



## Equality Impact Assessment Template

Before carrying out EqlA, you should familiarise yourself with the University's EqlA Policy Statement and Guidance and Checklist Notes, and undertake our online training on Equality and Diversity and EqlA. 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)

EqlA covers policies, provisions, criteria, functions, practices and activities, including decisions and the delivery of services, but will be referred to as 'policy/practice' hereinafter.

<b>A. Policy/Practice (name or brief description):</b> Student Maternity and Family Leave policy
<b>B. Reason for Equality Impact Assessment (Mark yes against the applicable reason):</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Undertaking a review of an existing policy/practice</li></ul>
<b>C. Person responsible for the policy area or practice:</b>  <b>Name:</b> Lisa Dawson  <b>Job title:</b> Academic Registrar  <b>School/service/unit:</b> Registry Services
<b>D. An Impact Assessment should be carried out if any of the following apply to the policy/practice, if it:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• affects primary or high level functions of the University - Yes</li><li>• 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</li><li>• It is one which interested parties could reasonably expect the University to have carried out an EqlA? - Yes</li></ul>
<b>E. Equality Groups</b>  <b>To which equality groups is the policy/practice relevant and why? (add notes against the following applicable equality group/s)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>age</b> – the policy applies to all students who are parents, or who are to become parents; and students of all age groups may be parents. This assessment has not identified any differential impact of this policy for students of any particular age group.</li><li>• <b>disability</b> – students with disabilities who are parents, or who are pregnant, are likely to have different experiences to student parents with no disabilities, due to intersectionality factors. The nature of these experiences, and the challenges that may arise as a result of these, will be dependent on the type of disability. Some examples are listed below, although it should be noted that this is an illustrative rather than an exhaustive list:</li></ul>

- students with particular health conditions are more likely to suffer pregnancy or labour complications;
- students with depression are more likely to suffer from post-natal depression;
- students with mobility issues may have additional challenges both during pregnancy and post-birth

It is also important to consider that student parents who have children with disabilities will have different experiences and challenges.

Both of these groups (i.e. student parents with disabilities and student parents with children with disabilities) are more likely to benefit from flexible arrangements outlined in some of the amendments to the policy, e.g. allowing students, in an emergency situation, to bring a child to a classroom or to a 1-1 meeting.

The policy aims to be as inclusive as possible to all students, and encourages students to meet with their Student Adviser or Research Supervisor to discuss any adjustments needed to their programme of study, and as well as health and wellbeing issues.

- **race (including ethnicity and nationality)** – students of non-UK nationality will usually require a student visa in order to study at the University. The UK Home Office imposes limitations regarding the duration of periods of authorised interruption of study (AIS) for students on student visas. Given that AIS is the mechanism used within the University to enable a period of maternity or parental leave, students who have student visas will have limitations on the duration of the period of maternity or parental leave to which students who do not have a visa are not subject. The UK Home Office regulations are, however, outwith the University's control so this is an impact for which there is little mitigation. The policy is clear that students who have a student visa should seek advice from the Student Immigration Service at the earliest opportunity.

Students of non-UK nationality are also less likely to have support from family or friends nearby who can help with emergency childcare situations, given that they are living away from their home country. They are therefore more likely to benefit from flexible arrangements outlined in some of the amendments to the policy, e.g. allowing students, in an emergency situation, to bring a child to a classroom or to a 1-1 meeting.

- **religion or belief** - the policy applies to students of all religions or none. Students of all religious groups, including no religion, may be parents. This assessment has not identified any differential impact of this policy for students of any particular religion.
- **sex** – aspects of the policy that relate specifically to pregnancy will affect only female students, but the majority of aspects of the policy affect all students regardless of sex.<sup>1</sup> Enquiries received in relation to the policy over the years indicate that male, or non-biological, student parents were unclear to what extent the policy applied to them. The amendments to the policy clarify the aspects that apply to all student parents, or students who are to become parents, regardless of whether or not they are the birth parent.

Historically, women have been more likely to be primary care-givers, and to be disadvantaged in their education and careers after having children. While there have

---

<sup>1</sup> The Equality Impact Assessment guidance requires the consideration of protected characteristics as defined under the Equality Act (2010). This section therefore considers sex as defined under the Equality Act (2010). Considerations specific to transgender students are included alongside LGBT+ students under the protected characteristics of sexual orientation and gender reassignment.

been improvements to address this over the past decades, it is generally accepted that this situation persists to some extent today. Female students are therefore more likely to benefit from flexible arrangements outlined in some of the amendments to the policy. The amendments to the policy to clarify aspects that apply to all students, regardless of whether or not they are the birth parent, should be beneficial to both male and female students as this promotes gender equality and a more balanced distribution of parental responsibilities.

- **sexual orientation** – LGBT+ students who are parents are likely to have different experiences and challenges to non-LGBT+ student parents due to socio-cultural and intersectionality factors. For example, LGBT+ students are more likely to become parents via assisted reproduction, or through adoption, surrogacy or foster care. The amendments to the policy clarify that the policy applies to all student parents, or students who are to become parents, regardless of the means to parenthood. The policy aims to be as inclusive as possible to all students, and encourages students to meet with their Student Adviser or Research Supervisor to discuss any adjustments needed to their programme of study, and as well as health and wellbeing issues.
- **gender reassignment** – students who have gone through gender reassignment and who are parents are likely to have different experiences and challenges to non-LGBT+ student parents due to socio-cultural and intersectionality factors. The amendments to the policy have removed gendered language in order to make the policy more inclusive. The policy aims to be as inclusive as possible to all students, and encourages students to meet with their Student Adviser or Research Supervisor to discuss any adjustments needed to their programme of study, and as well as health and wellbeing issues.
- **pregnancy and maternity** – the policy explicitly covers students who are pregnant or who are mothers, and considers various circumstances in relation to pregnancy and maternity, including:
  - health and safety during pregnancy
  - health and wellbeing
  - adjustments to programme of study in order to support students with issues related to pregnancy or maternity
  - maternity and parental leave
  - other periods of leave due to parental responsibilities

It is worth noting that amendments to the policy clarify that many of the considerations above also apply to non-birth parents, and that including non-birth parents as eligible for this support is beneficial to students who are pregnant or who are mothers, as it helps to distribute parental responsibilities.

