



THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH

Equality Impact Assessment Template

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):

The Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program supports postgraduate and PhD scholarship students from across Africa studying in person and online. As well as financial support, Mastercard Foundation Scholars are recipients of other wrap around support such as Leadership programming, career and pastoral support. Eligible scholars are those with academic talent but without the financial means to fund study at an international university. The program aims to encourage applications from young women, scholars from displacement backgrounds and scholars with disabilities who, research shows, are underrepresented in this type of programme. The Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program is funded from 2023-2030.

B. Reason for Equality Impact Assessment (Mark **yes** against the applicable reason):

- Proposed new policy/practice -
- Proposed change to an existing policy/practice
- Undertaking a review of an existing policy/practice - yes
- Other (please state):

C. Person responsible for the policy area or practice:

Name: Charlie Bevan

Job title: Program Director

School/service/unit: Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program, Edinburgh Global

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)

Age:

As outlined in the arrangements between the University of Edinburgh and the Mastercard Foundation, one of the charitable purposes of the Mastercard Foundation is : *To establish, operate and provide programs and services to help children and youth to access education, understand and utilize technology, and develop the skills necessary to succeed in a diverse and global work force;*(page 1)

Young people are defined by African Union's Africa Youth Charter as under 35 years of age. This definition is also used by Mastercard Foundation.

In partnership with Mastercard Foundation, the University of Edinburgh's Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program supports young people from across Africa to get access to higher education, an important bridge into employment opportunities. The Mastercard Foundation Scholarships are a mechanism for overcoming potential barriers for young people from across Africa who would not have the financial means to attend the University of Edinburgh.

According to the [Mastercard Foundation's Young Africa Works strategy](#), of which the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program is an important vehicle to implementation:

- Africa is the youngest and fastest-growing continent in the world.
- By 2030, there will be 375 million young people in the job market in Africa.
- By 2100 almost half of world's youth will be African
- A significant gap between the number of young people seeking work and the limited employment opportunities available to them means that they will face challenges finding formal employment and a pathway out of poverty.
- ILO reports that 80 percent of people in Africa work informally.
- Research in two African countries by the Foundation showed that very few young people had access to formal employment: employment – specifically formal employment – is a leading pathway out of poverty. Youth employment is an important measure of poverty reduction.
- Young women in particular face additional disadvantage, facing lower unemployment rates than young men (ILO)

According to the International Labour Organisation: *"The lack of productive and decent jobs remains the largest labour market challenge for young people in Sub-Saharan Africa. At 21.9 per cent in 2023, the youth NEET (not in employment, education, or training) rate in sub-Saharan Africa exceeded the global rate (at 20.4 per cent)."* [file:///Users/cbevan/Downloads/Sub-Saharan%20Africa%20GET%20Youth%202024_0%20\(1\).pdf](file:///Users/cbevan/Downloads/Sub-Saharan%20Africa%20GET%20Youth%202024_0%20(1).pdf) With large numbers of young people entering the job market, the competition for jobs is much more pronounced for this demographic. Demand for dignified and meaningful work outstrips supply of jobs for young people across Africa, and education is an important bridge into employment opportunities. This Scholarship is designed to support young people who face disproportionate barriers to jobs, access education to support their transitions from education into dignified and meaningful work. Typically, unemployment rates tend to fall as individual's educational attainment increases. The quality of education offered through the University of Edinburgh will help equip young people with the necessary skills, positioning them more competitively in the job market, where they are likely to have less work experience than older applicants.

In addition to the competition for jobs, it can be argued that in some contexts the socio-cultural norms in some of the countries in which Mastercard Foundation Scholars are recruited can disadvantage young people. For example, in contexts where who you know can lead to job opportunities, and those jobs are scarce, young people are less well positioned than their senior colleagues to navigate and take advantage of such networks. This disadvantage can be argued to be compounded by gender, where in some contexts there are strong cultural expectations on the roles of women in society that limits job opportunities. This program seeks to overcome this barrier by creating opportunities for the Scholars to develop their network and social capital, through both the University of Edinburgh network, and as part of the wider Mastercard Foundation network. For example, through opportunities to attend summer schools, present on their research at conferences, and increase their profile across the University and Mastercard Foundation's online platforms. (IDS,

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5b4323f4ed915d39f09ff21d/How_youth-specific_is_Africas_youth_employment_challenge_FinalV2.pdf)

However, as well as young people in Africa, it is also recognised that those with disabilities, women, trans women, and those from a displaced background face barriers to accessing educational opportunities such, and in accordance with the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 and detailed in the EHRC Technical Guidance on Further and Higher Education, the University, through the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program, aims to take proportionate steps to achieve the stated aims of:

- enabling or encouraging Scholars who share the protected characteristic to overcome or minimise that disadvantage
- meeting those needs
- enabling or encouraging persons who share the protected characteristic to participate in that activity,

so as to encourage Scholars with those characteristics to apply for the programme.

Disability

Research indicates that gaps in educational achievement between people with and without disabilities is greatest in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). [How do we overcome barriers to accessing higher education for people with disabilities? - DEP](#) Mastercard Foundation asks Program Partners to consider the barriers faced by young people with disabilities in recruiting Scholars to scholars' programmes. The University, through the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program, has identified the following as steps it can take to encourage applications from Scholars with a disability:

- Actively encouraging applications from scholars with disabilities, ensuring in-person outreach visits to Africa and scholarship promotional materials reflect this commitment, and where appropriate include Scholars/Alumni with disabilities to further encourage applicants.
- Communicating the provision of tailored support for scholars with disabilities, offering additional assistance based on individual needs and highlighting the comprehensive Student Support Services available at the University.
- Collaborating with a disability organisation; Light for the World, a trusted technical partner of the Mastercard Foundation, to enhance accessibility and inclusion in our recruitment.
- Guaranteeing reasonable accommodations during interviews, ensuring a fair and supportive process for applicants with disabilities.

