



Equality Impact Assessment

The Darlington Scholarship

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

A. Key Information	
Policy/practice name:	The Darlington Scholarship
General background/aims of policy/practice:	The Darlington Scholarship is a flagship postgraduate scholarship programme launching as a pilot for 2025/26 entry intended to widen access to postgraduate courses at the University of Edinburgh.
School/Dept:	Development & Alumni
Assessed by: (name & job title)	Eleanor Jones, <i>Philanthropy Projects Officer</i> , Development & Alumni
Sign off by: (name & job title)	Professor Colm Harmon, <i>Vice Principal (Students)</i> 
Sign off date:	17 December 2024
Review date:	1 October 2025

B. Reason for EqIA	(check one)
New policy/ practice is proposed	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Change to existing policy/practice is proposed	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (describe in Section D below)	<input type="checkbox"/>

C. Who will most impacted by this proposal? Consider carefully how your proposal will impact both positively and negatively on people from different groups.
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Consider the 9 protected characteristics as below in your proposal. There may be other identity characteristics that you wish to also include in your impact assessment. It is expected that you will consider all equality groups for impact. Please indicate below (with a tick) which groups you feel will be most affected by your proposal.

Age	<input type="checkbox"/>	Race (including ethnicity and nationality)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Marriage and civil partnership¹	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	Religion or belief (including no religion or belief)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sex	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gender reassignment	<input type="checkbox"/>	Pregnancy and maternity	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sexual orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other characteristics	<input type="checkbox"/>				

D. Consideration of Impact

Show your considerations of how all of the above protected characteristics may be impacted. The following prompts will help you to reflect:

- What information and evidence do I have about the needs of relevant equality groups – is this sufficient to fully assess impact?
- Could this policy/practice lead to discrimination (direct or indirect), harassment, victimisation, or create barriers or less favourable treatment for particular groups and how can you mitigate any negative impacts?
- Does this policy/practice contribute to advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations?
- How can communication of the policy/practice be made accessible to all relevant groups?

In its pilot year (2025/26), the Darlington Scholarship will support Scotland domiciled University of Edinburgh graduates who were in receipt of a WP Access Edinburgh Scholarship (or a legacy WP scholarship) in their final year of UG study, who are transitioning straight from UG to PG study and are accepted onto a 1-year full-time on-campus PGT or MScR Masters course.

This scholarship does not directly discriminate against any group on the basis of race. It is open to persons of all races (including ethnicities and nationalities). However, given that it is open only to persons who were domiciled in Scotland with Scotland fee status (eligible for SAAS funding) during UG study and at the time of PG and scholarship application, this EqIA addresses the possibility of indirect discrimination against persons of races who are less likely to be domiciled in Scotland and/or have Scotland fee status.

¹ Note: only the duty to eliminate discrimination applied to marriage and civil partnership. There is no need to have regard to advancing equality or opportunity or fostering good relations in this respect.

The programme aims to mitigate the substantial imbalance in experience and outcomes experienced by many students from underrepresented socio-economic backgrounds at the University of Edinburgh. The first year of this scholarship (academic year 2025/26) will act as pilot to provide evidence on whether the scholarship adequately supports students, identified as WP at undergraduate level, to transition into further study at the University of Edinburgh.

On any available information about the needs of relevant equality groups

Barriers to widening participation to postgraduate study in Scotland have historically not been well understood or addressed; in Scotland in particular there are minimal initiatives beyond generic financial support programmes, loans, and previous government funding in skills shortage areas. A 2020 paper published on behalf of the Commissioner for Fair Access, titled '*Access to postgraduate study: representation and discussion*' identifies students from deprived areas of Scotland are significantly less likely to progress from undergraduate to postgraduate study in comparison to their more socially advanced peers.² Access to further study is fundamental to promoting greater social equality as postgraduate courses are increasingly required for entry into key professions, often meaning access to greater earnings, security of employment and job satisfaction. The report surmises that Scottish institutions have a responsibility to address fair access to further education, as without enabling more socially disadvantaged students across a range of subjects, inequality in education in Scotland will persist.

Furthermore, a Sutton Trust report from 2021 '*Inequality in the highest degree? Postgraduates, prices and participation*' notes that 'Universities should extend their widening access work to postgraduate level, especially at high-status institutions'. The University's Access Edinburgh Scholarship has an excellent track record of supporting students from disadvantaged backgrounds, including the Access Edinburgh Scholarship which supports students with lower household incomes throughout their undergraduate study. The Darlington Scholarship (which in its pilot year is using receipt of this scholarship as part of its eligibility requirements) can be viewed as an extension of this programme – there is not currently an equivalent scholarship at postgraduate level.

Scotland domiciled students regularly represent a significant proportion of the on-campus postgraduate student community; in 2023/24 they were the second largest cohort after China. For 2024/25 entry 677 Scotland domiciled candidates accepted an offer for on-campus full-time PGT programmes and were expected to enrol, however only 4 of these were UoE graduates in receipt of Access Edinburgh in their final year of undergraduate study (2023/24).³ Such numbers demonstrate how this cohort, who would be eligible for a Darlington Scholarship from 2025/26, are currently significantly underrepresented in the make-up of students applying for further education at UoE. According to research undertaken by Widening Participation colleagues, there is increasing demand from UoE UG WP students seeking to progress onto further study, however financial barriers are considerable and a major factor for potential PG students do not apply and why they decline their offers.⁴

² Commissioner for Fair Access, *Access to postgraduate study: representation and discussion*, (Edinburgh: The Scottish Government), January 2020, <https://www.gov.scot/publications/commissioner-fair-access-discussion-paper-access-postgraduate-study-representation-destinations/documents/>

³ Data taken from GaSP Application tracking and forecasting dashboard on 23.10.2024. The data refers to unconditional offers accepted by potential students (i.e., the University was expecting them to matriculate), however the final number of enrolled students may be different.

