



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):

A new service, EdHelp, will provide easy access to information and services for students, as and when they need them. EdHelp will deliver frontline student services that are not provided by School teams and provide a central point of contact for frontline student services.

This will be delivered online (via Edweb and UniDesk) and on campus (at the Main Library and Murray Library). EdHelp will be staffed by the current IS Helpdesk Assistants, whose job titles and descriptions will be changing in line with their new roles.

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: **Gosia Such**

Job title: **Director of User Services Directorate (USD), USD Directors Office**

School/service/unit: **USD, Information Services Group**

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 EqIA? **YES**

E. Equality Groups

Overview:

EdHelp will be able to be accessed virtually (through t EdHelp online which will sit within Unidesk and via its own webpage on the University of Edinburgh website (EdWeb)) and on campus at the Main Library and Murray Library, where the current Library Helpdesks are.

The service will develop incrementally:

- **In June the online EdHelp site will launch within UniDesk where students can find answers quickly**
- **From July, if students need more support or can't find what they need online, they'll be able to raise enquiries within UniDesk. These will be answered by the EdHelp team and will track any existing enquiries through to resolution**
- **From August, they will be able to live chat with the EdHelp team**
- **Due to the current situation with Covid-19, we are not able to put a date to when as to when the on campus service will launch**

EdHelp will provide frontline student services that are not provided by School teams, own student's queries and work collaboratively with staff across the University to ensure students' queries are resolved. The service will be staffed by the current IS Assistants, who staff the Library Helpdesks at the Murray Library and the Main Library.

This service will cover frontline queries in relation to Student Administration, Library, IT and Student Finance as well as handling general enquiries. There will be rooms available behind the Helpdesk for any distressed students to be able to talk with staff privately.

The opening hours of the service will mirror the existing Library opening hours in Murray Library and the Main Library and they can therefore access the service whenever these buildings are open. The online self-help material will be available 24/7.

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

The new service does have the potential to impact on all 9 protected characteristics as the Edweb page will be available around the world and majority of students will use the UniDesk portal. It has the potential to affect both the staff and the students using it. There is the need to consider the online element of the website and portal and the physical aspect of the helpdesks.

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.

All content added to the website and portal 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 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. Staff will be made aware of the issue of unconscious bias and asked to complete the online course about this and offered more detailed training such as Disability Awareness training. The branding and communication materials have been considered from an accessibility point of view but also from the angle of trying to make them as inclusive as possible. The increasing offering of more services online may make the service more accessible for some disabled users, those with caring/childcare responsibilities and those who observe times of religious observance as it allows greater freedom in terms of time (more services provided as self-service 24/7 and location in that more information can be accessed remotely without travelling to a specific location

There is a potential impact on Race as the services online and in person will only be provided in English but as this is the main teaching language of the University we do not believe this should create any disadvantage. To assist with this and for accessibility reasons information will be provided in plain English.

With regards to disability the website and application have been tested for accessibility in line with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1 AA standard and an accessibility statement added in line with The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018. As per the Equality Act 2010 and these regulations, information can be requested and will be provided free of charge in alternative formats. We aim to make the website and the portal as accessible as possible for disabled users, including compatibility with assistive technologies such as screen readers etc. In terms of the physical helpdesks, both have lowered counter sections on both sides and counter induction loops. They are both on the ground floor of buildings offering level access and egress, both buildings have accessible toilets –with a mixture of left and right hand side transfer. Chairs can be provided if a queue should develop for any individual who may find it difficult to stand.

Regarding pregnancy and maternity and age, access is available for those with pushchairs/prams and baby changing facilities are provided within the publically accessible ground floor café toilets. However, there is a policy about children accessing the library which has its own EqIA [Main Library Access Policy for Users with Children EqIA](#)

This policy allows users accompanied by children under the age of 16 (for the purposes of making an enquiry, borrowing/dropping off a book, or for a pre-arranged appointment), normally a maximum stay of 30 minutes, the revised policy also allows users accompanied by children with prearranged appointments with University staff based in the Library to visit for in excess of 30 minutes. Users has also been extended to cover any visitors to the library not just staff and students.

To access the services in the Murray and Main Library students need to have photographic ID – normally their matriculation card. There is a potential impact on individuals from specific religions whose religion prohibits the taking of personal photos. Here, the issue would have arisen before outwith the context of accessing EdHelp and would be referred to a senior staff. There may also be an issue for those users who are in the process of gender reassignment who may not have photographic ID that is of a good current likeness and/or will include the individual's previous name. In a similar manner users of a particular religion and belief may require to cover the

heads/faces and therefore not be recognisable by photo ID. Staff be required to have training in how to handle such situations in a sensitive manner.

There are gender neutral toilets in the buildings and sanitary waste provision is available in both male and female toilets to try to ensure no disadvantage to someone undergoing or who has undergone gender reassignment.

