



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Equality Impact Assessment Template

If you require this template in an alternative format, such as large print or a coloured background please contact HRHelpline@ed.ac.uk.

You'll find it useful, before filling in this assessment template, to complete the online course:

[Introducing Equality Impact Assessment](#)

This template is designed to be used alongside the:

EqIA [Guidance and Checklist](#)

EqIA [Policy Statement](#)

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:	MentorEd: HR Mentoring Platform
General background/aims of policy/practice:	To launch a new mentoring platform for all UoE staff. The aim is to ensure that all colleagues engage purposefully and ethically with the mentoring platform.
School/Dept:	HR
Assessed by: (name & job title)	Sara Medel Jimenez, HR Partner EDI and Tim Goodman, HR Partner Talent & Development
Sign off by: (name & job title)	Cara Hunter, HR Senior Talent & Development Partner

Sign off date:	3/07/2026
Review date:	31/07/2027

B. Reason for EqIA	(check one)
New policy/ practice is proposed	☒
Change to existing policy/practice is proposed	☐
Other (describe in Section D below)	☐

C. Who will most impacted by this proposal? Consider carefully how your proposal will impact both positively and negatively on people from different groups. 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	☒	Race (including ethnicity and nationality)	☒	Marriage and civil partnership¹	☐
Disability	☒	Religion or belief (including no religion or belief)	☐	Sex	☒

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.

Gender reassignment	☐	Pregnancy and maternity	☒	Sexual orientation	☐
Other characteristics	☒				

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?

Mentoring is a crucial element of staff development, that aligns to the University's People Strategy and the Equality Outcomes and Mainstreaming Progress report 2025. To ensure that this mentoring platform improves staff engagement by fostering stronger connections and career clarity across the University, we must acknowledge any additional barriers that colleagues [with protected characteristics] may face to accessing and utilising this platform.

One of the objectives from [the Equality Outcomes and Mainstreaming Progress Report 2025](#) is to 'increase the diversity of staff, including at senior grades, in leadership roles and on key decision-making bodies'. To this end, many leaderships Initiatives like the Aurora and Elevate programmes have supported women and ethnic minorities into leadership development. Similarly, the university has highlighted Advanced HE's Diversifying Leadership programme to BAME staff,

but with very little uptake². The anecdotal evidence from Aurora and Elevate cohorts, is that colleagues favour internal leadership programmes, with Aurora enjoying further success from their built-in mentoring programme. With this in mind, we see MentorEd as a great tool to ease the selection of a mentor/mentee for all our staff and realise the individual and organisational benefits of mentoring, but with particular emphasis to disabled and BAME colleagues, who are underrepresented across the board, especially in higher paygrades.

Disability Context

Chart 18 Distribution by Declared Disability and Grade

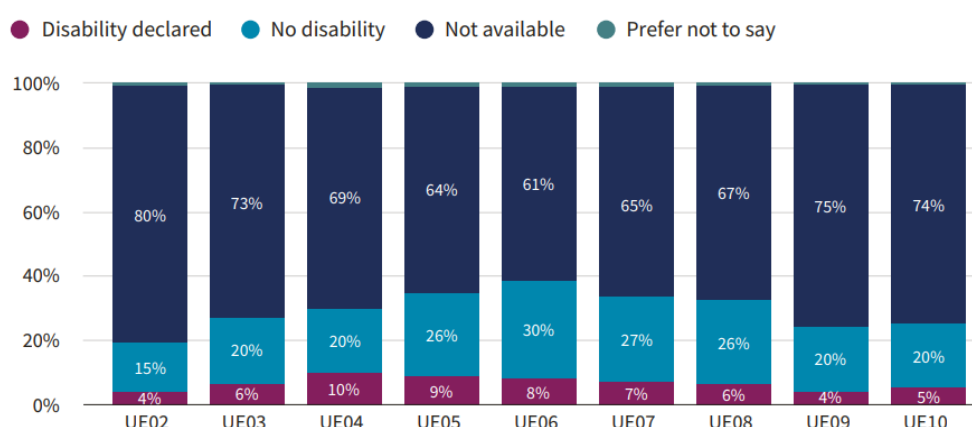


Figure 1 Distribution by Declared Disability and Grade³

Varied representation of disabled colleagues across pay grades, coupled with high rates of 'no-information' as shown in the Pay Gap report 2025⁴, which details the average pay gap between disabled staff and those not declaring a disability is 5.17% with a median salary disability pay gap at 7.89%. Disabled staff experienced is less favourable, with the most notable disparities were related to feeling able to be themselves at work (69% of disabled respondents agree vs 83% of non-disabled) and feeling treated with respect by the University as an employer (52% vs 65%)⁵. MentorEd has the potential to nurture the career development of our disabled colleagues and create a more inclusive environment that values their contribution to the university.

