



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): **Student Voice Policy**

B. Reason for Equality Impact Assessment (Mark **yes against the applicable reason):**

- Proposed new policy/practice
- Proposed change to an existing policy/practice **YES**
- Undertaking a review of an existing policy/practice
- Other (please state):

Note: Course Enhancement Questionnaires and Student Staff Liaison Committee Guidance have separate published Equality Impact Assessments.

C. Person responsible for the policy area or practice:

Name: **Gillian Mackintosh**

Job title: **Academic Policy Officer**

School/service/unit: **Academic Services**

D. An Impact Assessment should be carried out if any of the following apply to the policy/practice, if it:

- affects primary or high level functions of the University
- 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. Equality Groups

To which equality groups is the policy/practice relevant and why? (add notes against the following applicable equality group/s) **The Policy applies to all students and to staff with responsibility for gathering student opinion and for taking action in response and therefore could be relevant to any of the protected characteristics.**

- Age
- Disability
- race (including ethnicity and nationality)
- religion or belief
- sex

- sexual orientation
- gender reassignment
- pregnancy and maternity
- marriage or civil partnership¹

Add notes against the following applicable statements:

- On any available information about the needs of relevant equality groups: **There is potential for unconscious bias through feedback provided by students. See below and the EqlA for Course Enhancement Questionnaires for actions taken to mitigate this.**
- Any gaps in evidence/insufficient information to properly assess the policy, and how this will be addressed: **Mid-course feedback is not carried out in a consistent format across the University so it is not possible to fully assess the potential equality impact. That said, the reflection below identifies that there is a low risk of this being an issue in practice.**
- If application of this policy/practice leads to discrimination (direct or indirect), harassment, victimisation, less favourable treatment for particular equality groups: **One of the key principles in the Policy is: “Students should ensure that their feedback does not breach the University’s Dignity and Respect Policy.”**
- If the policy/practice contributes to advancing equality of opportunity² **One of the key principles in the Policy is that methods used to survey the student opinion should not disadvantage any student from participating.**
- If there is an opportunity in applying this policy/practice to foster good relations: **No**
- If the policy/practice create any barriers for any other groups? **No. One of the key principles in the Policy is that methods used to survey the student opinion should not disadvantage any student from participating. Advice on accessibility can be sought from the Student Disability Service or Information Services.**
- How the communication of the policy/practice is made accessible to all groups, if relevant? **The information can be made available in different formats.**
- How equality groups or communities are involved in the development, review and/or monitoring of the policy or practice? **The Senate Quality Assurance Committee which owns the Policy has representation from across the University and Edinburgh University Students’ Association. The introduction of mid-course feedback was in part the result of advocacy from elected representatives of the Students’ Association. The SSLC principles were developed in partnership with Edinburgh University Students’ Association**
- Any potential or actual impact of applying the policy or practice, with regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality and promote good relations: **One of the key principles in the Policy is: “Students should ensure that their feedback does not breach the University’s Dignity and Respect Policy.”**

Mid-course Feedback (being formalised as a policy requirement)

Mid-course feedback was piloted in 2016/17 for Honours courses. An Equality Impact Assessment was not undertaken at this time because it was a pilot. An evaluation exercise

¹ Note: only the duty to eliminate discrimination applies to marriage and civil partnership. There is no need to have regard to advancing equality or opportunity or fostering good relations in this respect.

² This question does not apply to the protected characteristic of marriage or civil partnership

on the pilot was undertaken and no equality and diversity issues were raised. Mid-course feedback was rolled out to all undergraduate courses in 2017/18 and postgraduate taught courses for 2020/21.

Through this new approach there is a recognition that feedback provided by students carries a potential risk of unconscious bias and inappropriate comments, however:

- The University has not set a methodology for mid-course feedback. Schools are responsible for determining how mid-course feedback is carried out, for ensuring that it operates in an appropriate way and encourages constructive feedback. Guidance for staff is available on the Institute for Academic Development's website but staff are free to choose an appropriate methodology. Given the diversity of approaches that Schools are taking, Schools must take responsibility for ensuring any approaches they take do not create any real risk of inappropriate comments.
- The University does not require that students provide feedback on individual staff as part of mid-course feedback, and mid-course feedback is not linked to staff performance management.
- Feedback gathered is informal and not widely circulated or required to be used as part of any formal University processes.
- One of the key principles in the Policy is: "Students should ensure that their feedback does not breach the University's Dignity and Respect Policy." Text has been added to the student-facing Student Voice mid-course feedback webpage to remind students of their responsibilities in terms of providing constructive feedback which does not breach the University's Dignity and Respect Policy and of the possibility of unconscious bias when providing feedback (including a link to the information developed for Course Enhancement Questionnaires). Additionally, as part of communications on Course Enhancement Questionnaires, students are made aware of equality, diversity and unconscious bias <https://www.ed.ac.uk/students/academic-life/student-voice/enhancing-courses/course-enhancement-questionnaires/equality-diversity-unconscious-bias>

F. 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.

G. 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). **No specific actions identified. The EqIA will be reviewed when the Policy is next reviewed. The Policy will be presented to Senate Quality Assurance Committee on 21 May 2020 and, following approval, will be communicated to key stakeholders.**

2. When will the policy/practice next be reviewed? **Academic Session 2021/2022**

H. Publication of EqIA

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

I. Sign-off

EqIA undertaken by (name(s) and job title(s)): **Nichola Kett, Academic Policy Manager, Academic Services**

Accepted by (name): **Gillian Mackintosh, Academic Policy Officer**

Date: **14 May 2020**

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