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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):

A new service, EdHelp, will provide easy access to information and services for students, as and when they need them. EdHelp will deliver frontline student services that are not provided by School teams and provide a central point of contact for frontline student services.

This will be delivered online (via Edweb and UniDesk) and on campus (at the Main Library and Murray Library). EdHelp will be staffed by the current IS Helpdesk Assistants, whose job titles and descriptions will be changing in line with their new roles

Update 2024:
In June 2023 the EdHelp service extended to all site libraries. The online service EdChat expanded to provide live chat support.

B. Reason for Equality Impact Asessment (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: **Gosia Such**

Job title: **Director of User Services Directorate (USD), USD Directors Office**

School/service/unit: **USD, Information Services Group**

Update 2024:

Name: **Gosia Such**

Job title: **Director of User Services Directorate (USD), USD Directors Office**

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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

EdHelp will be able to be accessed virtually (through EdHelp online which will sit within Unidesk and via its own webpage on the University of Edinburgh website (EdWeb)) and on campus at the Main Library and Murray Library, where the current Library Helpdesks are.

The service will develop incrementally:
- **In June the online EdHelp site will launch within UniDesk where students can find answers quickly**
- **From July, if students need more support or can't find what they need online, they'll be able to raise enquiries within UniDesk. These will be answered by the EdHelp team and will track any existing enquiries through to resolution**
- **From August, they will be able to live chat with the EdHelp team**
- **Due to the current situation with Covid-19, we are not able to put a date to when as to when the on campus service will launch**

EdHelp will provide frontline student services that are not provided by School teams, own student's queries and work collaboratively with staff across the University to ensure students' queries are resolved. The service will be staffed by the current IS Assistants, who staff the Library Helpdesks at the Murray Library and the Main Library.

This service will cover frontline queries in relation to Student Administration, Library, IT and Student Finance as well as handling general enquiries. There will be rooms available behind the Helpdesk for any distressed students to be able to talk with staff privately.

The opening hours of the service will mirror the existing Library opening hours in Murray Library and the Main Library and they can therefore access the service whenever these buildings are open. The online self-help material will be available 24/7.

Update 2024:
In June 2023 the EdHelp service extended to helpdesks at the remaining 8 libraries:
- **Law Library**
- **New College Library**
- **Moray House Library**
- **Edinburgh College of Art Library**
- **Art & Architecture Library**
- **Royal Infirmary Library**
- **Western General Hospital Library**
- **Lady Smith of Kelvin Veterinary Library**

The service can be accessed through four methods:
- **The EdHelf Self-Service Portal is a student-facing knowledge base which provides 24/7 access to information and a way to easily raise a ticket for further individual support.**

- **If students need more support or can't find what they need online, they can raise enquiries within UniDesk. These are answered by the EdHelp team through a system that enables tracking enquiries through to resolution**
- **Live chat with the EdHelp team (EdChat)**
- **In person at helpdesks in 10 libraries located on each University campus**

Opening hours
- **Library helpdesks are open during library opening hours, with the exception of the Main Library, which is open 24/7 during term time. The Main Library Helpdesk opening hours are 9am – 8pm Mon-Thurs, 9am – 7pm Fri, 9am – 5pm Saturday and 9am-7pm Sunday**
- **EdChat is available 9:30 am – 4:15pm, Monday through Friday**
- **EdHelp queries are answered during working hours (Monday-Friday, 9am – 10pm, Saturday 9am-5pm, Sunday 9am-7pm)**
- **Online information available 24/7**

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 new service does have the potential to impact on all 9 protected characteristics as the Edweb page is available around the world and majority of students will use the UniDesk portal. It has the potential to affect both the staff and the students using it. There is the need to consider the online element of the website and portal and the physical aspect of the helpdesks.

All content added to the website and portal must not discriminate against any of the protected characteristics. Any content that is found to discriminate against any of the protected characteristics would result in severe disciplinary action. The University vision is a continuing commitment to equality and diversity for both students and staff. The University has a single equality strategy to ensure that equality and diversity are guiding principles in our pursuit of academic excellence.

Staff will be made aware of the issue of unconscious bias and asked to complete mandatory online courses on Equality and Diversity and Unconscious Bias, and are offered more detailed training such as Disability Awareness training. The branding and communication materials have been considered from an accessibility point of view but also from the angle of trying to make them as inclusive as possible. The increasing offering of more services online may make the service more accessible for some disabled users, those with caring/childcare responsibilities and those who observe times of religious observance as it allows greater freedom in terms of time, as more services are provided as self-service 24/7 and can be accessed remotely without travelling to a specific location.

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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.

There is a potential impact on Race as the services online and in person will only be provided in English but as this is the main teaching language of the University we do not believe this should create any disadvantage. To assist with this and for accessibility reasons information will be provided in plain English.

