



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):

Blackboard Learn

Virtual Learning Environment for campus based and distance learning courses

July 2017

Update following the Summer Upgrade to Blackboard Learn Q4 2016 release. This release is part of a continual programme of updates supporting bug fixes and security improvements. This release also includes an updated look and feel to make the system more consistent and easier to use on mobile/tablet devices.

July 2018

Update to EQIA as part of the 2018 Summer Upgrade to Blackboard Learn Q4 2017 release.

B. Reason for Equality Impact Assessment (delete as applicable):

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

July 2017

Learn servicee upgrade with noticable change to look and feel and way of representing content within courses hosted in Learn

July 2018

Service upgrade with minor interface changes and functionality

C. Person responsible for the policy area or practice:

Name: **(previously Ross Ward) now Karen Howie**

Job title: **Technology Enhanced Learning Team Manager**

School/service/unit: **Information Services – Learning, Teaching & Web**

July 2017 - No Change

July 2018 – Change to reflect new Service Operational Manager for VLE service

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 – core service to support teaching and learning**
- 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 EqIA?
 - **Yes**

July 2017 - No Change

July 2018 – No Change

E. Equality Groups

To which equality groups is the policy/practice relevant and why? (delete any that are not relevant):

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

The LEARN service has the potential to impact all students and therefore the potential to affect all potential protected characteristics but we feel that the protected characteristics of disability and race are the most likely to be impacted. The protected characteristic of disability may be affected as this is an online system and it will need to be accessible and compatible with assistive technology such as voice recognition software, screen readers or screen magnification software and reasonable adjustments will need to be in place if for any reason a disabled staff or student was unable to use the system. Blackboard states it “is committed to ensuring that the platform is usable and accessible. The code and user interface design techniques are continually audited to ensure that the application is usable by everyone, to the greatest extent possible, regardless of age, ability, or situation and is delivered in compliance with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines version 2 (<http://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG20/>).”

Race is a relevant characteristic in that the majority of the site is in English but English is the main teaching language of the University.

All content added to the VLE must not discriminate against any of the protected characteristics. Any content that was found to discriminate against any of the protected characteristics would result in severe disciplinary action. The University

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.

vision is a continuing commitment to equality and diversity for both students and staff. The University has a single equality strategy to ensure that equality and diversity are guiding principles in our pursuit of academic excellence. The introduction of this strategy coincides with the implementation of the Equality Act 2010 and builds on its principle of integrating equality and diversity in policy and practice.

We also have a new University web accessibility policy which we feel will help guide staff on their requirements regarding accessibility when uploading course content as well as a set of published guidelines <http://www.ed.ac.uk/information-services/help-consultancy/accessibility/creating-materials/accessiblecontent>

In addition to the accessibility policy we also raise awareness for accessible content in our Learn Support webpages and cover these issues during consultation meetings to staff wishing to use Learn to support their courses.

Race may be impacted on as Learn is available in English but as Learn is only for students and staff at the University and English is the main teaching language we feel in practice this should not lead to any disadvantage

In fact there may be a positive effect for some students whose first language is not English as it will enable them to review materials/questions asked etc at their own pace. In addition, the potential to view the materials as often as the student likes may be beneficial to both disabled students and students whose first language is not English.

Update 2017 – the new look and feel of the Learn site underwent accessibility testing based around the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines Version 2 AA standard and recommendations were made but on the whole it was felt the change had improved accessibility for disabled users and Learn remained compatible with assistive technology.

Update July 2018 – No change to the core theme, and only minor changes required to improve some usability aspects. During usability testing we identified a concern that editing buttons do not stand-out with as much contrast as we would like. A development tweak is in progress to add more definition.

Add notes against the following statements where applicable/relevant:

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

There will be the expectation from some disabled users that the system complies with the recognised accessibility standards (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines version 2)

and be compatible with various forms of assistive technology. The system is only available in English but as English is the main teaching language of the University and only students and staff will have access to the system we do not envisage that this will cause any disadvantage. The Disability Information Officer has conducted a full accessibility audit of Learn the results of which we have implemented as far as possible.

We have also consulted Student Disability Services who were happy with the EqIA and did not identify any other issues.

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

At this stage we feel we have sufficient information to proceed but will monitor all feedback and suggestions for any positive or negative issues relating to any of the 9 protected characteristics.

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

We do not believe that the use of Learn will result in any form of prohibited conduct. We will ensure the system is as accessible as possible but will also ensure reasonable adjustments are in place so that no disabled student or staff member experiences less favourable treatment if they are unable to use the system. As discussed above policies are in place across the University to govern any content that is added.

- If the policy/practice contributes to advancing equality of opportunity²

The Learn VLE platform looks to enhance equality of opportunity by offering 24 hour access to course information, assessment activities, and other educational services that would not otherwise be available remotely or in other timezones. The service is actively used to support students on-campus and those studying at distance.

Update 2018 – we have received no positive or negative feedback related to any 9 of the protected characteristics.

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

The Learn service enables greater course based communication between staff and students, and within the student groups within the course. There is the capability for questions and discussions to be shared to all and responded to. The nature of this communication means that the information shared is persistent and accessible at anytime asynchronously. Learn also acts as a collaborative tool for group/peer work, and can also be a central location for disseminating feedback and pastoral support to students from the tutors.

