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 Digital Poverty programme provides digital equipment to students who may not be able to access equipment due to financial hardship.

EdHelp provides laptops for long-term loan and personal wifi ("mi-fi") devices that provide wifi internet to students who are unable to access the internet in their accommodation. Long-term loan laptops and mifi units can be requested by Student Advisors, Personal Tutors, EUSA Advice Place, and other staff on behalf of a student.

This is in addition to EdHelp's standard laptop loan service, which provides laptop loans to any student for a 28-day period.

Further information about this service is available at Medium and long term laptop loan service for students in hardship | The University of Edinburgh and Mi-Fi unit Loan Service for students in financial hardship | The University of Edinburgh.

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

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

C. Person responsible for the policy area or practice:

Name: **Barry Croucher**

Job title: **Head of Help Services**

School/service/unit: **User Services Directorate (USD), Information Services Group**

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

Long-term loan laptops and mifi units can be requested by Student Advisors, Personal Tutors, EUSA Advice Place, and other staff on behalf of a student. The guidelines for eligibility are provided online and accessible 24/7. All staff members undertake mandatory Equality and Diversity and Unconscious Bias training. A student can approach a number of different staff members for a nomination, which provides more options in the event that they feel uncomfortable with any particular staff member.

Eligibility for the service includes students who meet at least one of the following criteria:

- **Care leavers**
- **Estranged from family ([see further info](#))**
- **Acting as a carer**
- **In receipt of a University bursary based on household income**
- **In receipt of discretionary and hardship funds**
- **Currently working from a tablet or phone to access lectures and teaching material**
- **In severe financial difficulty and unable to purchase or repair a laptop / purchase an internet plan**

Documentary evidence of eligibility is not required. This reduces the potential to impact students negatively who are unable provide documentation of their situation.

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 partnership[1]

The Digital Poverty service has the potential to impact on all 9 protected characteristics as the service is open to all students, in addition to having a positive impact on those with lower incomes and lower socioeconomic status.

We believe this policy has the potential to positively impact students, in particular care leavers, asylum seekers and refugees, disabled students, students who are estranged from their families, and students who are married or in civil partnerships, or are parents or carers.

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[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.

Laptops and mifi units are available for pickup at the Main Library during helpdesk opening hours. In specific circumstances they may be able to be sent to a student's home or another site library for pickup if this was more accessible.

The protected characteristic of disability may have the greatest impact, as this relates to accessing the service (information and application form) online through the use of an electronic device (either desktop, laptop, tablet or mobile). This is undertaken via the University website (which we call EdWeb) in addition to an application form (EdHelp form via UniDesk). Both the website and application website are designed to be accessible as far as possible in line with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.2 AA standard, including compatibility with assistive technology such as voice recognition software, screen readers or screen magnification software. Both the EdWeb website and UniDesk platform hold an Accessibility Statement, as per The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018. Reasonable adjustments will need to be in place should a disabled user be unable to use the form, in addition to the website itself, and that we were unable to rectify.

Another significant consideration on the service is race, whereby the information guidance and application form is written in English, which is mitigated by the fact that the main teaching language of the University is also English. There is a potential positive effect in that by providing the facility online, users can access the information and subsequently use browser translation tools to covert to their preferred language. The Mifi units can only be used in the UK so rely on the student being based in the UK.

Students must be nominated by a member of staff, so requests come from the staff member and not the student themselves. The only information requested is the member of staff saying they wish to nominate, the general reason for the nomination, and the student's University ID or UUN. We do not require the student to prove they are eligible. The nominating member of staff may ask questions about the situation so they feel comfortable nominating, but we don't require that they get any proof. No details regarding the student such as gender, race, sexual orientation, marital status, age, or religion are asked for. No photographic ID proof is asked for. No information is specifically required other than the student's UUN and the general reason for the nomination. Details are retained in line with the general Unidesk retention policy.

The University vision is a continuing commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion for both students and staff. The University has a single Equality Strategy to ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion are guiding principles in our pursuit of academic excellence.

Add notes against the following applicable statements:

- On any available information about the needs of relevant equality groups:

This activity is driven by the University Strategic Priorities and is supported at senior levels by the Vice-Principal and Chief Information Officer, and the Scottish Funding Council, which aims to make access to essential digital equipment and skills available to students who may not otherwise be able to access them.