With regards to disability the **EdWeb website** and **UniDesk platform** have been tested for accessibility in line with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1 AA standard and an accessibility statement added in line with The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018. As per the Equality Act 2010 and these regulations, information can be requested and will be provided free of charge in alternative formats. We aim to make the website and the portal as accessible as possible for disabled users, including compatibility with assistive technologies such as screen readers etc.

In terms of the physical helpdesks, both have lowered counter sections on both sides and counter induction loops. They are both on the ground floor of buildings offering level access and egress, both buildings have accessible toilets - with a mixture of left and right hand side transfer. Chairs can be provided if a queue should develop for any individual who may find it difficult to stand.

Regarding pregnancy, maternity and age, access is available for those with pushchairs/prams and baby changing facilities are provided within the publicly accessible ground floor café toilets. However, there is a policy about children accessing the library which has it's own EqIA. **Main Library Access Policy for Users with Children EqIA**. This policy allows users accompanied by children under the age of 16 for the purposes of making an enquiry, borrowing/dropping off a book, or for a pre-arranged appointment, normally a maximum stay of 30 minutes. The revised policy also allows users accompanied by children with prearranged appointments with University staff based in the Library to visit for in excess of 30 minutes. Users has also been extended to cover any visitors to the library, not just staff and students.

To access the services in the Murray and Main Library students need to have photographic ID – normally their matriculation card. There is a potential impact on individuals from specific religions whose religion prohibits the taking of personal photos. Here, the issue would have arisen before outwith the context of accessing EdHelp and would be referred to a senior staff. There may also be an issue for those users who are in the process of gender reassignment who may not have photographic ID that is of a good current likeness and/or will include the individual's previous name. In a similar manner users of a particular religion and belief may require to cover the heads/faces and therefore not be recognisable by photo ID. Staff will be required to have training in how to handle such situations in a sensitive manner.

There are gender neutral toilets in the buildings and sanitary waste provision is available in both male and female toilets to try to ensure no disadvantage to someone undergoing or who has undergone gender reassignment.

Students will gain access to the service via their EASE credentials, which means when they log an enquiry, their name and email will be pulled through from their University credentials. EdHelp staff have access to EUCLID and this has been approved within a Data Protection

Impact Assessment. Staff are trained in how to deal with students in distress and there will be space within the Main Library for staff to take distressed students. EdHelp staff are trained to ensure they maintain confidentiality and specific areas of EUCLID such as a disabled student's learning profile are not visible. EUCLID does include information on a student's age and gender and information on their marital status may be available via their emergency contacts. Staff will have to use this information in an appropriate manner and any discriminate actions taken on the basis of this information would meet with disciplinary action. Staff will also have to attend training on unconscious bias so they are aware of any potential unconscious bias.

When submitting an enquiry, students have to detail what their enquiry is about.

Staff will be required to attend training which covers a wide range of issues including: disability awareness training, dealing with distressed students, responding to disclosures of sexual violence, unconscious bias etc. Staff have access to and will be familiar with the University guidance on dealing with distressed students.

Update 2024:
The extension of EdHelp to all site libraries enables more students to access the service at a location that is close to their normal site of study or their accommodation.

The Murray Library helpdesk is on the first floor. Lifts are available in the Nucleus building for access to the library. Disabled toilets are available on the first floor. An emergency lift is available within the library. Access to physical helpdesks at site libraries varies. Full information on access, helpdesk services, accessible toilets, IT services, and study rooms is available at [Individual library information leaflets | The University of Edinburgh](#). Services provided at each site to assist disabled users include: coloured acetates, portable desk lamps, A4 page magnifier, alternative formats of library documents, library trolley, extended borrowing, and book collection service.

The policy applies to all site libraries as well as the Main Library. In 2023 the Main Library introduced a Carer & Child room for use by students, staff and visitors who need to bring children under 16 with them to the library.

Per the Period Products Act (Scotland), period products are provided free of charge in toilets.

As part of the extension of the EdHelp service to all site libraries, site library staff have been given additional training in resolving EdHelp queries.

The paragraph regarding photographic identification applies to all site libraries. All staff have been given training in handling sensitive situations, confidentiality and students in distress.

As a result of this expansion staff have not been asked to work extra hours or move to different locations. Additional training has been provided to all staff.

The [EdWeb website](#) and [UniDesk platform](#) have been tested for accessibility in line with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.2 AA standard and an accessibility statement added in line with The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018.

Add notes against the following applicable statements:

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

Following the results of the National Student Survey (NSS) in 2018, ongoing feedback from students and a clear understanding that we need to improve students' experience at the University of Edinburgh, the Student Experience Action Plan was developed. One aspect of this plan is the introduction of student hubs (EdHelp), which allow students to access, in a single place, transactional University services not available within schools. The website and application have been tested in line with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1 AA standard and a full accessibility statement added to both services inline with The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018.

