Equality 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.
School of Divinity

New procedures for hybrid teaching

A. Practice to which this assessment applies: **Change from on-campus teaching to hybrid teaching model (i.e. mix of in person and digital teaching due to the Covid-19 pandemic)** (Please note that a separate EqIA has been carried out on returning to work in New College and these documents should be considered together)
B. Reason for Equality Impact Assessment: Proposed change to an existing policy/practice (change to teaching practice)
C. Person responsible for the policy area or practice: Name: Prof. Helen Bond Job title: Head of School School/service/unit: School of Divinity
D. An Impact Assessment should be carried out if any if 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) • Age - YES • Disability - YES • race (including ethnicity and nationality) - YES • religion or belief – YES

- sex - YES
- sexual orientation – YES
- gender reassignment - YES
- pregnancy and maternity - YES
- marriage or civil partnership[1] NO

Terms: **Clinically vulnerable** and **extremely clinically vulnerable** have been used in this document and are important. The NHS definition of these terms can be found on the NHS website: https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/people-at-higher-risk/whos-at-higher-risk-from-coronavirus/

- All managers should familiarise themselves with the meaning of these terms and the relationship to social distancing/shielding.
- Managers should find out, where staff are willing to share this, all staff that they manage that are in the clinically vulnerable categories for the purpose of effectively assessing social distancing risks. Personal health details should be kept confidential unless agreed to be shared by the individual.
- Individuals classed as clinically extremely vulnerable will not be able to access the buildings and will be required to continue working from home.

AGE

Travel to and from work using public transport may be more difficult and riskier for older individuals, and impossible for those who are extremely clinically vulnerable.
Mitigation: Students who are concerned that they may be at increased risk can bring this up with their Personal Tutor or the Director of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in the first instance. If necessary, steps will be taken to ameliorate risk while at the same time ensuring that individuals are not excluded from participating in classes and other activities that they are able and willing to do.

Digital Skills – Older staff and students may be less comfortable in a digital environment (though this should not be assumed).
Mitigation: Teaching staff should keep teaching materials simple and easy to access. Training and support is being provided for staff and students on both the University and School level. The library is providing resources on information literacy. We should ensure students access these early on and build in learning tasks early on in courses that encourage practice and engagement.

DISABILITY

Disability with Clinical Extreme Vulnerability - Individuals classed as clinically extremely vulnerable will not be able to access the buildings and will be required to continue working from home.
Mitigation: Every effort should be made to ensure that students who are extremely clinically vulnerable are not disadvantaged in their studies. Students in this position should contact Student Disability Services for advice and support and also discuss their situation with Personal Tutors and Course Organisers.

Accessibility: Poor accessibility of materials and poor communication/poorly structured course sites could reduce the potential for participation of those with some disabilities. However, flexibility of programming offers the potential to manage fatigue related to some disabilities and digital learning provides opportunities to make our courses more accessible.
Mitigation: All teaching materials should meet university's accessibility requirements (e.g. resource lists, formatting, images, videos). Asynchronous pre-prepared materials will improve accessibility and allow for short bursts of engagement.

Hearing Impairments – The University is currently "strongly recommending" the use of face coverings for students and staff. Whilst this has significant benefits in reducing the potential for virus transmission, it has a negative impact on the ability of people with hearing impairments to lip read. It is likely that face coverings will be in continued use for a significant period of time. Advice from SDS is that visors and transparent masks do not necessarily help since they create glare and distortion.

Mitigation: Teaching staff with significant hearing impairments who find it difficult to communicate with others wearing face coverings should raise this with their manager in the first instance to discuss how it is affecting their teaching. Students with hearing impairments should contact the Student Disabilities Service to discuss whether individual support needs to be put in place, and also make their course organisers/teachers aware. Staff should ensure all teaching materials used in class and online are as accessible as possible for those with hearing impairments. Staff are also permitted to remove face coverings when at a distance of 2m if they are comfortable doing so.