Ethnicity Context

BAME staff ethnicity continues to be a challenge for the university, particularly at higher pay grades. The average and median pay gaps between White and BAME

² [Equality Outcomes and Mainstreaming Progress Report 2025.pdf](#) p.10

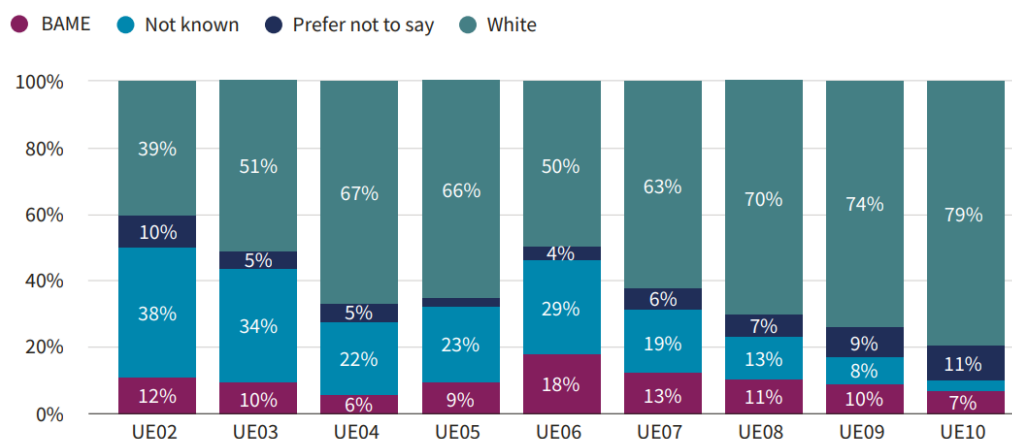
³ https://equality-diversity.ed.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2025-04/Equal%20Pay%20Audit%202025_0.pdf p.16

⁴ [Equal Pay Audit and Equal Pay Statement 2025](#) p.6

⁵ People Insight's Staff Survey EDI report.

employees are 13.2% and 15.83% respectively. The average pay gap has increased by 2.86 percentage points since the 2023 Audit. Under representation of BAME employees at senior levels is the main contributing factor for the ethnicity pay gaps⁶.

Chart 15 Distribution by Ethnicity and Grade



*Figure 2 Distribution by Ethnicity and Grade*⁷

Similarly, the Staff Survey EDI Report, highlights respondents from the Other Ethnic Group categories, Asian or Asian British – Other Asian Background, and Black or Black British – Caribbean were the least favourable in their responses to questions about inclusion, wellbeing and reward and recognition. We believe that mentoring relationships have the power to support career development and improve wellbeing and inclusion within the university community.

Gender, Age and other characteristics

With understanding of intersectionality and similar barriers that other groups may experience, we envisage that MentorEd, will also support women, younger colleagues, and those from a range of socioeconomic background and contexts e.g. first in family academics to connect with mentors.

⁶ https://equality-diversity.ed.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2025-04/Equal%20Pay%20Audit%202025_0.pdf p. 6

⁷ https://equality-diversity.ed.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2025-04/Equal%20Pay%20Audit%202025_0.pdf

Chart 2 Gender Percentage by Grade

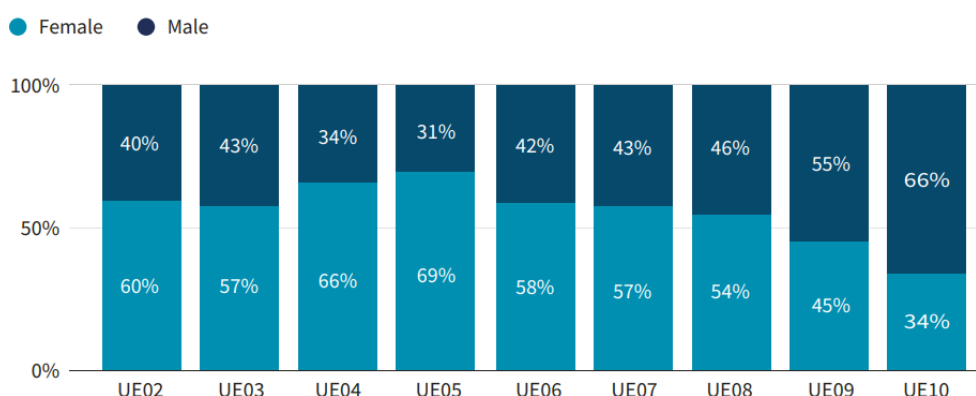


Figure 3 Gender Percentage by Grade⁸

Similarly, to the BAME pay gap by grade, the report concludes that there is a lack of equal representation in senior pay grades. The report also confirms that the University's Gender pay gap is 5%, which matches the threshold from the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), which defines a gender pay gap as significant when is 5% or higher.

