

Equality Impact Assessment of University of Edinburgh Admissions Policy and Practices

3. Selection criteria, processes and procedures

University of Edinburgh Admissions Policy

“The University of Edinburgh is committed to admitting the very best students, who demonstrate the potential to benefit from, and contribute to, the academic experience we offer”

and

“The University is committed to equality in education. Students are selected on the basis of their individual merits, abilities and aptitudes.”

University of Edinburgh Equality Outcome 5

Improve equity of access to education in the University

Selection processes

For many of the programmes of study offered, the University of Edinburgh receives more applications than there are places available. In these cases, it is necessary to select from the applications those students who best demonstrate the academic ability, interest and commitment to succeed in their studies at the University. The University of Edinburgh also recognises that applicants will have differing backgrounds and experiences, and is committed to considering an applicant’s academic and individual achievements in the context in which they were achieved.

Actions to tackle any potential impact of our selection criteria, processes and procedures need to be anticipatory, to ensure fairness to all applicants whether they belong to one or more protected characteristic group or not. They should be transparent, and clearly explained so that any applicant can understand how their application will be assessed. Any special arrangements which can be made for applicants as a result of identified disadvantage, such as alternative arrangements for interviews or assessments should be widely published and brought to the attention of all applicants, to ensure that those who could benefit from these arrangements are aware of them.

Equality profile of applicants

- UCAS currently collects data on the following equality characteristics of applicants using its HE application services: gender / age / disability / race. Information regarding the ethnic background of applicants is only provided to HEIs once an applicant is UF.
- The University currently collects data on the following equality characteristics of applicants applying directly via EUCLID: gender / age / disability / race.
- The University does not currently collect the following data for applicants / students: Religion; Sexuality; Gender Reassignment; Marital Status; Pregnancy/Maternity.
- Widening Participation has been included within the scope of the EIA because of its focus on under-represented groups. Members of protected characteristic groups may also belong to targeted widening participation groups.
- As new information on the equality profile of potential applicants becomes available, the findings of this equality impact assessment will need to be revisited.

| Category | Activity / Process / Policy with potential equality impact | Actions to be taken to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduce risk of discrimination and/or unfair impact • opportunities to promote understanding | Who by |
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| For information | Admissions policies and procedures The University of Edinburgh Admissions Policy and its supporting policies and procedures are each subject to specific equality impact assessments. The selection equality impact assessment is considering selection criteria and selection processes, rather than the policy framework. | | |
| General | | | |
| Monitoring of equality data | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Systematic monitoring of equality data for all applicant pools required to identify any areas of potential disadvantage | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Introduction of annual review of UG and PG applicant equality profiles and potential areas of negative impact to be introduced by January 2015. Reports will be submitted to RASG. | SRA |
| Achieved and pending academic qualifications | | | |
| Minimum entry requirements / General entry requirements | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Minimum and general entry requirements are set at the level, and in subjects, which demonstrates an applicant has potential to succeed at the University of Edinburgh ○ Applicants who have been away from education for some time, or those who have had disruption in their education through illness or other factors, may be able to demonstrate that they meet the minimum and/general entry requirements by alternative evidence | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Minimum and general entry requirements for undergraduate and postgraduate programmes are transparent and should present no unnecessary barriers to prospective students ○ Minimum and general entry requirements should be subject to regular review ○ Entry requirements are widely published on website and in publications ○ Changes to entry requirements should be subject to specific equality impact assessment ○ <i>Policy and procedure for undergraduate applications from Adult Returners to higher education (April 2014)</i> recognises the need for flexibility, where possible, to allow adult returners to demonstrate that they meet minimum entry requirements in different ways ○ Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in Admissions policy is under development, due August 2014 ○ RPL already in place for many PG programmes and best | Schools / Colleges Schools / Colleges Schools / Colleges Schools / Colleges Implementation by all College UG admissions offices SRA |

