



## Equality Impact Assessment

**A. Policy/Practice (name or brief description):**

**External Examiner Policy and External Examiner Reporting System and the Business Intelligence Reports**

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

- Proposed change to an existing policy/practice **Yes**
- Undertaking a review of an existing policy/practice **Yes – transference of Code of Practice into Policy.**

The Policy sets out the role, powers and responsibilities the University assigns to its External Examiners for undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes. The Policy sets out the roles and responsibilities of Schools, Colleges and at the Institutional level for External Examiner Processes. The policy replaces:

(i) Code of Practice for External Examiners of Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes

(ii) Guidance for Students and Schools/Subject Areas – External Examiner Summary Reports at Student Staff Liaison Committees

(iii) Guidance to Schools/Colleges regarding the Freedom of Information and Data Protection implications of the University's Code of Practice on External Examining  
The Handbook for External Examiners of Taught Programmes does not differ in fundamental content from the Policy. The handbook is focussed at the External Examiner and is intended to give a succinct outline of the role, duties and procedures that External Examiners must follow.

The External Examiner Online Reporting System enables the return of External Examiner Reports via an Online Reporting System accessed via EASE authentication. The system is accessible by staff with EUCLID access. The system allows External Examiners to submit External Examiner Reports, for a designated member of staff to respond to the key points made in the External Examiner Report and for readers to read both the Report and Responses. Business Information Reports allow for analysis of the data contained in the Reports and the responses. The reports can also be saved to PDF and printed. A paper format for certain areas of the University who will not be able to access the online reporting system.

- Other:

**Reasons why we are doing this EqIA: we realise that the Policy and IT tools have the potential to impact on all nine protected characteristics but we feel in particular that disability and race are the two most likely characteristics to be affected.**

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

Name: **Anne Marie O'Mullane**

Job title: **Academic Policy Officer**

School/service/unit: **Academic Services**

**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 EqlA? **YES**

#### **E.** Equality Groups

To which equality groups is the policy/practice relevant and why? (delete any that are not relevant):

- Age

**A section of the policy states: "Where an External Examiner retires from his or her institution during their four year External Examiner term, their appointment with the University as an External Examiner will cease at the end of the relevant academic session. An exceptional extension of one year to ensure continuity may be approved". Advice was sought from HR on the potential impact on the equality group – Age. It was clarified that the word "retirement" is no longer linked to a particular age. It is up to the School to decide if the person has retained the academic standing they had when they were agreed to be an External Examiner. We considered protected characteristic of age might be impacted because of the wording of section 6 1 (g) of the policy. However, after consideration, we concluded that there was no negative impact on age.**

- Disability

**Both the policy and handbook can be requested in an alternative format.**

**Reasonable adjustments for a disabled External Examiner or staff member, requiring them, as an employee of the University will be put in place. Meetings will be held in accessible rooms as far as possible.**

**As this is an online system a key focus of the EqlA will be around the requirements of disabled users and the need for the system to be as accessible as possible and compatible with the main forms of assistive software. Reasonable adjustments will be put in place for any disabled External Examiner who is unable to use the system. E.g. If a disabled individual is unable to use the online system they will be able to contact the Academic Services, who can ensure the information can be provided in an alternative manner.**

**We believe this online system will improve accessibility for disabled users and therefore, will have a positive impact. The use of colour to denote issues, suggestions and commendations on the External Examiner Report and the Response has been developed with colour blindness in mind. Issues, suggestions and commendations are also visually on display so that colour is not the central mechanism for communicating this process. We have removed the reliance of the system on information conveyed only in colour, therefore, having a positive impact on some disabled users, particularly ones with colour blindness.**

- Race (including ethnicity and nationality)

**External Examiners must be fluent in English, and where programmes are delivered or assessed in languages other than English, fluency in the relevant language(s) in order**

to be eligible to be appointed as an External Examiner for the relevant course or programme. This provision was introduced to comply with the person specification requirements set out in Chapter B7 of the Quality Assurance Agency's UK Quality Code for Higher Education on External Examining. This provision may impact on the equality group with the protected characteristic race; specifically nationality. However, because the main teaching language of the University is English we do not believe that this will lead to disadvantage. This provision is required to meet the business needs of the university as external examiners form a key part of the University's quality assurance mechanisms ensuring that degrees awarded are comparable to those in the sector.

