APRIL

EDI PLAN FOR APRIL AI HUB

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Preface

This document presents the APRIL AI Hub's firm commitment to fostering Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI). Understanding that diverse perspectives drive innovation and enrich our research, we have developed a clear strategy to embed EDI into every layer of our operations. This report outlines actionable steps to address systemic barriers, create more inclusive environments, and promote equitable participation across disciplines.

Preface

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Introduction

The APRIL AI Hub is unwavering in its dedication to fostering a diverse, inclusive, and equitable environment. This commitment aligns with broader national efforts to advance equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in both academia and the wider technology sector. Our primary objective is to cultivate an atmosphere where every individual, regardless of their background, feels valued, respected, and empowered to excel. By setting a standard for the industry, we seek to contribute to the national and global conversation on EDI, especially in areas where technology, including AI, plays a transformative role.

In alignment with these values, the APRIL AI Hub proudly supports the principles of the Athena SWAN Charter, which aims to advance gender equality in academia. The hub's commitment to the Athena SWAN framework reflects our dedication to addressing gender disparities, promoting equitable opportunities, and creating an environment where all individuals can thrive. While gender is a pivotal aspect of EDI policies, it is also essential to broaden the scope to include other important metrics such as race, ethnicity, disability, age, and socioeconomic status, among others. Emphasising intersectionality, the Hub can also consider factors like sexual orientation, religious beliefs, and neurodiversity to create a more comprehensive EDI strategy. By integrating these diverse metrics, the Hub ensures a holistic approach to inclusion, recognising and addressing the multifaceted nature of discrimination and barriers faced by various members of the community. This broader focus not only enriches the work environment but also enhances the Hub's outputs by leveraging a wider range of perspectives and experiences.

This document outlines our comprehensive plan to achieve these objectives, encompassing awareness, support, diversity, and cultural promotion.

EDI Principles:

Equality ensures that all members of our community have equal access to opportunities, resources, and support, emphasising the removal of barriers and the provision of equitable chances for success. Diversity celebrates the unique perspectives, backgrounds, and experiences of each individual, enriching our community and fostering innovation and creativity through a variety of viewpoints. Inclusion creates an environment where all individuals feel welcomed, respected, and heard, actively involving every community member and valuing their contributions.

Goals:

Promoting awareness and understanding is a key goal. We will conduct regular training sessions and workshops on EDI topics, including unconscious bias, cultural competency, and anti-discrimination practices, aiming to educate and increase sensitivity to the nuances of diversity and inclusion. Additionally, we will develop and distribute comprehensive educational materials to raise awareness about the importance of EDI, accessible to all APRIL Hub stakeholders across the UK.

Creating a supportive and inclusive environment is essential. We will establish clear and transparent policies and procedures for addressing discrimination, harassment, and bullying, ensuring alignment with national best practices and legal frameworks. These policies will be communicated widely and reinforced regularly. Regular feedback mechanisms, such as surveys and focus groups, will help us identify areas for improvement and ensure the voices of all community members are heard, with feedback being reviewed and acted upon promptly to enhance our EDI efforts.

Enhancing diversity in recruitment and retention is another critical goal. We will implement strategies to attract a diverse pool of candidates for staff and student positions, including outreach to underrepresented groups and partnerships with diversity-focused organisations. Providing robust mentorship and professional development opportunities to support the retention and advancement of underrepresented groups through structured programmes and career development workshops.

Promoting a positive culture is fundamental. We will celebrate cultural and social events that reflect the diversity of our community, highlighting various cultures, traditions, and achievements to foster a sense of belonging. Collaboration and teamwork across diverse groups will be encouraged to promote mutual respect and understanding, with cross-departmental projects and initiatives building cohesive and inclusive teams.

In addition to traditional EDI challenges, the APRIL AI Hub is committed to addressing EDI issues specific to the AI sector. As artificial intelligence increasingly influences society, it is critical to ensure that AI methods, models, and systems are free from racial, gender, and other biases. While AI in circuits and systems may present fewer direct risks of bias, it is essential to develop guidelines and best practices for ensuring that the AI tools and methodologies produced by the Hub are equitable and fair.