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| | | practice will be identified and shared through the RPL policy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Information on adult returners policy to be added to website ○ <i>University of Edinburgh policy regarding special consideration of adverse circumstances</i> (amended October 2013) currently in place. Full review planned by August 2014. | SRA SRA |
| Programme specific entry requirements (including specific subjects and/or skills such as maths, sciences or music) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Programme specific entry requirements are evidence-based, and are set to ensure students have sufficient knowledge and/or appropriate skills to be able to succeed on their chosen programme ○ Applicants who have been away from education for some time, or those who have had disruption in their education through illness or other factors, may be able to demonstrate that they meet the programme specific entry requirements by alternative evidence | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Programme specific entry requirements should be transparent and should present no unnecessary barriers to prospective students ○ Programme specific entry requirements should be subject to regular review to ensure the requirements remain appropriate. ○ Regular review of progression data for students from protected characteristic groups should be used to identify any negative equality impacts ○ Programme specific entry requirements apply to all applicants to the programme ○ Programme specific entry requirements are widely published on website and in publications ○ Changes to programme specific requirements should be subject to specific equality impact assessment ○ <i>Policy and procedure for undergraduate applications from Adult Returners to higher education</i> (April 2014) recognises the need for flexibility, where possible, to allow adult returners to demonstrate that they meet minimum entry requirements in different ways ○ Implementation of the new policy will be reviewed in September 2015 ○ Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in Admissions policy is under development, due August 2014 | Schools / Colleges Schools / Colleges Schools / Colleges / EDMARC Admissions staff Schools / Colleges Schools / Colleges Undergraduate admissions staff SRA SRA |

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| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ RPL already used for many PG programmes ○ Information on adult returners policy to be added to website ○ <i>University of Edinburgh policy regarding special consideration of adverse circumstances</i> (amended October 2013) currently in place. Full review planned by August 2014. | <p>Schools / PG offices SRA</p> <p>SRA</p> |
| Qualifications for undergraduate entry | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ensuring fair comparisons between different qualifications systems within the UK and overseas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A new Admissions Qualifications sub-group reporting to the Recruitment and Admissions Strategy Group (RASG) has been introduced, to replace previous UK/EU/ international qualifications groups (May 2014) ○ AQG decision-making will be based on a detailed consideration of course content and assessment methods to determine how well a qualification will prepare a student for study at the University ○ Details of qualifications accepted for general entry purposes are published on the University website ○ Specific programmes may accept qualifications as suitable preparation, even though these have not been approved for general University entry. Information about any exceptions should be included on the relevant degree pages of the website and in the prospectus | <p>RASG</p> <p>AQG</p> <p>SRA</p> <p>Schools / Colleges</p> |

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| | <p>UK qualifications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Some qualifications are more likely to be taken by students in FE colleges. Applicants with these qualifications are more likely to be older students returning to education, or to be women combining college with caring responsibilities <p>EU and international qualifications :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ EU and other international qualifications will mainly be studied by applicants of nationalities other than British, so any negative impact on an applicant who has studied for national qualifications in an overseas country must be considered in terms of an equality impact due to race/nationality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Information about the HNCs and HNDs accepted for entry to specific programmes in CSCE and CHSS are published on the University website ○ WP outreach with college students includes information on acceptable qualifications ○ Use of non-standard qualifications and RPL for admissions purposes to be covered by new policy under development ○ Guidance on overseas qualifications and equivalencies is available from SRA and the International Office, and from external organisations such as DfE and UK NARIC. ○ Details of common EU/international qualifications which are acceptable for entry to the University are published on the website ○ Potential applicants who have studied for qualifications not listed on the website are invited to contact Student Recruitment and Admissions and/or the International Office to discuss the acceptability of their qualifications ○ HSS International Foundation Programme provides an entry route for international students whose school qualifications are not accepted for direct entry to the University | <p>CHSS / CSCE</p> <p>WP</p> <p>SRA</p> <p>Admissions offices</p> <p>SRA/International Office</p> <p>SRA/International Office</p> <p>CHSS</p> |
| Qualifications for Postgraduate entry | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ensuring fair comparisons between different qualifications systems ○ The acceptability of qualifications from HEIs in other countries may vary. This could have a greater impact on students due to their race/nationality ○ Availability of information on which to base comparisons will vary from country to country and between institutions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ As much information as possible about accepted qualifications is published on the University website ○ Decisions about the acceptability of qualifications from a country/institution are based on evidence, and guidance from systems such as the Bologna Process for European HE awards ○ Guidance and training is provided for staff involved in admissions in equivalences | <p>SRA / International Office</p> <p>SRA / International Office</p> <p>SRA / International Office</p> |