The Online Reporting system is only available in English. Fluency in English is required but as English is the main teaching language of the University, we do not believe this will lead to disadvantage.

- Religion or belief

**Scheduling of meetings/training must not take place on the same day of the week, all attempts are made to avoid days of religious observance.**

- Sex
- sexual orientation
- gender reassignment

Add notes against the following statements where applicable/relevant:

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

**Policy: A Policy Development Working Group, consultation with members of staff and survey. These consultations raised no significant potential negative or positive impacts on the protected nine characteristics. We consulted with the IS Disability Information Officer and HR to gather information on potential or negative impacts which we have discussed in this EQIA. There will be a need for meetings/training to be arranged sensitively in accordance with days of religious observance.**

**System: User groups, surveys and workshops. We consulted with the IS Disability Information Officer. The system was tested for Web Content Accessibility Guidelines Version 2 standards. We are aware that disabled users may require the system to be compatible with assistive technology.**

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

**No we feel that we have sufficient evidence to proceed at this time. When the policy is implemented, all feedback will be examined for any potential positive or negative impact on any of the nine protected characteristics and we will act accordingly.**

- 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 that either the policy or system will result in any forms of prohibited conduct. Fluency in English is required but as English is the main teaching language of the University, we do not believe this will lead to disadvantage.**

- If the policy/practice contributes to advancing equality of opportunity<sup>1</sup>

**The system is designed to ensure that External Examiner Reports are easily accessible and can be submitted efficiently. We hope this may encourage more disabled users to become External Examiners.**

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

**We hope that by demonstrating through this EqIA and the accessibility for testing of the system, the University's commitment to equality and diversity and the seriousness with which it takes these issues have provided the opportunity to foster good relations.**

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

**We do not envisage the either the policy or system will result in any barriers for any of the protected nine characteristics. Fluency in English is required but as English is the main teaching language of the University, we do not believe that this will lead to disadvantage.**

**Reasonable adjustments will be put in place for disabled staff as required.**

**Where an External Examiner does not have access at home to computing facilities, they would have access to free computing facilities on campus.**

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

**The policy is communicated via Academic Services annual email on policy updates, the policy will be highlighted as a new policy on Academic Services webpages. Guidance is also provided at Board of Examiner Training Sessions.**

**Training sessions for External Examiner Reporting System and the Business Information Suite Reports involves a mixture of sit-down training, online tutorials and step-by-step guides.**

**All communication on both the policy and the IT tools is available in alternative formats upon request. This will be advertised to users.**

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

**IS, Development Services reviewed the accessibility of the system for disabled users in line with WCAG Version 2. In addition all feedback will be monitored for any negative or positive impact on any protected characteristics and acted on accordingly.**

- 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: **No.**

**F. Equality Impact Assessment Outcome**

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

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<sup>1</sup> This question does not apply to the protected characteristic of marriage or civil partnership

**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 EQIA found that the Policy required no further amendments. Making staff aware of making reasonable adjustments where appropriate and the need to provide all communication in alternative formats upon request. Continued monitoring of the feedback for any negative or positive impact on any protected characteristics and acted upon accordingly.**
2. When will the policy/practice next be reviewed? **In academic year 2018/19.**

**H. Publication of EqIA**

Can this EqIA be published in full, now? **Yes**

**I. Sign-off**

EqIA undertaken by: Anne Marie O'Mullane

Accepted by: Sara Welham, Head, Governance and Regulatory Framework team, Academic Services

Date: 28.5.15

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