We have consulted with the Information Services Disability Information Team and the Student Disability Service, the Chaplaincy, International Office, The Student's Association, the Staff Disability Network and the Staff Pride Network in order to try to gain representation from across the various protected characteristics.

This is driven by one of the University's Strategic Priorities:

Building a People-focused culture, which cherishes students, staff, alumni & friends and nurtures a sense of community, efficiency and openness.

UPDATE 2024:
Updated EqIA has been reviewed by the Disability and Learning Support Service and EUSA.

The website and application have been tested in line with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.2 AA standard and a full accessibility statement added to both services inline with The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018.

- 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 have been put in place for disabled users (staff and students) as required. These include hearing induction loops and seating available when there are queues. Any information online/at the physical hub is available in alternative formats upon request.

Update 2024 – at this stage we believe we have sufficient evidence to proceed.

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

The ability to access clear information online and increased self-service mean it is not a necessity to have to travel to a physical location to access some services. The introduction of EdHelp to more sites means that an in-person service is available in a wider variety of locations. This means that it may be more accessible to those with caring/parental responsibilities and individuals with certain disabilities as well as to those who observe times of religious observance by enabling them to access assistance at a closer location or remotely, but also being able to access information via the self-service provision at whatever time they wish.

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

Update 2024:
Extension to all site libraries will enable more students to access support at a location closer to their main site of study or accommodation, reducing travel time and allowing access at a site with which they may already be familiar. This may be of benefit to a number of students including disabled students and those with caring responsibilities

- 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 have engaged with students in the process to date and will continue to do so and 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 Student Disability Service, The Chaplaincy, The International Office and The Student's Association and any other relevant bodies or groups. We hope this demonstrates that we take our duty to be as inclusive as possible very seriously.

Update 2024:
We hope that extending the service will have a positive impact in particular on disabled students and those with caring responsibilities, and that this will foster good relations with these students.

- 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 it is not proposed there would be a cost to any of the EdHelp services. Students and staff have free 24 hours access to IT facilities so there should be no disadvantage for those on low incomes as they can still access the virtual EdHelp service and staff will be provided free of charge with everything needed to conduct their role. However we acknowledge that during the COVID lock down University Buildings have not been open and students may not have access to IT facilities in their own house. They can still access help and services by phoning the IS Helpline.

Update 2024:
Expansion of EdHelp to site libraries means that shorter travel may be required to access services. EdHelp also provides a service to provide laptops and internet access to students who may not otherwise be able to afford them, allowing students to access online services. They can also access help and services by phoning the IS Helpline. All sites are now open on a normal schedule.

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

The service will have its own brand which has been approved to be accessible. 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 2.1 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.

UPDATE 2024: Information can be requested and will be provided free of charge in alternative formats. To date we have received no requests for information in alternative formats.

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

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

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 Student Disability Service, The Chaplaincy, The International Office and The Student's Association and any other relevant bodies or groups.

Update 2024:
We are continuing to review feedback from users. Any feedback related to an equality issue is flagged and acted on accordingly. Where appropriate we will seek input from the Disability and Learning Support Service, Staff Disability Office, The Chaplaincy, The International Office and The Student's Association and any other relevant bodies or groups. In the Customer Service Excellence (CSE) Accreditation review in November 2023 the EdHelp service successfully passed accreditation and was awarded additional points for excellence in sections relating to making positive changes as a result of customer feedback, staff friendliness and understanding of customer needs, and monitoring of performance targets.

- 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.

Update 2024 – 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.

Update 2024:

Option 1: No change required – the assessment is that the policy/practice is/will be robust. For the reasons detailed above

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).

- **Make staff aware of the need to make reasonable adjustments and to provide materials in alternative formats upon request**

- **Review all feedback for any comments positive or negative related to any of the 9 protected characteristics**
- **Ensure plans for onsite services are as accessible as possible for disabled users and do not result in any form of prohibited conduct against any of the nine protected characteristics.**
- **Ensure all staff are appropriately trained to sensitively respond to the range of issues which may be raised via EdHelp**

Update 2024 – we will continue to do all of the above and act accordingly

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

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)): **Catriona Cairns, Design Lead, User Services Division, Information Services Group**

Accepted by (name): **Gosia Such, Director of User Services Directorate (USD), USD Directors Office, Information Services Group**
[This will normally be the person responsible for the policy/practice named above. If not, specify job-title/role.]

Date: 07.06.2020

UPDATE

EqIA undertaken by (name(s) and job title(s)): **Brenda Welch, EdHelp Service Delivery Manager, User Services Division, 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: **31.05.2024**

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