⁴ University Executive, *Widening Access to Postgraduate taught study*, (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh), 4 March 2022.

To access higher and further education, students living in the most deprived areas of Scotland are more likely to borrow higher loans for university than those in the least deprived.⁵ As such, those with the least resources to begin with are taking on the largest debts, a burden that will continue to affect their social mobility well beyond university. A Sutton Trust report from 2021 highlights that a schism exists between the cost of PG study and the loans available to cover them across UK institutions, noting that the rate of tuition fee inflation goes beyond what could be expected to offset the rising costs to students through access loans.⁶ The total amount of SAAS loan available has risen from £11,500 to £13,900 in 2024/25 entry, however this still leaves a large shortfall in immediate cash funding that students will need to find.⁷ The Darlington Scholarship programme provides a cash award and fee discount to successful applicants, aiming to support students (up to 25 in the pilot year) with tuition fees and to limit additional debts incurred on top of significant undergraduate-related debts, removing the financial barrier to further study.

Details of the scholarship, terms and conditions and FAQs will be published on the University's Scholarship web pages. In addition, the scholarship will be actively promoted to potential applicants, and any applicants who meet/have the potential to meet all the eligibility criteria.

If application of this policy/practice leads to discrimination (direct or indirect), harassment, victimisation, less favourable treatment for particular equality groups:

As referenced above, this scholarship does not directly discriminate against any group on the basis of any protected characteristic (including but not limited to race). It is open to persons of all races (including nationalities and ethnicities).

However, given that it is open only to persons who were domiciled in Scotland with Scotland fee status (eligible for SAAS funding) during UG study and at the time of PG and scholarship application, there is a risk of indirect discrimination against persons of races (including ethnicities and nationalities) who are less likely to be domiciled in Scotland and/or have Scotland fee status

We believe that the particular aim of the scholarship to reduce certain socio-economic disadvantages (as further explained and evidenced above) necessitates using the Scotland domicile/Scotland fee status criteria as a proportionate means of achieving this legitimate aim.

If the policy/practice contributes to advancing equality of opportunity⁸

At present the cost of undertaking postgraduate taught study at the University of Edinburgh is a barrier that disproportionately impacts upon students from disadvantaged or underrepresented groups. The Darlington Scholarship will help deliver the Strategy 2030 commitment to 'be leading Scotland's commitment to widening participation' by removing the financial restriction that disproportionately impacts Scotland-domiciled Edinburgh students from under-represented and disadvantaged backgrounds wishing to progress from undergraduate (UG) to PG study. The programme prioritises applicants with the

⁵ Audit Scotland, *Briefing: Student Loans* (Edinburgh: Audit Scotland), January 2020, pp. 8-9.

⁶ The Sutton Trust, *Inequality in the highest degree? Postgraduates, prices and participation* (London: The Sutton Trust), June 2021, 60-64, <https://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Inequality-in-the-Highest-Degree-Final-Report.pdf>

⁷ Ogden, K and Phillips, D., *Scottish universities and students are under pressure – and so is the Scottish budget* Institute for Fiscal Studies (London: Institute for Fiscal Studies), December 2023, 10.1920/co.ifs.2023.0090

⁸ This question does not apply to the protected characteristic of marriage or civil partnership

known lowest levels of family income, consistent with existing Widening Participation scholarships.

The Darlington Scholarship will positively impact the equality and diversity of further education by supporting WP students, who are currently underrepresented in the student body, to access education without financial restrictions.

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

The scholarship does not directly contribute to fostering good relations.

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

The criteria of Scotland domicile/Scotland fee status raises the risk of indirect discrimination which could be a barrier to groups who do not meet this criteria, but we believe that this is justifiable (please see above for further information).

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

As the pool of eligible candidates is identifiable, the scholarship will be directly advertised to all equally. It will also be advertised via the University website, which all prospective students have equal access to, and searchable via the University's student funding service.

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

This scholarship programme has been developed collaboratively with colleagues from across the University, including experts in Widening Participation and PG study.

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 proposal is designed to be proactive in advancing equality amongst under-represented groups within the University community.

E. 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.	(check one)
Outcome 1: No change required – the assessment is that the policy/practice is/will be robust.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Outcome 2: Adjust the policy or practice – this involves taking steps to remove any barriers, to better advance equality and/or to foster good relations.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Outcome 3: Continue the policy or practice despite the potential for adverse impact, and which can be justified.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Outcome 4: Stop the policy or practice as there are adverse effects which cannot be prevented/mitigated/or justified.	<input type="checkbox"/>

F. Action and Monitoring

Describe any actions you will take to address the findings of this EqIA.

- How can I involve equality groups or communities in the ongoing monitoring, review and potential future development, of this policy/practice?

Describe how the policy/practice will be monitored going forward, to ensure that impact is frequently reviewed. Make sure you add a review date in Section A above.

The University is confident it can robustly justify and defend this programme within the parameters of positive action in pursuit of an agreed strategic priority.

If the scholarship is likely to continue into the 2026/27 academic year, this programme will be reviewed after a period of 12 months, where we will review application statistics to ensure we are attracting applicants in need. We will review whether the intended audience have been reached by reviewing applicant demographic and subsequent scholar intake. We will also aim to seek qualitative and quantitative evidence on the recipients' experience of the scholarship.

G. Publish

Send your completed EqIA to the HR EDI team (equalitydiversity@ed.ac.uk) to published, and keep a copy for your own records.