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):

Text Anywhere Text Message System
A central text messaging system which enables SMS messages to be sent to prospective students, students, staff and others. It replaces the existing ConnectTxt system which is being withdrawn by the vendor. All staff of the University are entitled to use the SMS text messaging system. Students may also do so but require the authorisation of the lecturer or supervisor. Use cases include, but are not limited to:
- **communications with prospective students and offer holders**
- **contacting students for student support purposes**
- **appointment reminders**
- **fee arrears reminders**
- **emergency business continuity messages and campus status alerts.**

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: **Stratos Filalithis**

Job title: **Head of Website and Communication Technologies**

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

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
- Disability
- race (including ethnicity and nationality)
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation
- gender reassignment
- pregnancy and maternity
- marriage or civil partnership[1]

Add notes against the following applicable statements:

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

This change has the potential to impact on all students, staff and others and therefore could potentially affect all protected characteristics. However, as users can choose which format in which they wish to receive communication, no users should be disadvantaged as users can chose the system that is most appropriate for their needs.

For instance some users on low incomes may not have access to a mobile phone and will prefer communication by letter or email which they can access on a University machine. Some disabled users may not be able to access a text message on their phone even with assistive software and so receiving the message by email etc may be preferable. For others being able to receive the message by phone may be more convenient for individuals with caring/parental responsibilities, those who adhere to times of specific religious observance and some disabled users.

The text message system is just one tool which the University uses to communicate with users. The variety of mediums ensure flexibility to allow the University to best meet the needs of all users. A brief limited survey of ten users was conducted which highlighted no issues positive or negative related to any of the nine protected characteristics.

Information Services has no control over the content of the messages sent over the SMS message system but if any messages were found to contain offensive or negative/discriminatory comments then the individual would be subject to the University's disciplinary procedures.

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

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

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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.

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

We do not envisage that application of this change will lead to any form of prohibited conduct for the reasons discussed in this document.

Due consideration will be given to each of the protected characteristics as mentioned throughout the document. All users are able to state their preferences for receiving communications and so will all receive the same information in the medium of their choice. If we have any requests for reasonable adjustments we will ensure these are put in place in a timely fashion.

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

By replacing the SMS message service and ensuring that users can still receive communications via their mobile phones if they wish we continue to offer a variety of mediums by which users can be contacted, ensuring flexibility and therefore potential offering benefits to a variety of protected characteristics.

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

By demonstrating that Equality and Diversity issues have been considered as part of this change, it is hoped this will raise the awareness and profile of such considerations and demonstrate the University's commitment to Equality and Diversity.

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

We do not believe this policy will create barriers for any other groups. We recognise that not all users and particularly those on lower incomes may not have access to mobile phones, however as users are allowed to state their preference for mode of communication and the fact the information can be communicated in another format we do not believe this will cause any disadvantage.

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

End users should notice no change to the service as we are just changing the text system method. If users wished any communication or information about the change we would provide this information and it would be made available in alternative formats free of charge for disabled users on request. Information about the service is provided on the University website which is subject to the University Website Accessibility Policy which is based on the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1 AA standards including accessibility with assistive technology.

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

We have consulted with the Disability Information Team in Information Services and will continue to do so if any new issues arise or changes to the system are made. We will monitor all user feedback for any comments positive or negative related to any of the nine protected characteristics.

- 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:

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

No impact expected from applying the new practice other than the issues discussed 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.

Based on the answers given 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).

The practice will be monitored and reviewed, and equality groups consulted if any specific equality related issues arise. All comments will be reviewed for any feedback related to any of the nine protected characteristics and acted on accordingly.

- **We will review feedback for any positive or negative impact related to any of the nine protected characteristics.**
- **Staff delivering the service will be reminded of the need to make reasonable adjustments and the need to provide information in alternative formats upon request**

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

The practice will next be reviewed if there is any feedback positive or negative regarding any of protected characteristics or if there are any significant changes to the system.

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)): **Mary Elder, Portal Services Service Manager, Learning and Teaching and Web Division, Information Services Group**

Accepted by (name): **Stratos Filalithis, Head of Website and Communication Technologies, Learning and Teaching and Web Division, Information Services Group**

[This will normally be the person responsible for the policy/practice named above. If not, specify job-title/role.]

Date:**24ʳᵈ June 2020**

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