THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH

Equality Impact Assessment Template

Before carrying out EqIA, you should familiarise yourself with the University's EqIA Policy Statement and Guidance and Checklist Notes, and undertake our online training on Equality and Diversity and EqIA. These, along with further information and resources, are available at www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/equality-diversity/impact-assessment

EqIA covers policies, provisions, criteria, functions, practices and activities, including decisions and the delivery of services, but will be referred to as 'policy/practice' hereinafter.

A. Policy/Practice (name or brief description): **Authorised Interruption of Study Policy**
B. Reason for Equality Impact Asessment (Mark **yes** against the applicable reason): • Proposed new policy/practice **Yes** • Proposed change to an existing policy/practice • Undertaking a review of an existing policy/practice • Other (please state):
C. Person responsible for the policy area or practice: Name: **Charlotte Matheson** Job title: **Academic Policy Officer** School/service/unit: **Academic Services**
D. What is the reason for carrying out an Impact Assessment of the policy/practice?: • **The policy / practice affects primary or high level functions of the University** • **It is relevant to the promotion of equality (in terms of the Public Sector Equality Duty 'needs' as set out in the Policy and Guidance)** • **It is one which interested parties could reasonably expect the University to have carried out an EqIA**
E. Aims and practices What are the main aims of the new policy / regulation / guidance, or the changes to the existing policy / regulation / guidance? **The policy seeks to provide a consistent framework for consideration of requests from students to interrupt their studies for a period. The policy provides a clear definition of 'Authorised Interruption of Study'. It sets out acceptable grounds for requesting an interruption, and how students can request an interruption of studies. It also clarifies the status of students who are interrupted and the return to study process.** What changes to practices will they introduce? **The policy introduces a more permissive approach to the approval of authorised interruptions of study. Authorised interruptions of study will be approved where the**

request supports the successful completion of a student's programme, or supports a student's career aspirations.

The policy sets out expectations around planning a return to study following an interruption. Students will be expected to have a proposed return to study plan agreed with their Personal Tutor, Programme Director or Supervisor before they begin a period of Authorised Interruption of Study.

The policy provides clarity that students who are on an interruption of study are entitled to access relevant campus facilities, e-mail and student support services including the Students' Association, Library Services, Chaplaincy, Student Counselling and Student Disability Services. The policy also clarifies that students are subject to the Student Code of Conduct whilst interrupted. Currently, most of the University's support services continue to provide support to students who are on an interruption, and interrupted students' University card access is not restricted. However, the policy provides clarity to both support services and students about the entitlements of interrupted students.

F. Are these changes are likely to have particular impacts (whether positive or negative) for students (or staff) with particular protected characteristics?
Yes
If you answer yes, state these impacts and which protected characteristic groups they are most likely to affect.
For some students, medical or other circumstances mean that taking time away from studies in the form of an interruption better supports successful completion of their studies than continuing on programme. The principle that the University will approve requests for interruption of study "where this will assist them in gaining the best possible outcome in their studies or support their career aspirations" should provide reassurance and contribute to the wellbeing of students in the event that they need to apply for an Authorised Interruption of Study, particularly if this is for health reasons. This should also provide benefits to those students who are more likely to need to take an interruption of studies due to caring responsibilities, or financial issues, which can often be connected with familial circumstances.

G. If you have answered yes to Question F, what evidence has assisted you to assess the likely impact of these changes?
Consultation with relevant stakeholders.
Please summarise the main sources of evidence you have utilised, and what the evidence has told you.
Senate Curriculum and Student Progression Committee (CSPC) established a task group in response to a recommendation, resulting from the Review of Support for Disabled Students, to develop a University-wide policy for Authorised Interruption of Study. The task group met on two occasions in November 2017 and December 2017 and conducted a consultation with stakeholders regarding a draft policy. Membership of the task group included staff from Colleges, Edinburgh University Students' Association, Student Disability Service and Academic Services, and consultation provided the opportunity for stakeholders to provide input on equality and diversity issues.

Respondents to the consultation welcomed the more permissive approach to supporting students' requests for interruption. Input from the Students' Association in particular emphasised the importance of providing students who are interrupted with clarity regarding their status, including their access to support services, a view shared by a number of other schools. This is something the policy actively seeks to address.

H. If you have identified that the changes are likely to have particular negative impacts for students (or staff) with particular protected characteristics:
No negative impacts on students or staff with protected characteristics have been identified.

- Is the policy / regulations justifiable and why?

- Have you amended the policy / regulation etc in order to remove or minimise these unintended impacts, and, if so, how?

I. If you have identified that the changes are likely to have particular positive impacts for students (or staff) with particular protected characteristics, what actions will the University take to maximise these benefits?
The policy will be published online and advertised to Schools/Colleges via a new policies communication.

J. Equality Impact Assessment Outcome

Select one of the four options below to indicate how the development/review of the policy/practice will be progressed and state the rationale for the decision

Option 1: No change required – the assessment is that the policy/practice is/will be robust.

Option 2: Adjust the policy or practice – this involves taking steps to remove any barriers, to better advance equality and/or to foster good relations.

Option 3: Continue the policy or practice despite the potential for adverse impact, and which can be mitigated/or justified

Option 4: Stop the policy or practice as there are adverse effects cannot be prevented/mitigated/or justified.

K. Action and Monitoring

1. Specify the actions required for implementing findings of this EqIA and how the policy or practice will be monitored in relation to its equality impact (or note where this is specified above).
   All relevant equality and diversity recommendations made during the consultation process have been incorporated into the policy prior to its publication. The policy will continue to be monitored in relation to its equality impact as part of regular policy review practices within Academic Services.

2. When will the policy/practice next be reviewed?
2018/19

L. Publication of EqIA

Can this EqIA be published in full, now? **Yes**

If No – please specify when it may be published or indicate restrictions that apply:

M. Sign-off

EqIA undertaken by **Charlotte Matheson, Academic Policy Officer, Academic Services**

Accepted by (name): **Adam Bunni, Head of Governance and Regulatory Team, Academic Services**

Date: **27th June 2018**

Retain a copy of this form for your own records and send a copy to
equalitydiversity@ed.ac.uk