With regards to our younger colleagues, the Equality Outcomes Mainstreaming report highlights as an objective 'early career support for colleagues undertaking internships or apprenticeships' to increase workforce diversity and provide career pathways for underrepresented groups⁹. As seen from the graph below, our numbers of 16–24-year-old colleagues have decreased in the last academic year.

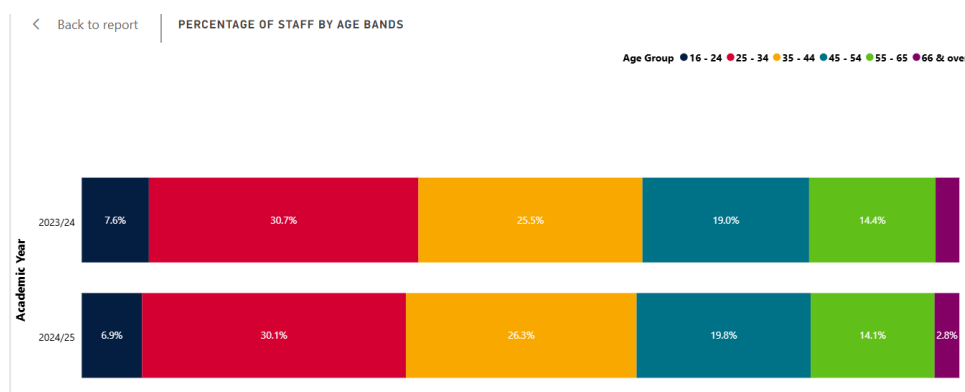


Figure 4 Percentage of Staff by Age bands [from EDI dashboards](#)

Institutional Context

⁸ https://equality-diversity.ed.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2025-04/Equal%20Pay%20Audit%202025_0.pdf p.8

⁹ [Equality Outcomes and Mainstreaming Progress Report 2025.pdf](#) p.3

It is a challenging time for many members of our University communities, particularly those from minoritized and underrepresented groups and those who work in these spaces. Groups of staff conducting research and teaching in minoritized forms of knowledge (e.g. queer and trans studies, black studies, and disability-related studies) report high levels of career uncertainty and low levels of institutional trust, including of centrally-led HR initiatives. This is an important consideration in both the need for accessible routes to mentoring but also in potential challenges and risks.

The recent [Race Review](#) also noted that “ethnically and racially minoritised students are less likely to pursue postgraduate studies, in part because of limited mentoring opportunities and peer support”. Whilst MentorEd is a platform for members of staff rather than students, these sector and institutional barriers and contributing factors are helpful in understanding the context in which a mentoring platform would be received and used.

MentorEd as a tool to address EDI barriers

Our leadership programme alumni often comment on the lack of networking opportunities within the university, many of them report a feeling of empowerment immediately after the course, closely followed by a sense of frustration. MentorEd seeks to fulfil this gap by providing a mentoring platform that provides access to a variety of available mentors offering support on a range of areas. Articles on the mentoring platform will include evidence from our Equalities and Mainstreaming report to inform colleagues about specific challenges and barriers that can be addressed through mentoring.

During consultation, concerns were raised about the disproportionate burden that underrepresented members of staff sometimes must carry to mentor, sponsor, and support colleagues. The platform works to mitigate this and safeguard their energy by limiting the number of mentees that a mentor can have and providing support resources to enhance their ability to mentor efficiently and effectively. All matches are optional and can be terminated by either party if necessary. Mentors can also change their availability to not appear in matching or search results and to not be accepting new mentoring requests.

Recognising that mentoring relationships can be enhanced by both parties having shared lived experiences and that members of all our communities can benefit from working with and learning from individuals with experiences and backgrounds different than their own, staff will have the ability to specify what lived experiences they would value in a mentor or can offer a mentee (e.g. ethnically minoritised, disability, parental returners, caring responsibilities). This, along with the ability to select a preference in gender of mentor, will foster psychological safety and trust

and actively address both real and perceived barriers to accessing meaningful mentoring support.

Mentor supply was identified as a challenge and risk to mentoring activity, with particular respect to underrepresented groups. To mitigate this, the platform will launch to mentors and mentees at separate times. A full review of mentor supply, including of demographic, local distribution, job family, job titles, and areas of support will be conducted prior to mentee launch to enable the team to identify and mitigate potential impacts, underrepresentation, and barriers.