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| | within countries. Risk of impact on applicants in relation to race/nationality must be considered | | |
| English Language requirements | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Non-native English speakers from overseas and who require a visa ○ Non-native English speakers who do not require a visa ○ General entry requirements for all applicants | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ UKVI visa requirements set minimum requirements ○ New policy on acceptable evidence for Tier 4 English language requirements to be considered by RASG in May 2014 ○ Consistent and fair assessment of all overseas applications to ensure the English language requirement is met and achieved, prior to making an unconditional offer ○ Meeting the University's English language requirements will ensure that students who take up a place at the University will have a sufficient level of English to be successful ○ Academic and specialist English language courses are available to non-native English speakers through the English Language Teaching Centre | |
| Predicted grades (UG) / Transcript and grading scheme (PG) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ An application which does not have predicted grades (and where these aren't forthcoming) will be rejected. ○ Predicted grades are most likely to be missing from overseas applications (where it is not necessarily a normal part of the process) which could disadvantage applicants re race/nationality ○ Some UK schools/colleges are not forthcoming about including predicted grades ○ Translations of transcripts required for overseas applicants | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Guidance and information for schools / colleges re the importance of including predicted grades ○ Publication on website of the requirement for predicted grades to be included on application ○ Admissions officers request predicted grades if they are not included in the application ○ Admissions staff request transcripts / grading schemes / translations | |

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| Contextual data and WP indicators (currently UG only) | | | |
| Academic context in which qualifications are achieved | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ School/college academic performance ○ School/college progression to HE rates ○ Care leaver status | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A review of contextual factors is underway ○ Considering academic achievements within the context in which they have been achieved is intended to increase fairness in admissions. ○ Applying contextual measures consistently and in accordance with policies will ensure fairness in the admissions process. | |
| Socio-economic factors | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ SIMD 20/40 ○ Other socio-economic data ○ First in the family to go to University if linked to LEAPS ○ Scottish Government WP targets | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A review of contextual data is underway ○ Consideration of socio-economic factors within the admissions process is designed to increase fairness, in line with Scottish Government requirements: the Post 16 Education Act allows HEIs to “take into account any social or economic characteristics which they consider appropriate when determining which groups are to constitute “socio-economic groups”. | |
| WP programmes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ LEAPS ○ SHEP ○ SWAP ○ Access programmes ○ UoE WP activities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ WP outreach programmes are designed to raise aspirations, increase applications from under-represented groups and ensure that applications are considered in context ○ WP activities are targeted at under-represented groups such as Educated Pass (boys’ football initiative), care leavers, older applicants (SWAP/Access programmes). | |
| Non-academic criteria | | | |
| Specific work experience or other non-academic criteria | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Work experience Summary requirement for Vet Medicine | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Clarity about what is required, and why, is published on Vet School website ○ Applicants are encouraged to report any difficulties they have encountered in arranging work experience. This should address any disadvantage faced by applicants with | |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mini-portfolio for art and design programmes ○ Work experience requirement for PG courses e.g. Nursing / Social Work / Counselling / PGDE / MBA / Counselling / Law ○ Portfolio (poetry or fiction) for English Literature: Creative Writing MSc ○ UKCAT | <p>fewer opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Monitoring protected characteristic data of successful/unsuccessful applicants will identify any unintended negative impacts on particular groups e.g. disabled applicants ○ Information on what is required in the mini-portfolio, and how to submit it, are provided on the website ○ Technical help is available ○ Details of the type of work experience required for each course is published on the relevant pages of the University website ○ Requirements such as the type of work experience or its duration should be evidence-based and valid ○ Information about what is required are provided on the website ○ UKCAT is designed to be equitable, without undue advantage (or disadvantage) to any specific group of applicants ○ Information on how the UKCAT scores will be used as part of the selection process are published on the website and in the “Applying to Medicine” handbook. | |
| Personal statement | <p><u>Undergraduate</u> We look for evidence of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Readiness for higher education ○ Strong interest in the subject ○ Specific skills, qualities and aptitudes as set out in the entry profile of the UCAS website | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Setting personal statement in context – not all applicants will have had the same opportunities for relevant work experience or personal achievement ○ Awareness of potential disadvantage to members of protected characteristic groups e.g. disabled applicants / older applicants / care leavers through training provided | |

