



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): Edinburgh Futures Institute – Fusion and Intensive Education

The Edinburgh Futures Institute (EFI) is developing courses around a fusion learning and intensive teaching model. With fusion learning EFI will be teaching students together on and off campus as a single cohort without double-teaching. Another aspect of the fusion model is students can move between modalities. EFI will also be using intensive teaching as part of the fusion learning model whereby parts of the course are delivered in intensive 2-day blocks scheduled either on consecutive Mondays and Tuesdays, or consecutive Thursdays and Fridays. To achieve this a physical and digital learning environment will be provided to support learning and teaching using the existing University infrastructure and where appropriate developing new solutions. An Equality Impact Assessment is being conducted to assess whether existing University equality policy/practice covers fusion learning and to consider the needs of students, employees and the wider community. The EFI values statement is: Open to all

Given the use of technology to support the fusion learning model this Equality Impact Assessment has been produced in consideration of the following assessments:

- [IS-Blackboard Learn Virtual Learning Environment](#)
- [ISLTW-Lecture Recording](#)
- [IS-Virtual Classroom Policy](#)
- [IS-Zoom Video Communications](#)
- [IS-Microsoft Teams Rollout Across the University](#)

B. Reason for Equality Impact Assessment (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: **Professor Siân Bayne**
Job title: **Director of Education**
School/service/unit: **Edinburgh Futures Institute**

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 **YES**
- is relevant to the promotion of equality (in terms of the Public Sector Equality Duty 'needs' as set out in the Policy and Guidance)? **YES**
- It is one which interested parties could reasonably expect the University to have carried out an EqlA? **YES**

E. Equality Groups

To which equality groups is the policy/practice relevant and why? (add notes against the following applicable equality group/s)

- Age
- Disability
- race (including ethnicity and nationality)
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation
- gender reassignment
- pregnancy and maternity
- marriage or civil partnership¹

AGE

It is not anticipated that there will any negative impact for students, employees and wider community based on age. The combined fusion and intensive model has been developed to benefit students of all ages, creating opportunities to study flexibly and around other personal commitments. The intensive nature of some of the courses may in some cases increase the pressure on students and staff with carer responsibilities, but the inclusion of fusion learning is designed to mitigate this impact, and courses will be marketed appropriately indicating intensive elements so that individuals can make personal judgements. As part of marketing, we will be mindful that imagery and other promotional material is inclusive.

As the [Student Maternity and Family Leave Policy](#) does not permit students to bring children into classes we do not anticipate additional considerations such as required parental consent for children under 13 years.

DISABILITY

As the fusion model uses virtual classroom technologies including collaboration tools, as noted in other related Equality Impact Assessments, the protected characteristic of disability may have the greatest negative impact. The accessibility of virtual classroom and collaboration tools can have both negative and positive impacts on certain disability groups. For example, the inclusion of features such as automatic captioning in existing virtual classrooms and the ability to study off campus will have a positive impact on certain disability groups. Negative impacts associated with accessibility will be mitigated by adopting centrally supported services – where additional technologies are required these will only be adopted after following existing procedures to assess data protection and equality impact. Guidance and support will be provided to staff for [creating accessibly materials](#).

For staff and students who have additional needs relating to mental health or neurodiversity, the intensive teaching model may have implications in terms of their wellbeing and capacity

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.

to contribute over a very focused and rigorous 2-day session. Course teams can mitigate this potential issue through effective design of the intensive days – structuring the sessions to make them manageable and engaging for all students and staff. A team-based approach to teaching would also mitigate any potential issues for academic staff, as would a staffing model that involves teaching assistants working alongside academic staff. In addition, for students, the fusion model will mitigate aspects of this by providing possibilities to participate in intensive sessions asynchronously. Guidance will be provided as part of course information to make students aware of the fusion and intensive aspects of the course and study options. Courses delivered by EFI may also benefit those with additional needs as it provides courses that can be taken on campus or online treating students as a single cohort, creating an inclusive environment and additional flexibility.

RACE

English is the main teaching language of the University. A higher IELTS level has been set for EFI courses given the reliance of group work within the curriculum. The use of virtual classroom technology may however help those whom English is their second language, as there will be the opportunity to replay recorded classroom sessions and students (both online and on-site) will be able to access a live transcript. Related to race a consideration of the tools used to support fusion learning will be their availability to online students in certain geographic regions as a result factors such as governmental firewalls, internet connection speeds/cost. Fusion learning is currently being provide via Microsoft Teams which has very good been checked for global availability (as of July 2021 *all Microsoft Online Services are unavailable in Cuba, Iran, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Sudan, and Syria*²). EFI is developing a scholarship programme, which includes provision for loaning of equipment and exploring the inclusion of internet/data access.

RELIGION OR BELIEF

The existing University EqIAs around the use of video tools have included religious considerations preventing the use of personal imagery and video. This is reflected in the [Lecture Recording](#) and [Virtual Classroom](#) policies which make it possible for people to be able to seat themselves accordingly to avoid being filmed/recorded and making it optional to turn on cameras and/or uploading of a photo to accompany a user's name. Following consultation with the University Chaplaincy it was noted that *"Our honorary Chaplains from diverse traditions have all said that they are not aware of religious grounds for people being uncomfortable appearing on camera. One of our team, a former prison Chaplain, said that this question was asked in the Courts and the response of 'no problem' was always returned in his experience."* Students studying online will have the option to not use their camera during fusion sessions.

