



Equality Impact Assessment

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

Equality impact assessment for the University of Edinburgh open digital badges service (BadgEd)

A. Policy/Practice (name or brief description): **Open Digital Badge service (BadgEd)**

Information Services (IS) is running a 3-year pilot of open digital badges service. The pilot has been created due to the growing interest and recognition of digital badges and their value in the educational and professional sectors for both earners and issuers.

Open Digital Badges are verifiable, portable and stackable digital credentials which contain information that validate a competency, skill or achievement. Badges can contain a rich and diverse set of data which includes mapping to a skill frameworks, defined badge award alignments, earning criteria, an expiration date plus additional fields which can be adapted per badge.

During this pilot the team has conducted a market analysis and spoken to numerous other institutions who are creating and issuing badges. One of the key lessons from this analysis is the requirement to maintain badge value and quality.

Earners awarded a badge can link the badge to a free and open badge backpack which allows them to collate badges awarded by multiple institutions, and via different platforms Earners can share the badges on social and professional media, blogs, webpages, download a certificate version of the badge for offline use, or simply keep them private.

Update 2025: this is a review and update of the original EqIA. The Pilot is now entering its third year and operating as a service, as business as usual.

B. Reason for screening (delete as applicable):

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

Update 2025: Yearly review of existing EqIA

C. Person responsible for the policy area or practice:

Name: **Karen Howie**

Job title: **Head of Digital Learning Applications and Media**

School/service/unit: **Learning Teaching and Web Services, Information Services Group**

Update 2025: Karen Howie, Head of Digital Learning Applications and Media, Information Services Group

D. Screening Analysis

1. Does the policy or practice affect primary or high level functions of the University? **YES**
2. Is the policy or practice relevant to the promotion of equality (in terms of the Public Sector Equality Duty 'needs' set out in the introduction above)? **YES**
3. Is the policy or practice one on which interested parties could reasonably expect the University to have carried out an EqlA? **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
- Disability
- race (including ethnicity and nationality)
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation
- gender reassignment
- pregnancy and maternity
- marriage or civil partnership¹

The new system does have the potential to impact on all 9 protected characteristics as it will be publicly available to both internal and external to University of Edinburgh users, however we believe the greatest impact will be on the protected characteristics of disability and race. There will be an impact on race as the system will mostly be in English however this is the main teaching language of the University. There is a possibility of adding foreign languages in the badge metadata, however certain characters may not be supported. The language of a badge (title and metadata) may be changed through the browser settings.

However, the greatest impact may be on the protected characteristic of disability as this relates to working in conjunction with an online system. It will need to be accessible as far as possible in line with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1 AA (WCAG) standard, including compatibility with assistive technology such as voice recognition software, screen readers or screen magnification software.

The badge visual may be the most problematic element of this new service. During the design of the standard badge visual we have ensured that accessibility standards are met (contrast, alt text etc.).

Information about Open Digital Badges will be hosted on the University website (EdWeb), which is governed by a Website Accessibility Policy and is designed to be accessible as far as possible in line with the WCAG 2.1 AA standard.

As with users to the service if a Badge champion required any reasonable adjustments to be made to enable them to carry out their role these would be put in place as well. For registering on the platform and issuing or receiving a badge, users are only required to submit an email; first and last name are optional. Therefore no personal data that could affect any of the protected characteristics is required.

¹ 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.

The badges are owned by the issuing School or Department, and receiving a badge is based on earning criteria set by the issuing School or Department. Local badge champions have been selected for each of the issuing Schools and Departments, and they have the necessary expertise on badge creation and will ensure adherence to the guidelines and good practice set and agreed by the Institution.

There will be no integrations with other exiting platforms.

The Institutional badge catalogue will be open to the public. Canvas Credentials will not restrict IP access.

We have tried to make the process as robust to ensure not protected characteristics are negatively affected. All University staff undertake the Unconscious Bias training.

Update 2025: the service's digital content aims to be accessible in line with the updated Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.2 AA (WCAG) standard as far as possible. We regularly conduct accessibility testing of the system using automated and manual testing methods including testing with assistive technology such as screen readers and voice recognition software. A legally compliant accessibility statement in line with The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018. Where we identify any accessibility issues we proactively work to resolve these.