Digital Accessibility

MentorEd will be accessible via mobile web or desktop through single sign on authentication. Testing has been undertaken for JAWS and Read & Write screen readers. The platform can be navigated with the use of keyboard only. Regular accessibility testing, including via mobile devices, has been completed and will continue to be undertaken annually to improve accessibility and maximise participation from all colleagues, whether they have regular access to a work computer and/or require assistive devices or other support.

In addition to in-house accessibility testing in consultation with the IS Disability Services Team, Perform Learn Develop (the supplier of MentorEd) has a valid [Shaw Trust accreditation](#), which means the website has been tested by people with a wide range of physical, visual, and cognitive disabilities and found to be accessible. In addition, to ensure that accessibility is maintained, each month 122 checks are carried out against 21 Level A accessibility checkpoints plus 14 checks against 7 Level AA checkpoints. This means that any accessibility issues that have crept in during the previous 30 days are highlighted and fixed quickly. All assessments are carried out in line with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.2 A and AA criteria.

Where and when relevant, two-way consultation with HR Partners and other local stakeholders in individual areas (such as Accommodation, Catering & Events and Estates) will work to ensure that colleagues with limited access to a PC are not disadvantaged compared to access across the university. Reporting functionality on the platform will work to validate this.

Actively reducing barriers and bias

Networking sites such as *LinkedIn* and the now defunct *Platform one* put the onus on the mentee to find an appropriate mentor when looking for support. This can prevent less confident colleagues from seeking development opportunities. Instead, MentorEd matches mentors and mentees by pairing the skills and attributes that they have prioritised. Automatic colleague suggestions that meet the

desired criteria reduces the potential for any biases from a human matchmaker, and any affinity biases that the users may hold.

In addition, support articles will be included in the platform to empower all members of the community to fully access the platform and benefit from the mentoring on offer. Support resources, both on and outwith the platform, will be regularly evaluated and updated by HR Talent & Development and Perform, Learn, Develop. Users have the ability to submit feedback on the usefulness, relevance, and accessibility of resources to HR Talent & Development directly on the platform, all of which will be considered and responded to in due course.

Communication and Consultation

To ensure that communication remains strictly professional and to reduce the risk of misuse of the platform's potential communication routes we have opted-out of the instant messaging add-ons available in the software. Instead contact between mentors and mentees will take place through the University's MS Teams licence and will remain subject to all University policies and procedures, including but not limited to the Dignity & Respect policy, and Perform Learn Develop's Terms of Acceptable Use. Mentoring relationships are optional and any user has the ability to end a relationship. Report+Support and regular routes of escalation remain in place to help safeguard staff from bullying, harassment, and discrimination.

Communication and consultation with wider university teams—including Staff Network leads and EDIC (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee) Sub-Group conveners—will ensure community engagement and voice during the testing phase, as well as effective dissemination once the platform is ready for use and ongoing feedback. Staff Networks and targeted Teams Communities will be key.

Reporting and Monitoring

MentorEd's built in reporting functionality will enable HR Talent & Development, in partnership with HR EDI, local stakeholders, and staff networks, to monitor, report on, and address any gaps in access and engagement. On profile creation, staff are prompted to enter optional demographic information that is kept separate from any matching criteria or personal statements. Data will include gender, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, declaration of disability, and caring responsibilities. This is not mandatory and *Prefer Not To Say* is available as an option to encourage and promote psychological safety and trust. Although this data is potentially limited by self-declaration, it is a meaningful step to understand and address impact and barriers.

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.	☒
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.	☐
Outcome 3: Continue the policy or practice despite the potential for adverse impact, and which can be justified.	☐
Outcome 4: Stop the policy or practice as there are adverse effects which cannot be prevented/mitigated/or justified.	☐

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 HR Talent and Development Team will continue promoting the platform through leadership programmes and communities, such as the MS Teams for Edinburgh managers, Edinburgh Leaders and alumni communities from Athena Swan and Elevate. Staff networks will be an important area for partnership and collaboration. Other teams and stakeholders will also work to ensure the platform reaches our whole community including those with limited access to a PC.

As part of promoting a Culture of Sponsorship, HR EDI will continue promoting the mentoring platform to EDI Leads and reporting feedback to T&D.

Feedback sessions and questionnaires will be run in 2027, alongside our continuous improvement and monitoring of the Platform. There will be a review to this EqIA in July 2027 following initial rounds of feedback and a year since product launch.

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.