective to ‘embed equality, diversity and inclusion (ED&I) in all that we do, ensuring that the activities we support and the research that we fund drives change in our community, and supports a system that is inclusive for everyone’.

DIGIT-Lab fully supports these aims and objectives and through the mechanism of the EDI committee wants to establish a strategy to achieve this. We have the opportunity to embed EDI within the project throughout its 5 years and to monitor progress. These principles should apply both to the project structure and to the activities of the project, e.g. staff recruitment, appointment of industry and visiting fellows, speakers at DIGIT-Lab events and wider issues, for example which organisations we will (not) work with.  Increasing diversity does not, by itself, increase effectiveness; what matters is how an organization or project harnesses diversity, and whether it’s willing to reshape its power structure to allow for divergent voices and to challenge existing power structures for example around decision making.

We therefore have two areas of focus. Firstly, the project itself. We want to embed good EDI practice in all we do. Secondly, in those LEOs that we engage with. We wish to challenge and encourage LEOs to reflect on their practices from an EDI perspective. We will initiate dialogue with our partners to understand their current EDI approach and share DIGIT Lab’s approach and learnings.

## Our EDI Goals

Now that the project has started, the key areas of focus are recruitment of staff, supporting ECR staff, academic and industry fellows and a broader consideration of EDI behaviours including EDI workshops and events to the wider research community.

HESA data reports that 18.7% of academic staff in STEM are from ethnic minority groups[[1]](#footnote-1) (with only 3% from Black academic groups) and only 19% female in technology subjects[[2]](#footnote-2). Over the lifetime of the project, we aim to ensure that we exceed this numbers for each of groups (see earlier eg academics, fellows, conference attendees etc)

We will review HESA data and collect our own data via self-reporting, to regularly review our strategy and principles. The data will consider the ethnicity and gender diversity, access to DIGIT-Lab activities (including mentorship/EDI activities), employment status (e.g., full time vs contract vs part time) and access to networking/training/development. Our goal is to observe a percentage increase for each metric at each review point. It is important that metrics are considered goals, not targets, and that all metrics are reviewed regularly to align with maturing/evolving strategies.

## Our EDI Strategy

We recognise that building EDI into everything DIGIT-Lab does is a journey. One framework for considering that journey is the Royal Academy of Engineering (RAE) progression framework. This would envisage DIGIT Lab moving from:

**Initiating** activity: for example, where the case for change is emerging, EDI features in advisory board discussions, venue accessibility is considered, observational data about speaker diversity and accessibility is shared, there is some good practice on EDI.

**Developing** activity, for example where ambition is communicated both internally and externally, leadership articulates ambitions against which EDI is measured, compliance (with the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty (2011), Athena Swan) is reported on, policies and guidelines are reviewed for unintentional barriers and those policies that disproportionately disadvantage and indirectly discriminate against minority groups are identified, materials are reviewed to support positive messaging, some initial demographic data is collected, those responsible understand the diversity of their audience, outline guidance is available to integrate EDI into activities, websites have minimum level of accessibility for disabled people, flexible working policy is in place, all decision-makers are given access to information on unconscious bias.

**Engaging** activity, for example, stakeholders' views on barriers faced by different groups are sought, an action plan is developed to address barriers, communication is inclusive, content developers have access to information on accessibility and unconscious bias, there is visible diversity among those in decision-making positions, effort is made to generate content from underrepresented groups and leadership on EDI is evident on a daily basis.

**Evolving** and further developing, for example, new activities are assessed for impact, project leadership is scrutinised and shares best practice, a diversity of speakers is visible, good practice is widely and actively sought, collective responsibility is the norm consideration is given to delivering activities targeted at and in partnership with underrepresented groups, a clear sustained change in communications, marketing outreach and engagement is evident.

To be clear, this journey applies both to the project and to the LEOs we engage with. We are particularly keen to explore the relationship between an organisation's digital transformation journey and its development in adopting EDI principles and progression through a framework like that proposed by the RAE.

As we move through the project phases (P1, P2 and P3) we will capture learnings around EDI from both within the project and LEOs that we work with and would expect to see evidence of progression along this framework.

DIGIT Lab would also strive to engage with people widely. In recruitment we would aim to draw from the widest possible pool and develop talent to provide a diverse pipeline of individuals with the end goal of developing their careers and enabling them to take up with more senior positions should they strive to do so.

To ensure inclusive working practices, we will adopt the Athena-Swan guidelines for **all** DIGIT Lab meetings, workshops and events. The following will be applied and adhered to by all stakeholders in the project:

* Conduct within the hours of 9.30-2.30pm
	+ Hold on appropriate days to allow p/t staff to attend.
* Avoid UK school holidays.
* Avoid major religious holidays.

## Responsibility

Each individual in DIGIT Lab has the responsibility to drive our EDI programme. The EDI committee’s role is to ensure equality issues are addressed and that operating under the guidance of the University, the project complies with relevant legislation. The committee will oversee the application and development of DIGIT Lab’s EDI Principles in line with legislation.

Responsibility of the ‘EDI Principles’ sits with the EDI committee who meet quarterly to review and update the EDI Principles and monitor progress against the principles and goals. The management board is the operations group responsible for reporting on progress against the EDI principles to the IAB on a bi-annual basis.

The current EDI committee consists of:

* Roger Maull (Chair)
* Liz-Ann Gayle
* Simonetta Manfredi
* Frances Lumbers
* Oli Young
* Niema Bohrayba
* Zena Wood
1. https://royalsociety.org/news/2021/03/stem-ethnicity-report/ [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. https://www.stemwomen.co.uk/blog/2021/01/women-in-stem-percentages-of-women-in-stem-statistics [↑](#footnote-ref-2)