Students will gain access to the service via their EASE credentials, which means when they log an enquiry, their name and email will be pulled through from their University credentials. EdHelp staff will have access to EUCLID and this has been approved within a Data Protection Impact Assessment. Staff will be trained in how to deal with students in distress and there will be space within the Main Library for staff to take distressed students. EdHelp staff will be trained to ensure they maintain confidentiality and specific areas of EUCLID such as a disabled student's learning profile will not be visible. Euclid does include information on a student's age and gender and information on their marital status may be available via their emergency contacts. Staff will have to use this information in an appropriate manner and any discriminate actions taken on the basis of this information would meet with disciplinary action. Staff will also have to attend training on unconscious bias so they are aware of any potential unconscious bias.

When submitting an enquiry, students will have to detail what their enquiry is about.

Staff will be required to attend training which covers a wide range of issues including: disability awareness training, dealing with distressed students, responding to disclosures of sexual violence, unconscious bias etc. Staff will have access to and be familiar with the University guidance on dealing with distressed students.

Add notes against the following applicable statements:

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

Following the results of the National Student Survey (NSS) in 2018, ongoing feedback from students and a clear understanding that we need to improve students' experience at the University of Edinburgh, the Student Experience Action Plan was developed. One aspect of this plan is the introduction of student hubs (EdHelp), which will allow students to access, in a single place, transactional University services not available within schools. The website and application have been tested in line with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1 AA standard and a full accessibility statement added to both services inline with The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018.

We have consulted with the Information Services Disability Information Team and the Student Disability Service, the Chaplaincy, International Office, The Student's Association, the Staff Disability Network and the Staff Pride Network in order to try and gain representation from across the various protected characteristics.

This is driven by one of the University's Strategic Priorities:

Building a People-focused culture which cherishes students, staff, alumni & friends and nurtures a sense of community, efficiency and openness

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

At this stage, we feel there is sufficient evidence to proceed.

- 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 this change will lead to any form of prohibited conduct for the reasons detailed above and below. Reasonable adjustments will be put in place for disabled users (staff and students) as required. This will include hearing induction loops and seating available when there are queues. Any information online/at the physical hub will be available in alternative formats upon request.

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

The ability to access clear information online and increased self-service will also mean it is not a necessity to have to travel to a physical location to access some services. This will mean it may be more accessible to those with caring/parental responsibilities and individuals with certain disabilities as well as to those who observe times of religious observance by enabling them to access assistance remotely but also being able to access information via the self-service provision at whatever time they wish.

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

We hope that by demonstrating our commitment to considering equality issues and taking account of the needs of various protected characteristics we will demonstrate our desire not only to meet our needs under the legislation but to promote good practice and therefore prompt and foster good relations. We have engaged with students in the process to date and will continue to do so and monitor all feedback for any comments positive or negative related to any of the nine protected characteristics. Where appropriate we will seek input from the Student Disability Service, The Chaplaincy, The International Office and The Student's Association and any other relevant bodies or groups We hope this demonstrates that we take our duty to be as inclusive as possible very seriously.

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

There should not be any barriers to any other groups e.g. such as those on low incomes as it is not proposed there would be a cost to any of the EdHelp services. Students and staff have free 24 hours access to IT facilities so there should be no disadvantage for those on low incomes as they can still access the virtual EdHelp service and staff will be provided free of charge with everything needed to conduct their role. However we acknowledge that during the COVID lock down University Buildings have not been open and students may not have access to IT facilities in their own house. They can still access help and services by phoning the IS Helpline.

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

The service will have its own brand which has been approved to be accessible. Any information about the service will be available in alternative formats upon request free of charge. Information about the service is available on the Website which is part of

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

EdWeb (the Universities website) and this is based on the Web Accessibility Compliance Guidelines 2.1 AA standard in line with the Universities Web Accessibility Policy. As per the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018 an accessibility statement has been added to the website and the Unidesk application. Information will also be conveyed via posters, emails, computer display screens etc.

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

Feedback from users will be gathered on a continuous basis and analysed to note any potential positive or negative impacts on the 9 protected characteristics that need to be addressed. Any mechanism used to gain feedback from users will be available in alternative formats. The service will be evaluated and feedback gathered from all users, including questions on how accessible the service is and will be continually assessed in terms of accessibility when any developments are made. Where appropriate we will seek input from the Student Disability Service, The Chaplaincy, The International Office and The Student's Association and any other relevant bodies or groups

- 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 other than what is mentioned above.

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

For the reasons detailed above.

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).
 - **Make staff aware of the need to make reasonable adjustments and to provide materials in alternative formats upon request**
 - **Review all feedback for any comments positive or negative related to any of the 9 protected characteristics.**
 - **Ensure plans for onsite services are as accessible as possible for disabled users and do not result in any form of prohibited conduct against any of the nine protected characteristics.**
 - **ensure all staff are appropriately trained to sensitively respond to the range of issues which may be raised via EdHelp**
2. When will the policy/practice next be reviewed? As this is a new policy what are the plans to review it/ when will it be evaluated?

June 2021

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)): **Catriona Cairns, Design Lead, User Services Division, Information Services Group**

Accepted by (name): **Gosia Such, Director of User Services Directorate (USD), USD Directors Office, Information Services Group**

[This will normally be the person responsible for the policy/practice named above. If not, specify job-title/role.]

Date: 07.06.2020

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