



## 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](http://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):**

Library Reference members' access to the Main Library during revision and examination periods (IS)

**Update 2016: Review of existing EqIA**

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

- Undertaking a review of an existing policy/practice

**C. Person responsible for the policy area or practice:**

Name: Barry Croucher

Job title: Head of Help Services

School/service/unit: User Services Division, Information Services

**Update 2016: Review undertaken by Winnie Chambers, Help Services Team Manager. Barry Croucher remains the named person responsible for this policy and has approved this EqIA**

**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 No
- 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**

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 partnership<sup>1</sup>

The practice is relevant to all equality groups as anyone belonging to an equality group may be a Reference member of the Library and be a Main Library user.

Reference membership is open to all members of the public on presentation of the appropriate proof of identity. There are two types of membership: consultation only, or external borrower. The former is free of charge, the latter incurs a fee of £30 for 3 months, £55 for 6 months or £75 for 12 months (but free to graduates of the University of Edinburgh).

There are approximately 3370 active Reference memberships; 2523 new memberships were created in 2013/14. Memberships typically last 12 months or 3 years before renewal of membership is required.

**Update 2016: There were 2850 active Reference users in 2015/16, with 1750 of these created in this academic year.**

**University of Edinburgh alumni have been entitled to external borrowing cards since 1 April 2015, therefore the numbers holding Reference-only membership has dropped and will continue to fall as Alumni Reference cards become due for renewal.**

During exam periods, Reference (consultation only) members will not be able to access University of Edinburgh Main Library between 7:30 am (opening time) and 5:30pm. This also includes those with SCONUL Reference Only cards/email but does not apply to those with full SCONUL Access borrowing rights or to graduates of the University of Edinburgh. The purpose is to ensure there are sufficient study seats in the Main Library for University of Edinburgh students during the busy revision and examination period. Headcount statistics show that occupancy of the Main Library can reach 1900 users at these times. Capacity is in theory 2140 but the Main Library is effectively full above 1800. Library Reference users are welcome to use the Main Library after 5:30pm, or at any time during the opening hours of any of the University site libraries managed by Information Services.

**Update 2016: This restriction was extended to include the Law Library during the summer exam period as the library was undergoing structural work which reduced the number of study spaces available. A total of 40 spaces were lost completely with the closure of 3 rooms and noise from building works affected many more. The Law Library has opened in its temporary location in David Hume Tower with a total of 194 study spaces and any decision to repeat this access restriction in future will be taken based on close monitoring of the usage of the new space.**

**Reference users are able to use both the Main and Law libraries after 5.30pm. The Law library is open during semester until 10pm Monday –Thursday, until 7pm on Fridays and from 12-5pm on Saturdays and Sundays. In addition, opening is extended until 7pm on Sundays during revision/exam periods. The Main Library opens at 7:30am. The Noreen & Kenneth Murray Library opens at 8:30am and other University site libraries open at 9:00am. Helpdesks open at**

<sup>1</sup> 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.

9:00am, when disabled users who need assistance with fetching books can gain staff assistance. There is alternative study space (not staffed) available in the David Hume Tower Hub from 8:30am.

**Update 2016: These alternatives continue to be available.**

Add notes against the following statements where applicable/relevant:

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

Some disabled reference users will need to have accessible access and egress and may not be able to get to other site libraries therefore there is the provision to make exceptions to the policy if, due to individual circumstances, this might lead to any disadvantage.

For some users with caring responsibilities who may only have opportunity to access a library before 5:30pm, provision of services will be maintained at other University Libraries, and books from the Main Library could be transferred to other sites at the request of a reference user to ensure no disadvantage.

**Update 2016: No requests for exceptions were made in 2015/16 for the above reasons. These alternatives will continue to be available**

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

Prior to the implementation of the practice, feedback from Library staff and students was received complaining that significant numbers of Library Reference members were taking up study seats, and this was confirmed by usage statistics.

There were 32,591 students (all levels of study) mid-year in 2013/14 (Source: <http://www.docs.sasg.ed.ac.uk/gasp/factsheet/StudentFactsheet300414.pdf> ). 3,079 were registered with University Student Disability Services (just under 9.5%). There is no information about how many Library Reference members belong to any of the equality groups.

**Update 2016: There were 35,258 students mid-year in 2014/15 (Source <http://www.docs.sasg.ed.ac.uk/gasp/factsheet/StudentFactsheet310715.pdf> ) of whom 9.5%, 3,338 were registered with University SDS. No information is available as to how many Library Reference users belong to each of the equality groups.**

- 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 policy will lead to any form of prohibited conduct as although we are restricting access for a short period for reference users we have ensured that they have access to services after 5.30pm in the Main Library (closes at 02:30am) and access to other site libraries where books from the Main Library could be transferred to. In addition, there is the provision to make exceptions to the policy if due to individual circumstances this might lead to any disadvantage.