To achieve this, the APRIL AI Hub aims to create a more inclusive, diverse, and equitable environment through the following four objectives:

1. **Quantifying EDI Challenges and Barriers:** To precisely understand and address the EDI challenges within the APRIL AI Hub and the broader electronics industry, we will initiate comprehensive assessments and surveys. Our approach includes analysing demographic data to identify the composition of our team, partners, and stakeholders, focusing on pinpointing disparities and potential areas for improvement. Specifically, we aim to engage with a diverse group of stakeholders, ensuring the inclusion of underrepresented groups, to gather detailed feedback on EDI issues. Our methodology involves both quantitative and qualitative analyses to measure key metrics such as recruitment, retention, and promotion rates, as well as participation in hub activities, to uncover patterns and trends influencing diversity and inclusion.

2. **Strategy Development with Measurable Goals:** Based on the data gathered, we will craft an EDI strategy tailored to meet the specific needs identified within our environment. This strategy will aim to foster a more inclusive and equitable culture, underpinned by clear, measurable objectives and benchmarks. We will ensure the allocation of adequate resources, including budgetary allocations and personnel, to support the successful implementation of this EDI strategy. This includes investments in training programmes, tools, and technologies to enhance accessibility, and the creation and enforcement of policies that promote EDI, such as anti-discrimination measures, flexible working conditions, and support systems for diverse needs.

3. **Role and Metrics for EDI Leadership:** The EDI Leads will have clearly defined responsibilities and the requisite authority to effectively champion EDI initiatives across the hub. This position will be supported by specific success metrics related to EDI programme implementation and impact. Continuous professional development, access to EDI networks, and resources will be provided to enhance the EDI Leads' capability and performance in establishing and meeting EDI goals.

4. **Metrics-Driven EDI Integration in Research Lifecycle:** We will ensure that EDI principles are systematically incorporated at every stage of the research lifecycle. This includes the deliberate formation of research teams diverse in perspectives and expertise, aiming to boost creativity and innovation. We will establish regular evaluation mechanisms to assess how EDI is integrated into projects, utilising feedback loops from team members and stakeholders to refine practices continuously. Specific metrics will be set to evaluate the effectiveness of training provided to researchers on EDI principles, alongside periodic reviews of research inclusivity. Access to workshops, seminars, and guidelines on best practices will be part of ongoing support to sustain EDI integration in research.

Identify EDI Challenges and Barriers

Comprehensive Assessment

To pinpoint and effectively address EDI challenges at the APRIL AI Hub, a well-rounded and thorough assessment framework will be implemented. This will encompass a range of strategies and methodologies designed to provide a detailed view of the current EDI landscape both within the hub and in the wider electronics industry. This assessment will focus on:

1. **Demographic Analysis**: Conduct a detailed analysis of the demographic composition of staff at the APRIL AI Hub, encompassing age, gender, race, ethnicity, disability status, and socioeconomic background. This data will illustrate areas of demographic underrepresentation and highlight critical areas where diversity enhancement is necessary.
2. **Surveys and Interviews**: Implement comprehensive surveys and structured interviews with our staff, researchers, and various stakeholders to gather qualitative insights into their direct experiences and perceptions concerning EDI. These inquiries will explore facets of the workplace environment that pertain to recruitment, retention, promotion prospects, access to training opportunities, as well as day-to-day workplace culture.
3. **Community Survey**: As part of our approach to capture a broader perspective, we will launch a community survey that reaches beyond immediate stakeholders to include perspectives from a wider ecosystem, potentially identifying unseen challenges and solutions within the EDI framework.
4. **Benchmarking**: Evaluate our current EDI status by comparing it against industry benchmarks and best practices. This comparative analysis will span other organisations in the electronics and AI sectors, providing a clear baseline of where the APRIL AI Hub stands and identifying key areas for improvement.
5. **Environmental Scan**: Carry out a systematic environmental scan to discern the external factors influencing EDI within the Hub. This scan will analyse prevalent societal trends, compliance with regulatory requirements, and specific challenges that are unique to the electronics and AI industries leading to diversity and inclusion issues.