Such efforts towards educational opportunities for disabled people in countries across Africa will contribute towards addressing their underrepresentation in the African workforce, see for example [Embracing the disabled workforce in Africa](#)).

Sex & Gender Re-assignment

Very extensive evidence shows that women and girls (and trans women and girls) face particular barriers to participating in education within the African continent. An example can be found here: [schools connect research barriers to girls education report vi.pdf](#). A recent world Bank report, [Pathways to Prosperity for Adolescent in Africa Report](#) also notes that,

Gender gaps in Africa emerge before adolescence and widen during the transition to adolescence and then adulthood. Although there are relatively small gender gaps in schooling among 10- to 14-year-olds in most African countries, girls are typically more likely to participate in household work and boys are more likely to participate in paid work. In the older-adolescent group (ages 15 to 19), a significant number of girls in Africa (26 percent) are neither working nor in school, compared with about 9 percent of boys. Additionally, about 22 percent of these girls are married, compared with only 1 percent of boys. As these older adolescents transition into young adulthood (ages 20 to 24), the gender disparity becomes even more pronounced. Among young women in this age group, 56 percent are married with children, whereas fewer than 16 percent remain in school. In contrast, young men are more likely to

continue their education or enter the labor force, and 71 percent remain unmarried without children (figure ES.1)

Mastercard Foundation have therefore asked its University partners to ensure women are well represented among the Scholars recruited to Mastercard Foundation Scholars Programs, including the one at the University of Edinburgh. The University, through the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program, has identified the following steps to encourage applications from female Scholars:

- Using language (on our website, recruitment materials and in in-person outreach visits to Africa) that encourages applications from women and trans women, and where appropriate include female Scholars/Alumni in outreaches to further encourage applicants.
- Showcasing [the stories of women](#) who have been on the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program to inspire and encourage future applicants based on visible representation.

Displacement

According to UNHCR “it is estimated that just 7 per cent of refugee youth worldwide were accessing higher education as of 2023, compared to a global average of 42 per cent,” :

<https://www.unhcr.org/media/15by30-roadmap-expanding-higher-education-skills-and-self-reliance-refugees>. UNHCR highlight the challenges that conflict and displacement, create for children accessing education in Africa: [From barriers to bridges: Empowering refugee education in West and Central Africa | UNHCR Africa](#)

Mastercard Foundation asks Scholars Program partners to pay attention to the challenges faced by young people who are displaced. The University, through the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program, has identified the following as steps it can take to encourage applications from Scholars who are displaced:

- Using language (on our website, recruitment materials and in in-person outreach visits to Africa) that encourages applications from those from refugee and displaced backgrounds i.e. ‘We welcome applications from scholars from refugee and displaced backgrounds’ and where appropriate include displaced Scholars/Alumni in outreaches to further encourage applicants.
- Conducting in-person outreach in refugee camps and settlements in Africa organised by WUSC—a Mastercard Foundation technical partner—to disseminate information, answer questions, and guide potential applicants through the application process and requirements.
- Collaborating with refugee-led organizations (RLOS) and one-on-one training, equipping their volunteers with the knowledge to support prospective scholars in preparing strong applications to the Scholarship.
- Collaborating with organisations such as UNHCR, Refugee-Led Research Hub, and others that support refugees, delivering tailored online information sessions.
- Recognising the barriers displaced applicants face regarding missing documentation (degree certificates and transcripts) and approach this not as a limitation but as an opportunity for support, ensuring flexibility and guidance in the admissions process.

Whilst the Foundation aims to address the underrepresentation of those with the characteristics outlined above, no candidates will be discouraged from applying. At the University of Edinburgh, applicants apply for the scholarship first. As long as they meet the degree's minimum entry requirement (typically a 2:1), they are eligible for consideration. Exceptional efforts will be made to make sure the recruitment, admissions and student onboarding process does not disadvantage any applicants, regardless of any characteristic they may possess. Systems and support will be made available to ensure full access and success in their academic and wider student experience.

Once recruited on to the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program we will work closely with Scholars to outline support available to them, their rights and reporting mechanisms. We will also create spaces and mechanisms to share experience and feedback, for example through our annual survey, as well as more informal channels of feedback.

The structure of the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program, offering both on campus and online scholarship opportunities aims to overcome some of the non-financial barriers that some studies have identified, for example for some displaced communities, to increase access to education.

We anticipate the policy and practice reflected in Scholars Program will influence the wider institution to eliminate discrimination, advance equality and promote good relations between those who share protected characteristics and those who do not.

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).

We will work closely with colleagues across the university student lifecycle to ensure Mastercard Foundation Scholars are not facing discrimination, but supported to enable them to access and thrive while a University of Edinburgh student.

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

The Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program is being funded from 2023-2030, and the policy/practice will be reviewed if further funding is secured from 2030.

H. Publication of EqIA

Can this EqIA be published in full, now? Yes

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

I. Sign-off

EqIA undertaken by (name(s) and job title(s)): Charlie Bevan, Program Director, Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program

Accepted by (name):

Date: 29/5/2025

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