**Update 2016: A small number of exceptions were made during the winter (8) and summer (14) exam periods, but no applications were made for reason of disability or other protected characteristics. This provision will continue. (Exceptions made**

were for reasons along the lines of wishing access to study prior to professional exams etc.)

- If the policy/practice contributes to advancing equality of opportunity<sup>2</sup>

No

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

Yes by ensuring that although we have to restrict access we will ensure that provision to services remains elsewhere (books could be moved to other libraries on request). This will demonstrate to users the seriousness with which the University takes its commitment to Equality and Diversity.

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

The practice restricts access to the Main Library by Reference members who are not SCOUNL Access borrowers or graduates of the University of Edinburgh, but access to the other libraries is maintained and access to the Main Library is still available after 5.30pm for the short duration of the exam period. Reference members will still have access to the same services as usual for instance by arranging the movement of books from the Main Library to the site libraries upon request and ensuring reasonable adjustments remain in place.

**Update 2016: During the summer examination period access to both the main and Law libraries was restricted for Reference members but, as previously, these users had access to all other site libraries and the same services as detailed above. Therefore, we do not feel this policy has created a barrier for any groups.**

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

The practice is communicated on the Information Services website in advance of and during the period of restriction. Notices are on display at the entrance to the Main Library. Reference members using the Main Library in advance of and during the restricted period are given notice of the restriction by Reception staff. Communication about the policy is available in alternative formats upon request.

**Update 2016: Information Services webpages and notices in the Main and Law libraries gave advance notification of the period of restriction and Reference users were also notified by Reception and Helpdesk staff.**

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

A report on Main Library usage during the revision/examination period is contained within Help Services Section Reports on the web. All users can provide feedback which is monitored for any potential positive or negative impacts on any of the protected characteristics.

Main Library users have been surveyed three times in 2014/15 when Reference users were welcome to give their views on the service. Main Library users are also surveyed during the two revision/examination periods: Reference users accessing the Main Library after 5:30pm could complete the survey if they wished.

---

<sup>2</sup> This question does not apply to the protected characteristic of marriage or civil partnership

**Update 2016: Surveys were carried out in the Main Library during both periods of restricted access in 2015/16 to which Reference users were welcome to contribute. Feedback forms were available at the Law library Helpdesk during the summer period.**

- 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:

By ensuring University of Edinburgh students have access to revision space we ensure no student is at a disadvantage and because reference users are still able to access services after 5.30pm and at other sites, where books could be transferred to, we believe there will be no disadvantage.

In addition, there is the provision to make exceptions to the policy if due to individual circumstances this might lead to any disadvantage.

**Update 2016: During the exam periods in 2015/16 a small number of exceptions to the policy were requested by users who would otherwise have been disadvantaged. None of these cited any protected characteristics as reason for their request. This provision to provide exceptions will continue.**

#### **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.

The practice is necessary because of the high demand from University of Edinburgh students for study spaces in the Main Library during the revision and examination period. Reference members may request an exemption, including those belonging to an equality group, and have access to all other University libraries, and so we will ensure no adverse impact on any of the equality groups. In addition, alternative study space is available in other libraries from 8:30am (the Murray library) or 9:00am or in the DHT Hub from 8:30am.

**Update 2016: Alternative study space will continue to be available as detailed above and all Reference members, including those belonging to an equality group, will be able to request an exemption when necessary.**

#### **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 practice will be monitored through regular Headcounts in order to verify the continued need for the restriction to apply. Monitoring has resulted in a reduction in the period of restriction in May 2015 compared with May 2014.

A detailed report for service managers on the operation of the restriction will be produced and analysed, with a view to detecting any equality impact.

Requests from individuals for exemption will be monitored in order to ensure no equality groups are prevented from gaining access if they have a particular need to use the Main Library during the restricted period.

Feedback from the users will be monitored for any evidence of any positive or negative effects on any of the 9 protected characteristics

**Update 2016: Headcounts will continue to be monitored regularly to verify the need for the restriction to apply.**

**Monitoring of requests for exemptions have found no evidence of any equality group being disadvantaged by the policy and monitoring will continue.**

**Feedback from users has revealed no effects, either positive or negative on any of the protected characteristics. Feedback will continue to be sought and monitored.**

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

April 2016

**Update 2016: When there are next any major changes to the policy or if we receive any positive or negative feedback related to any of 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:

**I. Sign-off**

EqIA undertaken by (name(s) and job title(s)): Barry Croucher, Head of Help Services

Accepted by (name): Bryan MacGregor, Director of User Services, IS

Date: 27 April 2015

**EqIA Update undertaken by Winnie Chambers, Help Services Team Manager and accepted by Barry Croucher, Head of Help Services. April 2016**

Retain a copy of this form for your own records and send a copy to [equalitydiversity@ed.ac.uk](mailto:equalitydiversity@ed.ac.uk)