Targeted EDI Awareness Events:

As part of our ongoing commitment to enhance EDI awareness and education, the APRIL AI Hub will host several events specifically targeted at enriching understanding and promoting inclusivity. These events will be strategically co-located with our main events to maximise engagement and impact, ensuring that EDI remains a pivotal element of our core activities and discussions.

By coordinating these comprehensive assessment strategies and targeted events, the APRIL AI Hub aims to foster an inclusive environment where diverse talents are valued and nurtured, supporting our broader mission of leading innovation in the electronics industry.

Stakeholder Engagement

Engaging with a diverse range of stakeholders is fundamental to effectively identifying and addressing Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) challenges. To ensure that our approach is both comprehensive and impactful, we are committed to several key strategies.

Firstly, **diverse representation** is at the heart of our stakeholder engagement efforts. We are dedicated to ensuring that all engagement activities reflect the diversity of the wider community, particularly by including voices from underrepresented and marginalised groups. To achieve this, we aim to establish advisory committees and consultation panels that are carefully composed to include individuals from a broad spectrum of backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives. This approach ensures that the unique needs and challenges of all community members are acknowledged and addressed.

In addition, we have implemented **robust feedback mechanisms** to facilitate ongoing dialogue with our stakeholders. Recognising that individuals may prefer to express their concerns and suggestions in different ways, we have created multiple channels for feedback, including anonymous surveys, suggestion boxes, and regular Hub meetings. In all meetings where members of the APRIL Hub participate, we provide anonymous channels specifically designed for stakeholders to express concerns, barriers, needs, and priorities. This feedback is taken seriously and used to inform and guide our actions, ensuring that we continuously improve accessibility, equality, and inclusivity across all our initiatives.

Our commitment to **collaborative engagement** is further exemplified through the organisation of workshops and collaborative sessions where stakeholders are invited to share their perspectives and co-create solutions to EDI challenges. These workshops are designed to be highly engaging and interactive, with the core objective of ensuring that every participant has a voice. We actively seek to foster open dialogue and mutual understanding, creating an environment where diverse ideas and experiences can be shared and valued. This approach not only enhances the inclusivity of our initiatives but also empowers stakeholders to contribute meaningfully to the development of our EDI strategies.

We have also established **strategic partnerships and alliances** with organisations and departments that possess specialised expertise in EDI, including interactions with advocacy groups, professional associations, community organisations, and relevant departments at the University of Edinburgh. These relationships are invaluable in supporting the Hub's EDI objectives through an infusion of insights, resources, and best practices. By extending these collaborative efforts to include all universities within our network, we ensure that our initiatives on gender disparities, promoting equitable opportunities, and fostering an inclusive academic environment are consistently implemented and magnified across all institutions. This unified approach not only strengthens our alliance but also amplifies the impact of our collective EDI efforts in the broader academic and local communities.

Data Analysis

Utilising both quantitative and qualitative data is essential for identifying patterns and trends related to diversity and inclusion within the APRIL AI Hub. This process involves a thorough analysis across several key areas to ensure that our practices are inclusive, fair, and aligned with our EDI goals.

Recruitment Data Analysis is a critical starting point. By examining data related to job applications, shortlisting, interviews, and hiring decisions, we can identify any biases or barriers that may exist within our recruitment processes. This analysis involves scrutinising the diversity of applicant pools, evaluating the fairness of the selection process, and assessing the outcomes of hiring decisions. Our aim is to ensure that every stage of the recruitment process is free from bias and offers equal opportunities to all candidates, regardless of their background.

Retention and Promotion Rates among different demographic groups are also closely monitored. This involves assessing how various groups progress within the organisation, looking at factors such as job satisfaction, career advancement opportunities, and the reasons behind staff turnover. By identifying disparities in retention and promotion rates, we can implement targeted interventions to address any underlying issues and create a more supportive and equitable work environment.

