QEPNT Hub – Plan for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)

The QEPNT Hub is committed to delivering world-leading research in a secure, respectful, and inclusive environment. Our diverse investigator-researcher team and board membership will deliver QEPNT's research excellence with the necessary expertise in a secure and inclusive environment that embraces the ongoing cultural change in our field to improve EDI. We will create an environment of respect and openness between everyone who engages with the Hub.

We have appointed two EDI Leads – Co-PIs **Joseph Cotter** and **Jennifer Hastie** – who will be supported at all levels to ensure EDI principles are followed, with reference to this EDI Plan and a **Code of Conduct** (Appendix A) for Hub recruitment, organisational development, meetings and events. We aim to embed EDI principles across all facets of our work — building on experience gained during Phases I and II of the UK National Quantum Technologies Programme (NQTP). This includes a commitment to attracting and retaining the best possible talent from the broadest range of people, while maximising development opportunities for all — particularly for underrepresented groups, and with an emphasis on gender balance.

Strategic Objectives

Our EDI strategy reflects EPSRC's Five Action Areas[1] and builds on strong foundations and best practice developed during earlier NQTP phases.[2]

1. Foster an Inclusive and Diverse Research Culture

- We will embed EDI practice into all centrally organised activities and decision-making processes across the Hub.
- We will continue to proactively promote equity, diversity, and inclusion across the wider research and industrial community.
- The EDI Plan will remain under review with expert guidance from community EDI specialists appointed to the Strategic Advisory Board (SAB). EDI will be a standing item on all governance board agendas.
- We will implement a mechanism for anonymous feedback and maintain transparency through a register of raised EDI issues and actions taken.

2. Embed Inclusive Practices in Operations

- The EDI Plan and an associated Code of Conduct (see Appendix A) will guide inclusive practice in recruitment, professional interactions, and organisational development.
- An EDI task manager has been introduced in the Hub's Microsoft Teams channel to support and track progress.
- Our first all-partner scientific meeting (1 April 2025) opened with an EDI-focused session to invite input and feedback, which has been consulted for this plan.

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[1] Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC), Three-Year Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan: 2022–2025, UKRI, 2022. https://www.ukri.org/publications/epsrc-equality-diversity-and-inclusion-action-plan-2022-to-2025/

[2] Quantum Technology Hub for Sensors and Timing, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Statement and Action Plan, University of Birmingham, 2021.

- A further facilitated workshop dedicated to EDI is planned by the end of Year 1.

3. Support Mobility and Travel Equity

- The Hub will consider equitable access to travel opportunities, particularly considering geopolitical developments that may disproportionately affect some researchers. This includes sharing updated guidance for international travel – especially to countries where enhanced scrutiny may affect individuals based on nationality or other protected characteristics.
- We will offer alternative participation options for meetings (e.g. virtual attendance) where needed.
- Our Mobility Policy (see Appendix B) will ensure that participation in international engagement is not limited by unequal barriers or safety concerns.

4. Support Career Development and Progression

- We will finalise mentor/ECR mentee assignments (with cross-institutional matching where possible). ECRs may anonymously request mentor changes.
- Feedback from the ECR representative on the management board (Dr Aurora Maccarone) will inform the ongoing development of our EDI activities in relation to ECRs.
- Baseline statistics and KPIs will be collected annually to monitor recruitment, retention, and progression metrics.

5. Increase Diversity in Leadership and Advisory Roles

- We aim to ensure the Strategic Advisory Board and other decision-making structures reflect a diversity of identities, disciplines, and perspectives.
- We will implement transparent selection and nomination procedures to diversify leadership pipelines.

6. Monitor, Evaluate, and Report on EDI Progress

- We will track EDI performance indicators using a scheduled implementation plan.
- This EDI plan will be maintained as a live document throughout the Hub's operation.
- An up-to-date list of EDI resources will be shared with all partners.

Existing Best Practice

Seven departments across partner institutions hold Athena Swan Silver Awards; five hold Bronze. Participating institutions provide strong internal EDI resources. Previous Quantum Technology Hubs have developed excellent EDI materials and guidelines. Director- and Manager-level interactions with other Quantum Hubs will ensure continued sharing of good practice. We will also actively engage with the EPSRC EDI Plus Hub.

Implementation and Accountability

EDI is a core operational priority, reflected in dedicated leadership, task-tracking tools, standing board agenda items, and community-driven feedback. Reporting mechanisms will be straightforward and transparent. Oversight will be provided by the Management Board, the SAB, and supported by data collection and ongoing review.

Review and Continuous Improvement

This plan will remain under constant review and adaptation, informed by feedback, performance data, and developments in national and institutional policy. Our goal is to maintain a dynamic and responsive EDI strategy that evolves in line with community needs and expectations.