Impact on mental health – COVID-19 has had a significant impact on people's mental health. There are a number of contributing factors, but pertinent to this assessment are concerns about returning to the workplace and also having to work from home and the additional pressures that can bring.

Mitigation: Students are encouraged to discuss the impact on their mental health of returning to university or working from home with their Personal Tutor, the Director of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, or the Advice Place. There are a number of University resources to support students (https://www.ed.ac.uk/students/health-wellbeing/wellbeing-services).

RACE (INCLUDING NATIONALITY AND NATIONAL ORIGIN)

Data are emerging that suggest BAME individuals can be more vulnerable to COVID-19, due to multiple factors, none, some or all of which may apply to any individual. The School will continue to monitor evidence in this regard and modify our assessments as information arises.

Mitigation: BAME individuals who are concerned that they may be at increased risk can bring this up with Personal Tutor or the Director of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in the first instance. If necessary, steps will be taken to ameliorate risk while at the same time ensuring that

individuals are not excluded from participating in classes and other activities that they are able and willing to do.

Harassment due to race or belief – There have been incidents in Edinburgh and across the country of individuals being verbally or physically abused due to the perceived origin of COVID-19. Furthermore, increased digital interaction within classes may increase risk of racism, bullying or harassment within online study spaces etc. (note that the risk of online bullying could apply to any one of the protected characteristics).
Mitigation: No form of harassment will be tolerated in the School. Any students who is a victim of any kind of racial abuse should immediately make their Personal Tutor or the Director or Equality, Diversity and Inclusion aware of the situation. Information about support and reporting procedures for those experiencing racial harassment is available here: https://www.ed.ac.uk/students/health-wellbeing/crisis-support/racial-harassment-and-hate-crime.
With respect to the risk of online bullying, teaching staff should set out 'netiquette' guidance at the beginning of classes, ensure students are aware of the Dignity and Respect policy and monitor class-related digital interactions.

International Students – Students accessing classes from other countries may lack of access to digital networks/strong or stable enough connections. They may be unable to engage in synchronous activities due to different time zones. Language issues may make them feel less confident at interacting in the online rather than face to face environment. Students' home countries may have restrictions in terms of specific technologies and government or social restrictions on the ability to discuss controversial issues (both in terms of materials we might use but also safety issues in relation to feeling able to express ideas/engage with potentially 'risky' ideas of others in the class).
Mitigation: Guidance has been provided on these issues by the University (see the document on Delivering Teaching Remotely: https://uoe.sharepoint.com/sites/hss/college-office/academic-administration/SitePages/Delivering-teaching-remotely-to-overseas-students---advice-on-technology-applications-and-learning-resources-&.aspx?CT=1599227816056&OR=OWA-NT&CID=8003d20b-cbab-e9d5-e1d1-433850126119) and this should be consulted by all staff. Recommendations include avoiding big files for download, making sure all materials are available asynchronously, and avoiding certain internet resources which are blocked in some countries for essential learning materials. Teaching staff should be sensitive to the issues that may be faced by those in other countries and encourage students to contact them to discuss any concerns.

RELIGION OR BELIEF

There will be no prayer rooms/ablution areas available - the Sanctuary will be closed.
Mitigation: Any bookable room within New College can be booked for use as a faith space/observance. Ablutions can be completed in any available washroom facility.

SEX

Men – Evidence exists that men, especially those in older age categories, are more vulnerable to COVID-19
Mitigation: Male students who are concerned that they may be at increased risk can bring this up with Personal Tutor or the Director of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in the first instance. If necessary, steps will be taken to ameliorate risk while at the same time ensuring that individuals are not excluded from participating in classes and other activities that they are able and willing to do.

Carers – Students with caring responsibilities may be disproportionately negatively affected in the event of further lockdowns, school closures or the need for children to self-isolate (evidence from the previous lockdown suggests women took on more caring responsibilities, though men could be affected by this too: https://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/14861).
Mitigation: Students with caring responsibilities should talk to their Personal Tutors or Student Support if their work is being negatively impacted. Access to digital learning (especially asynchronous digital activities) will give carers more flexibility to deal with

competing responsibilities. Students should be made aware of the option to take IoS, but this should not be default; students need support to continue their studies.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

During the past few months, some **LGBT+ individuals** may have been hiding aspects of their lives from people that they are living with, or have been forced to shelter in situations where their identity is not fully accepted, which may have an ongoing impact on their wellbeing and mental health.