Participation in Hub Activities is another area of focus. We evaluate the participation rates in various activities organised by the Hub, including training programmes, networking events, and research projects. This evaluation helps us identify any barriers that might prevent certain groups from fully engaging with and benefiting from these opportunities. By addressing these barriers, we can ensure that all members of the Hub have equal access to these valuable resources.

To complement our quantitative data, we place significant emphasis on gathering **Qualitative Insights**. Through interviews, focus groups, and open-ended survey responses, we gain a deeper understanding of the experiences and challenges faced by different groups within the Hub. These qualitative insights provide context to the quantitative findings, helping us to identify areas that require attention and improvement. They allow us to hear directly from individuals about their personal experiences, which can reveal nuances that numbers alone cannot capture.

Finally, **Impact Assessment** is an ongoing process where we regularly evaluate the effectiveness of our EDI initiatives. This involves tracking progress against established EDI goals and benchmarks, and gathering feedback from stakeholders on the perceived impact of these initiatives. By continuously assessing our performance, we can make informed adjustments to our strategies, ensuring that our EDI efforts remain effective and relevant.

In the context of web accessibility, for instance, tools like the IBM Automated Accessibility Checker and Google Lighthouse were employed to evaluate the inclusivity of the current APRIL website. These tools identified several areas needing improvement, particularly in navigation and screen reader compatibility, which could impact users with disabilities. The identified issues, such as violations and recommendations, have been communicated to the web development team for immediate action. Moving forward, further evaluations will be conducted to ensure that the website meets the highest standards of accessibility, ensuring that all users, regardless of their abilities, can access and benefit from the Hub's resources.

This detailed and methodical approach to data collection and analysis underscores our commitment to creating a diverse, inclusive, and equitable environment within the APRIL

Hub. Through continuous monitoring, feedback, and adaptation, we strive to ensure that our practices reflect our core values of fairness and respect for all.

Develop a Strategy

To effectively address the unique Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) challenges within the APRIL AI Hub, it is crucial to develop a strategy that is finely tuned to our specific environment. This approach includes creating initiatives informed by data from comprehensive assessments, targeting issues such as underrepresentation, unconscious bias, and barriers to inclusion. Incorporating community and Independent Advisory Board (IAB) feedback into the development of the EDI strategy at the APRIL Hub is crucial for ensuring a comprehensive and effective outcome. Strategies like conducting surveys, focus groups, and feedback sessions with community members help identify key concerns and needs related to underrepresentation and unconscious bias, while regular consultations and strategy review sessions with the IAB leverage their high-level perspectives and expertise for strategic alignment and practical insights.

Tailored Solutions

One key area is the organisation of events and conferences, where accessibility must be at the forefront. For instance, all presentations should adhere to accessibility guidelines, ensuring that content is accessible to all participants. This includes providing materials in multiple formats, such as large print or digital copies compatible with screen readers. Additionally, delegate badges should include personal pronouns to foster an inclusive atmosphere where individuals' identities are respected.

Website and Social Media Accessibility

Our digital presence, including the APRIL AI Hub website and social media channels, must also prioritise accessibility. This can be achieved by adhering to the University of Edinburgh's guidelines on creating accessible materials and technology. For example, ensuring that all online content is compatible with assistive technologies, such as screen readers and speech recognition software, will make our digital platforms more inclusive. Further, embedding accessibility features into website design—such as alternative text for images, captions for videos, and straightforward navigation—ensures that all users can engage with our content effectively.

Cultural Competency and Awareness Training

Cultural competency is another cornerstone of our EDI strategy. To cultivate a culture of inclusion and respect, the APRIL AI Hub will offer regular training on diversity, unconscious bias, and inclusive practices. This includes participating in awareness training sessions provided by the University of Edinburgh, which are designed to equip staff with the knowledge and skills needed to create an inclusive environment. These sessions will cover a

range of topics, including accessibility, cultural awareness, and effective communication across diverse groups.

Policy and Practice Development

Our commitment to EDI also extends to developing inclusive policies and practices. This includes revising recruitment and hiring policies to eliminate bias, ensuring that all policies are accessible to individuals with disabilities, and implementing flexible work arrangements to accommodate diverse needs. Additionally, providing clear guidelines and support for accessible technology, as outlined by the University of Edinburgh, will ensure that our policies are not only inclusive but also actionable.