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| | <p>Where relevant, a clear understanding of the profession (eg Medicine, Education, Social Work)</p> <p><u>Postgraduate</u> Specific requirements for personal statements are not set out, but personal statement is used to ensure the applicant really understands the nature of the programme to which they are applying</p> <p><u>Visiting students</u> Personal statements are considered in selection.</p> | <p>by SRA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Improve clarity of programme descriptor to ensure applicants know what the programme actually involves and are less likely to apply for unsuitable programmes ○ Guidance on personal statements is provided on the University of Edinburgh website for visiting students ○ Students may be asked to provide a new personal statement if the original does not meet the standard required, allowing for different cultural expectations from a personal statement ○ Recognition that applicants from other countries may have had different experiences will reduce impact re race/nationality | |
| Academic and/or professional references | <p><u>Undergraduate</u> References are a requirement for all applications.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Overseas applications, and those from applicants not applying from a school or college who may be older applicants, are most likely to be missing references or to have references which do not provide the information required ○ A poor quality reference could | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Training for admissions staff in recognising that overseas references may be affected by cultural bias/attitudes which differ from those provided for UK applicants ○ Guidance on UoE website, and briefings / training sessions for teachers, to underline the importance of references and what information they should contain ○ Link to UCAS guidance on what should be included in a | |

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| | <p>disadvantage an applicant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Adult returners may have only just started college at the time when application forms need to be submitted, so reference may not be very specific <p><u>Postgraduate</u> References are a requirement for some programmes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Missing references can lead to the rejection of an application. Overseas applicants or applicants who have had a break in their education are more likely to have missing references or to have references which do not provide the information required ○ A poor quality reference could disadvantage an applicant <p><u>Visiting students</u> Potential impact re race/nationality. Not all types of visiting students will be asked for a reference:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Exchange students are selected by their home institutions, so no reference is required ○ Applicants who apply via an agent will have had their reference checked by the agent, so will not be asked to provide one again | <p>reference</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If references are missing, they are chased up ○ A second, more up-to-date reference can be requested later in the admissions cycle to ensure fair consideration of the applicant ○ Training for admissions staff in recognising that overseas references may be affected by cultural bias/attitudes which differ from those provided for UK applicants ○ EUCLID system sends a reminder if reference is not received. ○ Guidance for referees is sent out with the request to provide a reference ○ As all visiting students will have been referred or will have a reference, there is no identified equality impact. | |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Other visiting students are asked to provide a reference | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If a reference did not provide the kind of information required, it would | |
| Selection procedures | | | |
| Assessment of the application form | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Screening ○ Scoring | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Clearly published minimum entry requirements ○ Clearly published acceptable qualifications, UK and overseas ○ Any other requirements are also clearly published <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Enhanced disclosure requirement ○ Professional fitness to practice requirements ○ Clear entry criteria for each programme ○ Scoring processes set out in College admissions handbook (UG) ○ Training – College and SRA ○ 2 admissions staff involved in all decisions | |
| In person selection procedures | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Interview ○ ECA applicant day | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Planning of “in person” selection events will include anticipatory equality impact assessment to ensure that no individual or group of applicants will be unfairly disadvantaged in the process ○ All those invited to “in person” selection events will be asked if they require any special arrangements, whether they have declared a disability or not ○ Wherever possible, any requirements relating to an individual’s membership of protected characteristic group will be accommodated. Where it is not possible to meet the individual’s requirements, a clear explanation of why this is the case will be provided. For example, if an applicant cannot attend an interview on a Friday for religious reasons, every effort should be made to offer an alternative. | Admissions staff |