- **marriage or civil partnership**<sup>2</sup> – the policy applies to all students who are parents, or who are to become parents, regardless of marriage or civil partnership status. This assessment has not identified any differential impact of this policy for students of a particular marriage or civil partnership status.

**Add notes against the following applicable statements:**

- **On any available information about the needs of relevant equality groups:**  
As noted above, students of all equality groups may be student parents and therefore the policy aims to consider the needs of all equality groups. Particular consideration is given to the protected characteristic of pregnancy and maternity, and some aspects of the policy are specific to pregnancy and/or maternity (e.g. health and safety during

---

<sup>2</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.

pregnancy, maternity pay). Throughout the review of the policy, consultation has taken place with the following groups in order to better understand the needs of student parents:

- Students' Association
  - Student Parent Action Group, including a survey of student parents
  - Widening Participation team
  - A number of schools and staff who support student parents
- **Any gaps in evidence/insufficient information to properly assess the policy, and how this will be addressed:** The University does not routinely collect data on whether or not students are parents. Throughout the consultation, estimates given by staff and students suggest that the population of student parents may be in the region of 2,000-3,000 students, although there is no means by which to ascertain this. This lack of information limits the insight of this assessment on the differential impact of the policy on different equality groups which the University does have data on, e.g. age, disability, race or ethnicity. Nevertheless, given that the policy applies to all students, and that students of all equality groups may be parents, the aim of the policy is to be as inclusive as possible of all equality groups. Feedback from the consultation also suggests that students do not consider it necessary for the University to collect data on whether or not students are parents, and that the focus should be on ensuring that policies and practices do not disadvantage students due to pregnancy or parenthood. This impact assessment considers therefore that the gaps in the data do not preclude the fair assessment of the policy.
- **If application of this policy/practice leads to discrimination (direct or indirect), harassment, victimisation, less favourable treatment for particular equality groups:** This impact assessment considers that the policy as amended should not have a negative impact on any of the equality groups.
- **If the policy/practice contributes to advancing equality of opportunity<sup>3</sup>:** Yes. As described in the 'Purpose of policy' section, "the policy seeks to provide flexibility for students who are parents, or who become parents during the course of their studies, to ensure that they are not disadvantaged in their studies". The amendments to the policy contribute to advancing equality of opportunity by providing more flexibility, highlighting sources of support, and by clarifying the University's commitment to offering maternity pay for postgraduate students in receipt of a studentship, scholarship, or stipend with full maintenance from the University of Edinburgh.
- **If there is an opportunity in applying this policy/practice to foster good relations:** Yes. There are opportunities in the policy to offer more flexible arrangements to students who are parents, or who are to become parents, which are reflected in the amendments to the policy.
- **If the policy/practice create any barriers for any other groups?** This impact assessment considers that the policy as amended does not introduce additional barriers for any student groups.
- **How the communication of the policy/practice is made accessible to all groups, if relevant?** Academic Services will communicate the amendments to the Student Maternity and Family Leave policy to key staff in Schools and Colleges in its annual update of policies. Academic Services will also communicate the amendments to the various stakeholders involved in the consultation, including the Students' Association. The policy can also be made available in different formats upon request.

---

<sup>3</sup> This question does not apply to the protected characteristic of marriage or civil partnership

- **How equality groups or communities are involved in the development, review and/or monitoring of the policy or practice?** The amendments to the policy have been developed through a wide consultation process, including meetings with the Student Parent Action Group, the Students' Association VP Welfare and the Widening Participation team, as well as a number of Schools and staff who support student parents.

The policy is considered and approved by the Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee (APRC). APRC membership includes representation of the Students' Association, The Advice Place, the three Colleges and Senate.

- **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:** This impact assessment has identified no negative impact on any groups that would derive from the proposed amendments. As detailed under *Section E: race (including ethnicity and nationality)* there is a continued impact on students of non-UK nationality who have student visas, given that the UK Home Office regulations have limitations on the duration of interruptions of studies and that these regulations do not make concessions for maternity or parental leave. Given that this is outwith the University's control, there is limited mitigation for this beyond making it clear that students who have a student visa should seek advice from the Student Immigration Service at the earliest opportunity.

#### **F. Equality Impact Assessment Outcome**

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

#### **G. Action and Monitoring**

- 1. Specify the actions required for implementing findings of this EqlA and how the policy or practice will be monitored in relation to its equality impact (or note where this is specified above).** If the amendments to the policy are approved, no change in current practice required.
- 2. When will the policy/practice next be reviewed?** The expected date for the next review of the policy is 2027/28.

#### **H. Publication of EqlA**

**Can this EqlA be published in full, now?** Yes (once the policy is approved)

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

#### **I. Sign-off**

**EqlA undertaken by (name(s) and job title(s)):** Cristina Matthews, Academic Policy Officer

**Accepted by (name):**  
Academic Policy and Regulations Committee

**Date:** 21 March 2024