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

We don't believe that Learn will create any barriers for any groups as we have ensured the system is as accessible as possible for disabled users. The University has free 24 hour access to PC facilities for all staff and students so there should be no disadvantage to those who are on lower incomes and don't have access to their own personal IT facilities.

Update 2018 – we have no evidence or indication that Learn has created any barriers for any other groups

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

Information about accessibility will be made available via the “Help” section directly within Learn, as well as information on the supporting webpages that are hosted by the University of Edinburgh. Information about Learn is provided to students in a number of different formats – from verbally by their course tutors to information on the

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

Information Services Website which has been checked for accessibility. Information about Learn and help will be available in alternative formats upon request.

July 2017 – The Learn Service Team have received no requests for information in alternative formats.

July 2018 – The Learn Service Team have received no requests for information about Learn support in alternative formats.(there may of course have been requests for alternative formats to the Schools directly)

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

The Disability Information Officer, and the Student Disability Service were asked to comment on the EqIA.

All feedback and comments will be monitored for any positive or negative impacts on any of the 9 protected characteristics and acted on accordingly.

July 2017 – The Learn Service Team received no negative or positive feedback relating to any of the 9 protected characteristics.

July 2018 – The Learn Service Team received no negative or positive feedback relating to any of the 9 protected characteristics other than feedback from the IS Disability Information Officer.

Some elements of the Learn interface and suggestions for improvements were highlighted by ISG Disability Information Officer and ISG Information Security Consultant in relation to the following areas:

- 1. Colour contrast for course navigation and buttons.**
 - a. Some elements have been reviewed and changed where technically possible, other elements will be reported to vendor as improvement requests**
- 2. Link to University Accessibility Guidance in system footer**
 - a. Not currently possible within system, but being investigated**
- 3. Some issues raised with assistive software “TextHelp Read and Write Gold”**
 - a. Not currently resolvable and will be reported to vendor as improvement requests**
- 4. Use of italics for inline-help and system suggestion**
 - a. Not currently possible to change and will be reported to vendor as improvement requests**
- 5. Issues around lack of highlight and process for keyboard navigation**
 - a. System has a number of keyboard accessibility shortcuts “quick links” for improved keyboard navigation.**
 - b. “Tab” styling has been improved with the Blackboard Q4 2017 release to make active states more visible**

An internal system review identified an issue has been identified with the “Quick Links” accessibility tool when Learn is accessed via MyEd. There have been no support calls logged with this, but a workaround solution is available. This issue has been logged with the vendor.

- 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:

We will continue to promote accessibility as being key to Learn and will test all upgrades for accessibility which we feel will continue to demonstrate the seriousness

by which Edinburgh University takes the issues of Equality and Diversity and in this case in particular the needs of disabled users and the desire to make the applications they use as accessible as possible and to mainstream as many adjustments as possible.

July 2017 – Minor changes to typos and formatting only

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. (Delete the options that do not apply):

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

Option 1 for the reasons stated above

July 2017 – No Change

July 2018 – No Change

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).

The need for reasonable adjustments to be made if necessary and the requirement for content uploaded to be accessible will be highlighted again to those using Learn, through information on our webpages, course design sessions and consultancy

We will continue to monitor all feedback for any positive or negative effects on any of the 9 protected characteristics.

July 2018 – The “Learn Foundations” project has been initiated within ISG as part of a larger programme of work to improve the student experience. The project aims to improve ease with which students can find what they need when they need it in Learn. This will be achieved by redeveloping the support and training available to academic colleagues and establishing re-usable components such as templates and standard terminology. Improving accessibility and usability are fundamental to this project and will be embedded into all outputs. A separate EqIA will be developed for the Learn Foundations project and any updates to this EqIA will be identified and carried out.

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

It will next be reviewed when there is any significant change or upgrade to Learn or if we receive any positive or negative feedback related to any of the 9 protected characteristics.

July 2017 - EqIA has been updated as part of the summer upgrade where the change was significant. We continue to monitor positive and negative feedback related to the 9 protected characteristics and update the EqIA when there is any such feedback or

when there is a major change. The Learn service also keeps up to date with developments from the vendor that may have a positive impact on the 9 protected characteristics.

July 2018 – EQIA has been updated as part of the summer upgrade where changes although minor required the EQIA to be reviewed and adjusted. We continue to monitor positive and negative feedback related to the 9 protected characteristics and update the EqIA when there is any such feedback or when there is a major change. The Learn service also keeps up to date with developments from the vendor that may have a positive impact on the 9 protected characteristics.

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:

July 2017 – No Change

July 2018 – No Change

I. Sign-off

EqIA undertaken by (name(s) and job title(s)): **Ross Ward – Learning Technology Advisor**

Accepted by (name): **Jo Spiller, Acting Head of Educational Design & Engagement**

Date: **31st October 2016**

EqIA updated by (name(s) and job title(s)): **Ross Ward – Learning Technology Advisor**

Accepted by (name): **Jo Spiller, Acting Head of Educational Design & Engagement**

Date: **4th July 2017**

EqIA updated by (name(s) and job title(s)): **Stephannie Hay - Service Manager
Digital Learning Applications & Media, Information Services**

Accepted by (name): **Anne-Marie Scott, Deputy Director, Learning, Teaching and Web Services**

Date: **27th September 2018**

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