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): Ethics Tool

The University currently has no centralised mechanism for the management of ethical approval for research projects. IS project RIS005 aims to procure, configure and roll out a suitable solution across the University.

The system is a piece of software which itself makes no automated judgements regarding ethical approval. It allows principal investigators to apply for ethical approval for their projects and for that approval to be passed through a suitable workflow so it can be signed off by appropriate members of staff.

There is an increasing requirement in this area for reporting and whilst there's no statutory reporting requirement we are anticipating increased requirements to be able to report on ethical approval at the University level for internal and external audiences.

The business owner of the service will be Lorna Thomson, Director of Research Support Office
The service owner is Damon Querry, Library Research Support, Library & University Collections

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

- Proposed new policy/practice - **YES**

C. Person responsible for the policy area or practice:

Name: Lorna Thomson

Job title: Director of Research Support Office

School/service/unit: Research Support Office

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

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 system has the potential to affect large numbers of staff and students across the entire University. It is envisaged all staff and student projects requiring ethical approval will require some interaction with this system. It is envisaged that ethical approval processes will be completed by the principal investigator (regardless of whether they are a staff member or student). Therefore all 9 protected characteristics have the potential to be impacted.

  Due to the nature of the interactions with the system the protected characteristics most likely to be impacted are disability and race (nationality).

  Disabled users will require the system to be accessible to WCAG v2 AA Standard including compatibility with assistive technologies. The procurement has included questions on the accessibility of the system which have been evaluated by the Information Services Disability Information Officer and follow up hands on testing has been conducted. If for any reason a disabled member of staff or student was unable to use the system due to a reason related to their disability and we were unable to rectify this we would ensure reasonable adjustments were in place such as physical assistance to complete the form or a paper form etc.

  In terms of race (nationality) the system will present information in English as this is the main teaching language of the University. We do not envisage that this should create any disadvantage.

  We do not envisage that the database will record any demographics about the individual such as gender, race etc other than name. All staff are encourage to undertake unconscious bias training to prevent any unintentional unconscious bias based on an individual's name.

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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.

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

  We feel we have sufficient information to properly assess the policy.

- 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 new system will lead to any form of prohibited conduct. The procured system will have to meet certain minimum requirements set out in the invitation to tender document by Information Services in relation to accessibility needs. Reasonable adjustments as mentioned above will be put in place where required.

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

  By having one accessible system it is hoped that this may make the process more accessible to disabled staff and students.

  It is possible the system may also be able to increase opportunities and highlight areas where there is under-representation from certain cohorts of staff and students. This would require reporting across databases as very limited demographic information will be held by this system. If the decision to do this cross referencing across databases clear procedures and regulations would be put in place to ensure this was not used for any form of prohibited conduct.

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

  Greater visibility of ethical approval data could enable better relationships to be formed by professional services in supporting the academic work of the University. It is hoped that by conducting this EqIA and considering the various impacts positive and negative and then acting accordingly that this will show how seriously IS and the University takes issues of Equality and Diversity.

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

  The proposed system introduction should not create any barriers for any other groups. All staff and students have access to free 24 hour IT facilities so there should be no disadvantage to low income groups.

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

  Communications regarding the new system will be led by the Research Ethics and Integrity Review Group (REIRG). Documentation will be published as part of the University's content management system – EdWeb – which has been developed to ensure accessibility. This and any training documentation which may be made available – either by the University or by the supplier – then, in line with our legal requirements, these will be made available in alternative formats upon request, free of charge.

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

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

   The policy/practice, which is the focus of the assessment, will be owned by REIRG. The Institute for Academic Development, who are part of REIRG, will take an active interest in the monitoring of this policy/practice. Once procured the business owners will be REIRG and the system owners Research Information Systems. All feedback will be monitored for any positive or negative impacts on any of the 9 protected characteristics. It is intended there will a post-implementation review.

- 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:

   During implementation phase discussions will be required with various areas of the business to customise workflows accordingly and engage end users in training. Any reasonable adjustments required for training or ongoing use of the system will be put in place. Training will take place on different days and times to allow for those with caring/parental responsibilities and those with specific times of religious observance.

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 discussed 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).

   Staff will be made aware of the need to provide reasonable adjustments and documents in alternative formats upon request.

   The IS Disability Information Officer will review all the suppliers responses as part of the procurement and test the systems hands on. Work will be ongoing with the successful supplier to ensure the system is as accessible as possible at launch.

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

   We will review the EqIA whenever the policy is updated or when we receive any positive or negative feedback related to any of the 9 protected characteristics.

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)): **Damon Querry, Research Information Systems Manager, Research Information Systems, Library Research Support, Library & University Collections, Information Services**

Accepted by (name): **Dr Lorna Thomson, Director, Research Support Office**

Date: **14/9/18**

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