THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

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): **Upgrade of Blackboard Collaborate the virtual classroom and meeting tool from 12.6 to Ultra.**
Blackboard Collaborate is the virtual classroom and meeting software used by the University. There are three integrations (but separate from) with Collaborate, the online virtual classroom and meeting software:

- **Learn integration – for virtual classrooms, tutorials, lectures, office hours etc. Learn is the main, central VLE for the University and can be used by all courses.**
- **Moodle integration - for virtual classrooms, tutorials, lectures, office hours etc. Moodle is available for online postgraduate programmes only.**
- **MyEd channel – for meetings, virtual open days, student use and non-course based work**

Collaborate has many features including audio, video, uploading and display of power points, application share, text chat, polling and breakout groups. These tools are used to varying degrees across the university.
Collaborate Ultra is developed using an agile methodology which means that new elements of functionality are released each month. We receive details of the release in the weeks preceding it and have the opportunity to try it out on the demonstration site.
The University has been using Collaborate for around five years and usage has grown steadily over this time. During January 2017 379 sessions were held in Collaborate Ultra with 2452 participants. These participants would have been a mixture of potential applicants, students, staff and externals.

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

- **Proposed change to an existing policy/practice**

C. Person responsible for the policy area or practice:

Name: **Jo Spiller**

Job title: **Acting Head of Educational Design and Engagement**

School/service/unit: **Learning, Teaching and Web Division, Information Services**

D. An Impact Assessment should be carried out if any if 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

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[1]

Collaborate is used for a variety of reasons across the institution including online open days, online tutorials and meetings – it can be used by all staff and students independent of courses through the MyEd integration and therefore has the potential to affect all protected characteristics however we feel the protected characteristics most likely to be affected are disability and race.. Collaborate is relevant to disabled users, who may rely on assistive technology to access the system and require it to meet the current accessibility guidelines Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA and be compatible with assistive technology.

The system has the potential to impact on Race as the system is only offered in English but as English is the main teaching language of the University we do not believe this will create any disadvantage.

With regards to the other protected characteristics all content added to the website 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. The introduction of this strategy coincides with the implementation of the Equality Act 2010 and the Scottish Specific Duty Regulations 2012 and builds on its principle of integrating equality and diversity in policy and practice

Add notes against the following statements where applicable/relevant:

- On any available information about the needs of relevant equality groups:
   We have run the proposed change past the Student Disability Service and the Disability Information Officer conducts regular accessibility checks. All users are encouraged to give feedback regarding any issues with the system and any potential feedback related to any of the 9 protected characteristics is addressed and acted on as appropriate.

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[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.

- Any gaps in evidence/insufficient information to properly assess the policy, and how this be will be addressed: **No, we feel we have sufficient information to proceed at this stage and will continue to monitor.**

- 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 the upgrading of this tool will result in any form of prohibited conduct. Any need for reasonable adjustments will be put in place such as provision of PowerPoints or PDFS in alternative formats. Information Services provided online advice on how to create accessible documents http://www.ed.ac.uk/information-services/help-consultancy/accessibility/creating-materials .**

- If the policy/practice contributes to advancing equality of opportunity[2] **It is hoped that the as the upgrade increases accessibility that it will improve the system for disabled users and therefore advance equality of opportunity by ensuring more disabled users can access the system and reduce the need for reasonable adjustments.**

- If there is an opportunity in applying this policy/practice to foster good relations: **It is hoped by demonstrating the commitment of the University to choose an accessible product and the care taken to ensure the tool is accessible will demonstrate the commitment the University has to Equality and Diversity.**

- If the policy/practice create any barriers for any other groups? **We do not believe this policy will lead to any barriers for any other groups. The University offers free 24 hour access to computing facilities for all staff and students which may be needed by users on lower incomes who do not have access to their own computing facilities.**

- How the communication of the policy/practice is made accessible to all groups, if relevant? **Alternative forms of documentation are available on request i.e. video, pdf, word, email. This information will be provided on our webpages with have been tested for accessibility in line with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines Version 2 AA standard.**

- How equality groups or communities are involved in the development, review and/or monitoring of the policy or practice? **We have run a pilot with Collaborate Ultra with MSc Internal Medicine, Student Recruitment and Admissions and MSc Design and Digital Media for AY 15/16. Overall all feedback has been positive on the upgraded tool. We will continue to monitor all feedback for any positive or negative impacts on any of the 9 protected characteristics.**

- 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. (Delete the options that do not apply):

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

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

As stated in section E, Blackboard have made changes to this upgrade to improve accessibility of Collaborate Ultra for disabled users. Blackboard's products are designed and developed in accordance with the internationally recognized Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA. Information Services will liaise with schools and make them aware of the need to make reasonable adjustments as they arise for a disabled student.

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). **Publish help and advice for disabled users on the Information Services webpages and ensure users are aware of their availability. Ensure all communications about the upgrade are available in alternative formats upon request.** We will continue to monitor all feedback for any comments (either positive or negative) related to any of the 9 protected characteristics.

2. When will the policy/practice next be reviewed? **If there is a major change to the system or the next upgrade 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

I. Sign-off

EqIA undertaken by (name(s) and job title(s)): Steph Hay, Service Manager, Digital Learning Applications & Media and **Kelly Hall, Learning Technology Advisor, Educational Design and Engagement, Information Services**

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

Date: 7th April 2017

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