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| Postgraduate Research | | | |
| Research proposals | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Guidance on writing a research proposal appropriate for the particular School or subject area ○ Clarity of process for the consideration of research proposals | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The more information which is available online and in published form about selection requirements and procedures, the less likely it is that any members of any protected characteristic group will be disadvantaged in the process. | |
| Other factors considered during admissions processes | | | |
| Declared criminal convictions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ When and how criminal convictions are considered is set out in <i>Code of Practice for Student Criminal Convictions and Disclosure Assessment</i> ○ Membership of PVG scheme is a requirement for some professional programmes (medicine; primary, secondary and community education; social work; nursing; oral health sciences) ○ Students from overseas, or those who | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Criminal convictions are not specifically associated with any protected characteristic group ○ Consideration of declared criminal convictions are not part of the selection process, but are considered separately after the selection decision has been made, minimising the risk of discrimination. ○ If an applicant is barred from PVG scheme membership by Disclosure Scotland they would be unable to receive professional accreditation for the programme, or to undertake work placements. Where these are requirements of the programme, the University would be unable to offer a place. ○ The Student Disclosure Assessment Panel will make the final decision on any application where relevant criminal convictions have been declared, as set out in the code of practice. ○ Arrangements for criminal record checks for students from overseas are set out in the <i>Code of Practice</i>. | <p>SRA is responsible for the policy and its dissemination.</p> <p>Admissions staff are responsible for its implementation.</p> <p>SRA will convene the Student Disclosure Assessment Panel</p> |

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| | <p>have spent more than a year abroad, will need to provide disclosure information from the relevant national authority</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Where an applicant from overseas declares a relevant criminal conviction, the process is the same as for a Home applicant. The final decision will be taken by the Student Disclosure Assessment Panel. ○ Visiting students are also asked to declare criminal convictions through the application process. | |
| Declared disabilities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ When and how declared disabilities are considered is set out in the <i>Policy and Procedure for Applicants with Declared Disabilities</i> which is due to go to RASG in May 2014 ○ The process for an applicant (UG and PG) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Consideration of declared disabilities are not part of the selection process, but are considered separately after the selection decision has been made, minimising the risk of discrimination. ○ Arrangements for dealing with applications to professional programmes where there are fitness to practice requirements are set out within the policy. ○ All applicants are encouraged to declare disabilities and to discuss any support needs they have at an early stage, in order that any necessary arrangements can be made | <p>SRA is responsible for the policy and its dissemination.</p> <p>All admissions staff are responsible for implementing the policy.</p> |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ UCAS process for applicants with declared disabilities, set out in UCAS Admissions Guide | <p>before they join the University.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Applicants will be involved wherever possible if there are any difficulties in making adjustments. ○ Briefing sessions for admissions staff on the content of the new policy planned for August 2014 ○ Review of implementation, and impact, of new policy after one year (September 2015) ○ The UCAS process is intended to ensure that an applicant who cannot be offered a place as a result of his/her disability is directed back to the UCAS system. If all alternatives have been explored and the Head of College has informed the applicant that a place cannot be offered on any course at the University, this procedure should be followed. All admissions staff should be reminded that this process exists. | <p>SRA</p> <p>SRA</p> <p>Undergraduate admissions offices</p> |