Support Networks and Resources

Finally, establishing support networks and providing resources for underrepresented groups within the hub will create a community where all individuals feel valued and supported. This includes forming affinity groups, offering mentorship programmes, and ensuring that all hub activities, from training sessions to networking events, are designed to be as engaging and interactive as possible, allowing every participant to have a voice.

Continuous Evaluation and Adjustment

The success of our EDI strategy depends on continuous evaluation and refinement. Regular monitoring of progress, coupled with feedback mechanisms, will allow us to adjust our strategies as needed. By remaining flexible and responsive to feedback, we can ensure that our EDI strategy remains relevant and effective, continually evolving to build a truly inclusive environment at the APRIL AI Hub.

Designate EDI Leads

Role Definition

To ensure the effective implementation and success of EDI initiatives within the APRIL AI Hub, it is imperative to clearly define the roles and responsibilities of the EDI Leads, Professor Rishad Shafik and Dr Anastasia Eleftheriou. These individuals will provide strategic oversight and lead the implementation of the EDI plan across the hub. Their key responsibilities will encompass:

1. **Strategic Planning**: Develop and execute a comprehensive EDI strategy that aligns with the hub's overarching objectives. This strategy will include setting specific, measurable goals and establishing clear timelines for the rollout of EDI initiatives.
2. **Policy Development**: Craft and regularly update policies that bolster equality, diversity, and inclusion across the hub. Prof. Shafik and Dr Eleftheriou will ensure these policies are thoroughly integrated into all operational facets of the hub, reinforcing a culture of inclusion.
3. **Training and Development**: Organise and facilitate training sessions on various EDI topics for all staff members. These sessions will cover crucial areas such as unconscious bias, cultural competency, and inclusive leadership, aimed at fostering an educated and aware workforce.
4. **Stakeholder Engagement**: Serve as the primary points of contact for all EDI-related matters within the hub, engaging both internal and external stakeholders to solicit feedback and forge strategic partnerships. They will work collaboratively with other organisations to exchange best practices and resources.
5. **Monitoring and Reporting**: Develop robust mechanisms for monitoring the progress of EDI initiatives, collecting data on key performance indicators, and generating detailed reports on their outcomes. Regular updates will be prepared for the hub's leadership and other relevant stakeholders to ensure transparent communication of progress.
6. **Support and Advocacy**: Actively provide support and advocate for underrepresented groups within the hub, ensuring that their voices are effectively heard and their specific needs are addressed. This role includes the creation and maintenance of support networks and affinity groups, as well as liaising with funders to advocate for the necessary support and resources to advance EDI objectives.

Ongoing Support

Providing continuous support to the EDI Leads is vital for the sustained success of EDI initiatives. This includes:

1. **Access to Leadership**: Ensure that the EDI Leads have regular access to senior leadership and is involved in key decision-making processes. This will help integrate EDI considerations into the hub's overall strategy.
2. **Mentorship and Coaching**: Offer mentorship and coaching opportunities to the EDI Leads. This can help them develop their skills and navigate challenges effectively.
3. **Networking Opportunities**: Facilitate connections with other EDI professionals and organisations. Networking can provide valuable insights, resources, and support.
4. **Regular Feedback**: Establish a system for regular feedback and performance reviews for the EDI Leads. This will help identify areas for improvement and provide recognition for their achievements.

Embed EDI in Research Lifecycle

Inclusive Research Design

Integrating EDI principles into the design of research projects from the outset is critical. This involves:

1. **Diversity in Research Subjects**: Ensure that research projects consider a diverse range of subjects to avoid bias and enhance the relevance of the findings. This includes recruiting participants from different demographic backgrounds.
2. **Inclusive Methodologies**: Use research methodologies that are inclusive and considerate of diverse perspectives. This includes employing mixed methods and participatory approaches that involve stakeholders from underrepresented groups.
3. **Impact Assessment**: Assess the potential impacts of research projects on different groups, ensuring that the benefits and risks are equitably distributed. This includes conducting equity impact assessments.