Consultation has been undertaken with the ISG Disability Information team. In addition, the policy has been reviewed by:

• Disability and Learning Support Service (DLSS);

- **Edinburgh University Students' Association (EUSA);**

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

At this stage we feel there is 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 believe this change will lead to any form of prohibited conduct for the reasons detailed above and below. Reasonable adjustments will be put in place e.g., such as delivery to a student's home if for a reason related to a disability they are unable to collect the equipment from a library.

  - If the policy/practice contributes to advancing equality of opportunity[2]

This activity specifically aims to contribute to advancing equality of opportunity by allowing students who may not have the financial ability to purchase a good quality laptop or regular internet connection to do so. It is well known that disabled users made face additional costs ([How the cost of living crisis is affecting disabled people in the UK (external link)](#) so this may have a positive impact on disabled users. Staff are aware of the Disability and Learning Support Service and can potentially direct students to additional support from that Service. This may include support in applying for additional, specific funding via Disabled Students Allowance, which could enable eligible students to be provided with a new laptop and other assistive technology Students who are pregnant or have children and those with caring responsibilities may also face additional costs.

The introduction of the service might positively affect a number of groups, due to this being a free service offered to users who may not have the financial ability to purchase a good quality laptop or regular internet connection. Information and the application form is online and available 24 / 7. As a result, this might help those who adhere to certain times of religious observance, in addition to the protected characteristic of pregnancy and maternity, people who hold caring responsibilities, and disabled users. By examining the potential positive and negative impacts of all the protected characteristics, it is hoped that this demonstrates the University's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion, specifically through enhancing equality of opportunity.

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

We hope that by demonstrating our commitment to considering equality issues and taking account of the needs of various protected characteristics, we have demonstrated our desire not only to meet our needs under the legislation, but to promote good practice and therefore prompt and foster good relations. We monitor all feedback for any comments positive or negative related to any of the nine protected characteristics. Where appropriate we will seek input from the Disability and Learning Support Service (DLSSS), The Chaplaincy, Edinburgh Global, and the Edinburgh University Student's Association (EUSA) and any other relevant bodies or groups. We hope this demonstrates that we take our duty to be as inclusive as possible very seriously.

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[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?

There should not be any barriers to any other groups e.g. such as those on low incomes as there is no cost or deposit necessary to request a laptop or mifi unit.

The information on the service, in addition to the application form, is available on an open website, allowing for ease of access in addition to availability and understanding for all users. However, eligible students can be put forward by a university representative and all staff and students have free, 24 / 7 IT facilities at the University, principally at the George Square Main Library. IT facilities are also provided at other campuses across Edinburgh. Public libraries in the UK also facilitate free access to the internet. Finally, other countries have similar options available. Mifi units can only be used in the UK.

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

Students would access the information online and contact the staff member, and the nominating staff would access the form.

All information used to promote the service such as posters and display screens should eb checked for accessibility. Any information about the service is available in alternative formats upon request free of charge. Information about the service is available on the Website which is part of EdWeb (the Universities website) and this is based on the Web Accessibility Compliance Guidelines 2.2 AA standard in line with the Universities Web Accessibility Policy. As per the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018 an accessibility statement has been added to the website and the Unidesk application. Information is also conveyed via posters, emails, computer display screens etc

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

As a service of EdHelp, feedback from users is gathered on a continuous basis and analysed to note any potential positive or negative impacts on the 9 protected characteristics that need to be addressed. Any mechanism used to gain feedback from users is available in alternative formats. The service is evaluated and feedback gathered from all users, including questions on how accessible the service is and is continually assessed in terms of accessibility when any developments are made. Where appropriate we will seek input from the Disability and Learning Support Service (DLSS), The Chaplaincy, Edinburgh Global and the Edinburgh University Student's Association (EUSA), and any other relevant bodies or groups

- 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:

None other than what is mentioned above and below.

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.~~

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 monitor all feedback for any comments, positive or negative, related to any of the nine protected characteristics and act accordingly. Staff operating the service will also be made aware of the need to make reasonable adjustments for some users where appropriate, including providing information in alterative formats, free of charge, upon request.

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

A review shall take place if there are any significant changes to the service, in addition to receiving any feedback, positive or negative, related to any of the nine protected characteristics. On each of these occasions, the EqIA will be updated.

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)): **Brenda Welch, EdHelp Service Delivery Manager, Help Services, User Services Directorate (USD), Information Services Group**

Accepted by (name): **Paul Gorman, Deputy Head of Help Services, User Services Directorate (USD), Information Services Group**
[This will normally be the person responsible for the policy/practice named above. If not, specify job-title/role.]

Date: **31.05.24**

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