The service has begun operating as business as usual, but there has been significant feedback or complaints from any of the 9 protected categories, we will continue to monitor this. All feedback from users will be gathered and analysed to note any potential unexpected positive or negative impacts that need to be addressed.

Add notes against the following applicable statements:

- On any available information about the needs of relevant equality groups:
Disabled users will expect that the service complies with the recognised accessibility standards (WCAG 2.1 AA), and subsequently be compatible with various forms of assistive technology. Therefore, the team have tested the application for accessibility. We have consulted with the Disability and Inclusive Learning Service and the Staff Disability Network and included the results of this consultation in this EqIA. We involved staff members from across the Institution (Schools and Professional Services) in consultation on the project.

Update 2025: the service websites aim to be accessible in line with the updated Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.2 AA (WCAG) standard. The project is now operating as a service, as business as usual.

- Any gaps in evidence/insufficient information to properly assess the policy, and how this be will be addressed:

At this stage, we believe we have sufficient evidence to proceed. Further information on impacts to any of the protected characteristics will continue to be monitored via any feedback we receive, positive and negative, when the service begins operation. If feedback is received showing a negative impact on a protected characteristic, this will be addressed by providing additional information on the service to mitigate the issue.

Update 2025:

At this stage we feel we have sufficient evidence to proceed.

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

We do not expect that the service will lead to any form of prohibited conduct for the reasons detailed above and below. We will ensure we make reasonable adjustments e.g. for those for whom the digital badges are inaccessible and where we're unable to rectify this an alternative print certificate can be issued. Local Badge Champions and a Governance Group are an additional step to ensure there is no discrimination in requesting new badges. They help with reviewing new badge requests independently and fairly.

Update 2025: At this stage we have no evidence to suggest any form of prohibited conduct has occurred or is likely to occur. There have been no requests for reasonable adjustments.

- If the policy/practice contributes to advancing equality of opportunity²

Open Digital Badges have the potential of being more accessible than traditional certificates. The badge metadata can be read with assistive technologies and can contain more details than a certificate. They are more easily shared, as they can be added on social and professional media, blogs, webpages, digital CVs.

Open Digital Badges will be awarded in recognition of skills and achievements that are not traditionally recognised as part of a degree. This could benefit learners who are unable to pursue an entire degree either due to financial or time constraints. These learners would have their skills, competencies and achievements officially recognised via a digitally verifiable badge, issued by the Institution.

Open Digital Badges will be created and issued in accordance to agreed good practice and standards. Local Champions are subject matter experts that can advise those who have an interest in badges, helping them understand the value and quality of badges and supporting through the request process.

Update 2025: same as above. While we have not received any feedback on the badges, we are dedicated to promote Equality and Diversity through our badges. Such examples can be seen in the following badges:

[23 Things for Digital knowledge](#)

[PlayFair Steps EDI Colleague](#)

[PlayFair Steps EDI Champion](#)

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

Open Digital Badges will be awarded in recognition of skills and achievements that are not traditionally recognised as part of a degree. This will enhance the visibility of achievements, skills and competencies that could otherwise be more difficult to evidence. The increasing value of open digital badges in educational and professional sectors will create a better communication system between learners, issuers and external companies (potential employers). We hope that by showing we have considered the potential impacts positive and negative on the protected characteristics of this change we have demonstrated the University's commitment to equality and diversity.

Update 2025: same as above. We have not received and feedback positive or negative related to any of the 9 protected characteristics.

² This question does not apply to the protected characteristic of marriage or civil partnership

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

Open Digital Badges requires users to have a number of technical requirements, including access to a desktop, laptop or mobile device, as well as an internet connection and access to an email address. These barriers are published on the service webpages, which staff are strongly advised to review prior to creating and issuing badges. We will advise staff also announce whether an activity will have the potential of leading to earning a badge, so any concerned groups may request an alternative instead (such as a certificate).