Mitigation: LGBT+ individuals who need support with their mental health or wellbeing are encouraged to contact student Wellbeing Services, the Advice Place, the University's LGBT Chaplain (Marion Chatterly), or the School's Director of Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (Dr Philippa Townsend).

GENDER REASSIGNMENT

Gender-neutral facilities - There is evidence that the lack of explicit gender-neutral facilities in higher education institutions causes indirect discrimination, and increases the risk of harassment for individuals who have undergone gender reassignment in addition to non-binary staff and students.

Mitigation: There will be fewer toilets available in total in order to ensure social distancing, but the same number of gender-neutral toilets will be available in unchanged locations, with the possibility of further options. Students who are concerned about impacts to them arising from new social distancing plans that related to their gender reassignment can bring this up with their Personal Tutor in the first instance. Additionally, concerns can be raised confidentially with the School's Director of Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (Dr Philippa Townsend).

PREGNANCY AND MATERNITY

Pregnant women have been included in the list of people at moderate risk (clinically vulnerable) as a precaution.

Mitigation: Students who are pregnant and who are concerned that they may be at increased risk can bring this up with Personal Tutor or the Director of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in the first instance. If necessary, steps will be taken to ameliorate risk while at the same time ensuring that individuals are not excluded from participating in classes and other activities that they are able and willing to do.

OTHER AVAILABLE INFORMATION ABOUT THE NEEDS OF RELEVANT EQUALITY GROUPS:

The threat posed by COVID-19 is without recent precedent, with all areas of the University affected. To this end, the School's Director of Equality, Diversity & Inclusion will represent the School on the CAHSS EDI Committee to ensure that emerging information about protected groups is incorporated into School plans. In addition, the School's Director of Professional Services and Resources Officer have access to shared CAHSS Teams sites looking at the impact of Covid19.

The evidence for impacts on protected groups will change as new information becomes available. The School will keep up to date, via the information flow from College, with information and incorporate new evidence of equality impacts as they arise. We will be monitoring particularly the UK government inquiry findings: "Unequal impact: Coronavirus (Covid-19) and the impact on people with protected characteristics" which will look especially at impact relating to gender, disability and BAME individuals https://committees.parliament.uk/work/227/unequal-impact-coronavirus-covid19-and-the-impact-on-people-with-protected-characteristics/

• **Are there gaps in evidence/insufficient information to properly assess the policy, and how will this be addressed?**

The gaps in evidence for assessment of this policy will be filled by consulting continuously with protected characteristic groups as this practice is implemented and changed in response to the Scottish government guidelines.

• **Could application of this policy/practice lead to discrimination (direct or indirect), harassment, victimisation, less favourable treatment for particular equality groups?**

The implementation of this new practice has the potential in a number of ways outlined in the document, and potential ways not identified, to impact indirectly on equality. These potential impacts are justified in achieving the aim of protecting staff and students from COVID-19. The indirect risk is mitigated by measures aimed at allowing individuals in one or various groups to take a more flexible approach to their work. In addition, we encourage any staff members who notice that their circumstances have deteriorated and who are not included here to reach out to their line manager, or any line manager with which they feel comfortable. Students should raise concerns with their Personal Tutor or with the Director of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

• **Will the policy/practice contribute to advancing equality of opportunity[2] ?**

The new practice should enable staff and students from all protected characteristic groups to participate in learning and teaching activities while managing the public health risk posed by COVID-19.

• **Is there an opportunity in applying this policy/practice to foster good relations?**

Applying this practice and ensuring its good communication will provide reassurance to **all** staff and students that their health, safety, and well-being are being prioritised, and that issues of equality have been carefully considered.