Diverse Research Teams

Promoting the formation of diverse research teams is essential for enhancing creativity and innovation. This involves:

1. **Diverse Hiring Practices**: Implement hiring practices that ensure diversity in research teams. This includes advertising positions through diverse channels and using unbiased selection processes.
2. **Interdisciplinary Collaboration**: Encourage collaboration across different disciplines and backgrounds to bring a variety of perspectives to research projects. This can lead to more comprehensive and innovative solutions.
3. **Inclusive Leadership**: Develop inclusive leadership practices that empower all team members to contribute their ideas and expertise. This includes providing leadership training on EDI principles.

Evaluation and Feedback

Regular evaluation and feedback mechanisms are necessary to ensure the continuous improvement of EDI integration in research. This includes:

1. **Feedback from Team Members**: Seek feedback from research team members on the inclusivity of the research environment and processes. This can be done through surveys, focus groups, and one-on-one interviews.
2. **Stakeholder Input**: Gather input from external stakeholders, including research participants and community partners, to understand their experiences and perspectives on the inclusivity of research projects.
3. **Performance Metrics**: Develop metrics to evaluate the effectiveness of EDI initiatives in research. This includes tracking diversity in research teams, participation rates, and the impact of research findings on different groups.

4. **Continuous Improvement**: Use the feedback and data collected to make adjustments to EDI strategies and practices. This ensures that the research lifecycle remains inclusive and responsive to emerging challenges.

Training and Awareness

Providing ongoing training and resources to researchers on incorporating EDI principles into their work is essential. This includes:

1. **Workshops and Seminars**: Organise regular workshops and seminars on EDI topics, such as inclusive research methodologies, cultural competency, and bias reduction. These should be mandatory for all researchers.
2. **Best Practice Guidelines**: Develop and disseminate best practice guidelines on EDI in research. These guidelines should be easily accessible and provide practical advice on implementing EDI principles.
3. **Online Resources**: Create an online repository of EDI resources, including articles, videos, and toolkits. This can serve as a valuable reference for researchers at any stage of their projects.
4. **Peer Learning**: Encourage peer learning and knowledge sharing among researchers. This can be facilitated through discussion forums, study groups, and collaborative projects focused on EDI.

Concluding remarks

At the APRIL AI Hub, our commitment to fostering equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) transcends everyday practicalities—it is central to our ethos. Situated at the intersection of various universities, we acknowledge our responsibility to serve as an exemplar of EDI advocacy, reflecting the richness of diverse intellectual and cultural perspectives. Inspired by successful practices globally, from the inclusive hiring strategies of Silicon Valley to the integrated research teams in Scandinavia, we endeavour to adapt and implement these benchmarks to address both national and global EDI challenges uniquely.

To augment our efforts, we have instituted robust measures ranging from in-depth training programmes and continuous online learning opportunities to innovative recruitment strategies and supportive mentorship programmes. Our approach is designed not only to attract but also to nurture talent from diverse backgrounds, ensuring they have the resources to thrive.

Moreover, by establishing a supportive and confidential reporting environment, facilitating open communication through regular forums, celebrating cultural diversity, and rewarding exemplary contributions to EDI, we are setting the stage for a truly inclusive culture.

Our ongoing evaluation processes, including feedback mechanisms through surveys and focus groups, ensure that our strategies are not static but evolve in response to new insights and community needs.

At its core, the APRIL AI Hub's commitment to EDI is about more than compliance—it is about creating a vibrant, inclusive community that reflects the values of dignity and respect upheld by our affiliated universities. Each step we take is geared towards building a resilient and diverse environment where innovation flourishes and where every individual, irrespective of their background, is given the opportunity to succeed. Our vision is clear: to be not just a participant in the dialogue on diversity and inclusion but a leader, setting precedents that inspire change beyond our immediate sphere to the wider academic and technological communities. Through continuous dedication and unwavering support, we aim to foster a hub that is both a beacon of academic excellence and a testament to the strength found in diversity.

Contributions

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