Open Digital Badges will be available to staff and students of University of Edinburgh, as well as to external users (e.g. other organisation employees). All University staff are provided with all the necessary IT equipment, free of charge. University students have access to free IT equipment 24/7 on campus. For students not on campus, UK libraries can provide free IT and internet provision; similar provisions exist in other countries as well. For external users, we expect their employers to provide them with the necessary IT equipment. For these reasons we do not believe there is likely to be any negative impact for those on low incomes. There is no charge for the badges.

Update 2025: same as above. There have been no concerns raised about social economic status with regards to the service.

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

All information is available in alternative formats for disabled users, free of charge, on request and details on how to obtain this are provided in our accessibility statement which is part of our legal requirements under The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018.

Open Digital Badges webpages are hosted on the University webpages, governed by a Web Accessibility Policy which is based on the WCAG 2.1 AA standards. University webpages has been accessibility audited and an accessibility statement added in line with The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018.

Badge earners will be advised by the activity organiser, at the start of an activity, if there is a badge to be earned. This should be done via the main means of communication of the respective activity, such as a webpage or in person. We have recommended the Issuer advise learners of the potential of earning a badge as part of the good practice documentation.

Update 2025: the service websites aim to be accessible in line with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.2 AA (WCAG) standard. The project is now operating as a service, as business as usual.

The participating staff members are regularly informed of service updates during quarterly Badge Community meetings (accompanying slideshows and agenda documents are checked for accessibility) and Teams channel messages. We have not received any requests for reasonable adjustments or requests for information in an alternative format.

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

The Information Services Disability Information Officer was asked to comment on the EqIA. The service has been tested as part of an accessibility review and will be tested again following any major updates to the system as required. We will continue to monitor all feedback for any comments, positive or negative related to any of the nine protected characteristics. We will continue to consult as required with the Disability and Inclusive Learning Service and the Staff Disability Network

Update 2025: Since launching the service, we have undertaken more extensive manual testing with assistive software to better understand the accessibility issues on this website. We have subsequently updated the [BadgEd Open Digital Badges Accessibility Statement](#), and will continue to review and make improvements to the accessibility of the service, including via manual testing, discussion with the supplier and any consultation and feedback with users accordingly.

During the most recent accessibility evaluation we have noted the following improvements the vendor have made to the accessibility of the system:

- User help is now offered consistently throughout the site
- Generated content does not use colour as an exclusive means to convey meaning
- It is possible to magnify all text to 500% without loss of content

- 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:

Nothing other than that mentioned above.

Update 2025: nothing other than that mentioned above

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. For the reasons detailed above

~~**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.~~

Update 2025:

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

For the reasons detailed above

The EqiA has been updated with minor changes made to reflect the move from project stage to service (business as usual) and updated WCAG 2.2 standards.

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).

Monitor and respond to all feedback.

Regularly consult with our colleagues who are experts in accessibility.

Promote good practice when users are creating content through online guidance and workshops. Ensure staff are aware of the need to provide materials in alternative formats upon request, make reasonable adjustments and promote Open Digital Badges as a tool that may be used to meet that need where appropriate.

Update 2025: as above we will continue to remind staff of the need to make reasonable adjustments and provide alternative formats free of charge on request.

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

We will review the system in September 2023 or before if there are any changes to the system or we receive any positive or negative feedback related to any of the 9 protected characteristics.

Update 2025: The Service has been reviewed but no significant changes have occurred since the last publication date. Changes are likely to occur going forward and the EqlA will be updated when this occurs and if we receive any negative or positive feedback related to any of the 9 protected characteristics.

H. Publication of EqlA

EqlAs are published on the Equality and Diversity website.

There is a statutory requirement to publish EqlAs within a reasonable period. However, in some circumstances there may be valid reasons to limit what is published or to delay publication.

Can this EqlA be published in full, now? **YES**

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

I. Sign-off

EqlA undertaken by (name(s) and job title(s)): **Delia Ioana Georgescu, Service Manager (Micro-credentials), Digital Learning, Applications and Media**

Accepted by (name): **Karen Howie, Head of Digital Learning, Applications and Media, Learning Teaching & Web**

Date: **13th December 2022**

Update 2025: undertaken by Delia Georgescu, Service Manager (Micro-credentials), Digital Learning, Applications and Media and accepted by Karen Howie, Head of Digital Learning, Applications and Media has accepted this EqlA on 19th February 2025

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