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

Socio-economically disadvantaged students may lack access to digital connections/strong or stable connections and equipment such as laptops. They may also lack suitable study space.
Mitigation: Teaching staff should bear in mind potential for poor connectivity e.g by designing small asynchronous activities, avoiding large files (e.g. narrated PowerPoint slides above specified length/file size), and ensuring learning outcomes can be achieved through asynchronous activities if necessary.
Adaption and Renewal has provided guidance for students on recommended technology. The University has extended its laptop loan service.
The School is working to provide as much on-campus study space as possible.

Many students and staff will see the amount of time they spend working from home increasing well above pre-pandemic levels for the duration of the requirement of social distancing. While some individuals may find this advantageous, others will not. There are a number of mental health and homeworking resources available on the University website for both staff and students.

Staff: https://www.ed.ac.uk/staff/health-wellbeinghttps://uoe.sharepoint.com/sites/Covid19/SitePages/Homeworking-%26-working-on-University-premises%E2%80%99.aspx.

Students: https://www.ed.ac.uk/students/health-wellbeing/wellbeing-services

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

This policy will be available on the School sharepoint, with particularly important information communicated via email. Printed versions will also be available for those that require them.

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

The following were directly involved in the development of this policy: Head of School, Director of Equality, Diversity & Inclusion, Director of Professional Services, Director of Undergraduate Studies, and Director of Taught Postgraduate Programmes

In matters related with the following protected characteristics, the following were asked for comment:

- Race and Ethnicity - University Edinburgh Race Equality Network (EREN)
- Religious Belief – University of Edinburgh Chaplaincy – Honorary Muslim Chaplin and Muslim Belief Contact
- Disability - Student Disabilities Service

Head of School and the Director of Equality, Diversity & Inclusion have been in ongoing conversations and consultation with the CAHSS EDI committee regarding issues raised in this statement. Further feedback will be sought and encouraged on an on-going basis, and substantive issues will be reported to the School Management Group.

A Q&A session is taking place at the end of August for all staff and research students with questions and answers posted on Sharepoint. Information for UG and PGT students will be disseminated via Welcome Week. GH Tutors will receive communications via their paid tutor training.

The policy will be monitored continually after implementation and factors re-evaluated as governmental and University policy is revised over time. Policy modification will be approved via the Director of Professional Services (for local decisions and building-wide modifications), or via Head of School for any change in policy affecting the entire School.

- **Is there potential or actual impact of applying the policy or practice, with regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality and promote good relations:**

Applying this practice and ensuring its good communication will provide reassurance to all staff and students that their health, safety, and well-being are being prioritised, and that issues of equality have been carefully considered.

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 YES

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).

The EqIA will be circulated to academic staff and PGR students   For Professional Services, the Director of Professional Services will undertake a review with her own teams.

It will also be referenced at the all-staff Q&A session (26th August) and links will be included in the building re-opening documentation. All colleagues will be encouraged to contact their line manager should their circumstances change.

The system for monitoring the impact of the policy has largely been described in section '**How equality groups or communities are involved in the development, review and/or monitoring of the policy or practice?'** and will include inviting feedback from affected groups. Comments will be discussed at the Senior Management Group and changes made as needed.

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

The policies will initially be reviewed one month after implementation by Head of School, Director of Equality, Diversity & Inclusion and Director of Professional Services..

After that the policy will be re-visited as anticipated changes in policies at the government or University level are implemented, or as and when feedback necessitates a review of the policy.

H. Publication of EqIA

Can this EqIA be published in full, now?

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

Yes. Due to the urgency of need, the EqIA will be published as soon as possible in order to provide guidance in tandem with anticipated changes that will come from Government. Changes to the EqIA are expected as more information regarding impact and feedback is received and the School intends to act responsively.

I. Sign-off

EqIA undertaken by (name(s) and job title(s)):

Prof. Helen Bond (Head of School)

Dr. Philippa Townsend (Director of Equality & Diversity

Louisa Grotrian, Director of Professional Services

Accepted by (name): Prof. Helen Bond

Date: 10/09/2020

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