A consideration for the intensive model is for students and staff observing daily prayer commitments and the Jewish Sabbath on Friday after sunset. This is mitigated by the asynchronous options offered by the fusion model and even during the winter the majority of teaching contact is during daylight.

SEX

The flexibility of the fusion learning model and in particular the opportunity to participate asynchronously may also benefit those with care responsibilities. The intensive nature of some of the courses may however increase pressure on students and staff with carer responsibilities, as noted in **AGE**.

PREGNANCY AND MATERNITY

The fusion learning model is considered to benefit students within the pregnancy and maternity group as it provides opportunities for remote participation. The intensive model may have a negative impact on this group as the time sensitive nature may limit adjustments

² [Microsoft 365 and Office 365 International Availability](#)

requested through the [Student Maternity and Family Leave Policy](#). A degree of mitigation is possible in post graduate courses as EFI courses are provided with flexibility in duration of study.

OTHER EQUALITY GROUPS

Other equality groups have been considered as part of this Equality Impact Assessment and it has been concluded that these protected characteristics are covered by existing University policies and practice.

Add notes against the following applicable statements:

- **On any available information about the needs of relevant equality groups:**

There have been consultations with Data Protection Officer, Legal Services, HR, the University Chaplaincy, Dean of Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion (CAHSS) and Director of English Language Education (Centre for Open Learning), and the EFI Learning Technology Board.

- **Any gaps in evidence/insufficient information to properly assess the policy, and how this will be addressed:**

Courses are being piloted in 2021/22 and there will be opportunities for staff and students to provide feedback on the equality of the fusion and intensive teaching models.

- **If application of this policy/practice leads to discrimination (direct or indirect), harassment, victimisation, less favourable treatment for particular equality groups:**

As noted, there are risks with the fusion and intensive for some protected groups but it is felt that there are appropriate mitigations in place which allow reasonable adjustments.

- **If the policy/practice contributes to advancing equality of opportunity³**

We believe the EFI fusion and intensive model advances equality of opportunity in the following areas:

- Access – Enables students traditionally excluded from postgraduate higher education to access our portfolio including the use of scholarships and flexible approaches to admissions and study
- Design – We will design courses that are accessible, flexible and engaging to students from a range of backgrounds and circumstances
- Reflect – Anticipate possible accessibility issues of our innovations

As part of the EFI PGT core students will also have an opportunity to study Ethical Data Futures which introduces the fundamentals of data ethics as the building blocks of a mature data philosophy. The core course includes a representative reading list, in both subject matter and authorship designed to highlight inclusivity, equality and diversity with respect to gender, race, ethnicity, disability, and other social groups and identities often targeted for or subjected to exclusion, both by contemporary data practices and in higher education more broadly.

- **If there is an opportunity in applying this policy/practice to foster good relations:**

³ This question does not apply to the protected characteristic of marriage or civil partnership

Equality and diversity will be at the heart of fusion and intensive models which is also reflected in our proposed curriculum which includes understanding how AI and the digital revolution can contribute social good, and how they can create inequality. We believe the development of fusion and intensive teaching models are also an opportunity to engage with students, staff and wider community, seeking views and feedback with the view to make improvements.

- **If the policy/practice create any barriers for any other groups?**

The use of highly technologised learning environments come at the risk of disproportionately affecting students from low social economic backgrounds. This can impact access to reliable internet connectivity or hardware to handle streamed media. Whilst the University has many study spaces allowing free access for students and staff to IT facilities but these will not be accessible to EFI students studying off campus. To mitigate against this impact, EFI is planning to offer scholarships to support widening participation and we are co-ordinating with Student Administration to provide access to an institutional laptop loan scheme.

- **How the communication of the policy/practice is made accessible to all groups, if relevant?**

Information will be shared with EFI Education staff and course teams and the EqIA will be referenced in course design and delivery guidance. All communication about the practice will be available in alternative formats upon request.

- **How equality groups or communities are involved in the development, review and/or monitoring of the policy or practice?**

EFI will be running pilot courses in 2021/22 with opportunities for feedback and input from staff and students. The policy will also be monitored after implementation and factors re-evaluated if governmental and University policy is revised over time. Policy modification will be approved via the EFI Director of Education

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:

None at this stage

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.

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.

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).
 - a. The EqIA will be circulated to EFI academic staff and referenced in course design guidance.
 - b. The EqIA will be reviewed following EFI pilot courses in AY 2021-22. The evaluation plan includes various instruments (qualitative and quantitative) and includes opportunities for both student and staff feedback.
2. When will the policy/practice next be reviewed? **July 2022**

H. 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:

I. Sign-off

EqIA undertaken by (name(s) and job title(s)):
Martin Hawksey, Learning Design and Technology Lead

Accepted by (name):
Tom Ward, Head of Education Administration and Change Management

Date: 08/09/2021

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