Appendix A: Code of Conduct

Purpose and Scope

This Code of Conduct supports the QEPNT Hub's commitment to equity, inclusion, and a safe working environment across all Hub-affiliated activities, including meetings, events, and collaborative engagement. While recruitment is conducted by individual consortium institutions according to their internal HR policies, this Code offers guidance and expectations that reflect the shared values and responsibilities of all QEPNT partners.

It applies to staff, students, partners, contractors, and visitors participating in Hub activities.

1. Guiding Principles

- Treat others with respect, dignity, and professionalism, regardless of background or status.
- Promote an inclusive environment where all participants can contribute fully.
- Actively challenge bias and discrimination, whether overt or subtle.
- Encourage the wellbeing and dignity of all participants and visitors.
- Recognise and value diverse perspectives as critical to research excellence and innovation.

2. Professional Conduct at Meetings and Events

- Behaviour that is harassing, discriminatory, aggressive, or exclusionary is not acceptable.
- Microaggressions – unconscious or subtle expressions of bias – should be avoided and addressed when they occur.
- Organisers and participants are expected to use inclusive language, ensure equitable speaking time, and avoid interrupting or talking over others.
- Events must be accessible, with appropriate adjustments for disability, caring responsibilities, or religious/cultural needs.
- Event chairs will reiterate this Code at the start of major gatherings, and will be prepared to intervene when necessary.
- Associated social events fall under the same expectations of conduct.

3. Inclusive Recruitment – Advisory Role

While formal recruitment is undertaken by partner institutions under their respective HR frameworks, the QEPNT Hub will:

- Share guidance on inclusive language in job advertisements and role descriptions.
- Promote the use of diverse and trained selection panels, and advocate for consistency and transparency in selection criteria.
- Monitor, where possible, aggregate demographic trends across the Hub (e.g. gender, ethnicity, disability) to inform EDI strategy, while respecting institutional autonomy and confidentiality.
- Institutions remain accountable for their own recruitment processes, but the Hub will support alignment with shared EDI values through guidance, consultation, and cross-institutional learning.

4. Reporting and Accountability

The Hub will maintain clear mechanisms for raising concerns:

- Issues can be reported in confidence to the Hub Management Board, or through an anonymous feedback system.
- Where events are hosted at institutions, participants may also report through that institution's own procedures.

- Reports will be handled respectfully, without retaliation, and in alignment with the seriousness of the concern.
- In serious cases, individuals may be removed from events or referred to their home institution for further action.

5. Ongoing Review and Learning

- This Code will be reviewed annually, with input from the Strategic Advisory Board, and feedback from Hub members.
- Feedback from Hub events and meetings will inform iterative improvements.
- The Hub will share practices and insights with other Quantum Hubs and the EPSRC EDI Plus Hub, to support sector-wide progress in equity and inclusion.

Statement of Commitment

The QEPNT Hub is committed to fostering an ecosystem where equity, inclusion, and dignity are embedded in every aspect of research collaboration. All participants engaging with the Hub are expected to uphold the spirit and letter of this Code of Conduct.

Appendix B: International Mobility and Researcher Safety

Policies in certain nation states have the potential to pose challenges to the safety and dignity of international and marginalised researchers who are travelling there for business. For example, some governments have enacted legislation or fostered environments that are perceived as hostile to ethnic minorities, LGBTQ+ individuals, and non-citizens. Additionally, visa vetting procedures in some nations can be more stringent for some nationalities, increasing the risk of delays or discriminatory treatment at borders.

In this context, the QEPNT Hub is committed to ensuring that all Hub members – regardless of nationality, ethnicity, religion or belief, sexuality, gender identity, or disability – can participate fully in international collaboration while receiving appropriate institutional support."

Alternatively, the Equality Act 2010 has the following list of protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

Policy Measures and Support for Travel

To mitigate risks and uphold our EDI commitments, the following provisions will be implemented:

- All Hub-affiliated researchers travelling abroad will be encouraged to complete a pre-travel risk assessment with their home institution, with attention to individual risk factors (e.g. nationality, sexual orientation, medical needs).
- Researchers will be advised to seek letters of institutional endorsement and access to guidance for navigating visa categories. For researchers subject to additional scrutiny, early planning and institutional support should be prioritised.
- Researchers will be advised to register with their embassy or consulate and be provided with emergency contact protocols in case of detainment, discrimination, or health-related concerns.
- Researchers will be encouraged to review national (and, in the US, state-level) laws relevant to their identity (e.g. anti-LGBTQ+ policies, female healthcare access restrictions, travel bans), and to plan routes and stays accordingly.
- The Hub will advocate for inclusive practices in all international fora.

Commitment to Action

The QEPNT Hub recognises that research excellence must be supported by researcher safety, inclusion, and dignity at all stages of engagement. These mobility protocols are not intended to limit opportunities but to enable secure, confident participation in the global quantum research ecosystem. This section will remain under review and adapted to geopolitical developments, visa policies, and the lived experiences of our Hub community.