



Equality Impact Assessment

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):

Application/Selection process for Academic Freedom/Freedom of Expression Working Group

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: **Professor David Smith**

Job title: **Convenor, Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression Working Group and Deputy Head of College**

School/service/unit: **College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences**

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

To which equality groups is the policy/practice relevant and why? (add notes against the following applicable equality group/s)

Due to the topic of Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression and the associated social issues and debates surrounding this within the University of Edinburgh and more broadly, individuals across multiple Protected Characteristics may be impacted if the selection and application process does not seek to actively address perceived concerns around bias,

fairness, transparency and safety , in particular in relation to disability, race, religion/belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, and sex.

It has also been noted that the timing of the selection process around school holidays may impact those with childcare responsibilities, for which women carry a greater burden, but that this is known and mitigated for in the following section

Individuals on long-term sick or maternity leave may have perceived and real challenges to applying in this round, potentially resulting in underrepresentation. The convenor is aware of this and acknowledges that future ad hoc expressions interest will be considered on a case by case basis.

The following actions have been taken to mitigate above impact and ensure a fair and unbiased process.

The design of the selection process has been overseen and carried out by specialist teams in Human Resources, specifically Talent & Development and Equality, Diversity, & Inclusion. In addition to expertise and experience in the areas of EDI, Recruitment & Selection, and Employee Engagement, this group reflects a variety of ages, disabilities, ethnicities, sexes, genders, and sexual orientations. Delegating the design to these specialist teams not only enables inclusive best practice to be in-built into the design and delivery of the process, it also encourages a neutrality in the selection and application processes.

The language and format of all materials and guidance have been evaluated for inclusivity fairness, and accessibility. Should anyone require materials in additional formats this will be provided where possible.

There are two parts to the process, firstly an “expression of interest” and then a “group discussion” exercise.

The Expression of Interest form asks for a minimal amount of personally identifiable data to ensure that candidates are selected on the basis of merit against the criteria and not on any pre-application relationships or connections. Contact details will be removed before it is sent to the shortlisting panel, ensuring anonymity as there is a clear evidence-base that anonymised selection benefits those from traditionally underrepresented groups.

The shortlisting panel is made up of four members, consisting of a Head of School, an individual from the University Secretary’s Group Business Unit, and two colleagues from Human Resources (one from Talent & Development and one from EDI) who will not be involved in the Group/Committee to ensure neutrality in selection. This group reflects a variety of backgrounds, job roles, and protected characteristics. Shortlisting will be conducted independently except in cases where further discussion is required. The shortlisting panel will then send their recommendations to the Convenor of the Working Group for a final decision to be made based on the scoring criteria alone. In line with the University’s Diversifying Recruitment guidance a note of the decision making will be made and retained for six months.

Shortlisting criteria and discussion group prompt/process will be shared publicly for transparency. These have been designed to be inclusive and respectful of the diverse range of staff for whom we hope will apply for these roles. This includes but is not limited to:

- Avoiding current hot-button issues that may disproportionately impact members of marginalised groups e.g. LGBTQ+, Palestinian, Arab, Israeli, Jewish community members.

- Shortlisting Panel members and Discussion Group observers will be briefed by Human Resources to remind them of best practices regarding unbiased selection and culturally responsive and neurodivergent awareness on interpretations of communication
- Each discussion group will be facilitated by an experienced facilitator, affording all individuals the ability to participate and be fairly observed in a safe and inclusive environment. For additional fairness, this facilitator will not participate in the scoring.
- Participants will have the option to participate in the Discussion Group stage either in person or virtually according to their own preferences and needs. Group sizes will be capped at 6 participants and there will be no hybrid sessions to ensure equal opportunity to participate. This is particularly relevant for our colleagues with disabilities but will also allow greater choice for any participants who may benefit from either the in-person or virtual options.
- Timing of discussion groups has been chosen after school holidays to allow for greater participation.

Voluntary Protected Characteristic Data will be requested after shortlisting is complete to help evaluate the diversity of the shortlisted field and to evaluate the breadth of participation across multiple demographic and non-demographic categories. Any evident underrepresentation revealed at this stage may result in a more targeted approach to colleagues from certain groups to actively address this. Access to and usage of this data will be clearly explained and monitored by the HR Equality Diversity & Inclusion team.

Any individuals who wish to be involved but were excluded from the process due to long-term sick, maternity, or other special leave will have the opportunity to submit an expression of interest and have it evaluated at a later date.

Individuals have also been offered the opportunity to put themselves forward to be involved as Expert Contributors, ensuring that participation extends beyond the upper limit of group size.

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.

Option 2: Adjust the policy or practice – this involves taking steps to remove any barriers, to better advance equality and/or to foster good relations.

Option 3: Continue the policy or practice despite the potential for adverse impact, and which can be mitigated/or justified

Option 4: Stop the policy or practice as there are adverse effects cannot be prevented/mitigated/or justified.

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).

Findings incorporated into process design by HR.

Individuals on the shortlisting panel and involved in the group discussion process will be briefed on findings.

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

Informally after shortlisting stage and after group discussion stage. Formally after selection process is complete.

H. Publication of EqIA

Can this EqIA be published in full, now? **Yes/No**

If No – please specify when it may be published or indicate restrictions that apply:

UPDATED 8th April 2024 by Tim Goodman

Original response here was “No – To be sent to Joint Unions prior to publishing.”

This was sent on 26th March with a two week hold on publication to allow for feedback or queries. Receiving none, publication will go ahead w/c 8th April.

I. Sign-off

EqIA undertaken by (name(s) and job title(s)): **Tim Goodman, HR Partner, Talent & Development**

Accepted by (name): **Professor David Smith**

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

Date: **22nd March 2024**

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