



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): Piloting of group sessions for PhD students with long term enduring Mental Health conditions that affect their studies.

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

- Proposed new policy/practice - Yes
- Proposed change to an existing policy/practice
- Undertaking a review of an existing policy/practice – Yes: the Student Disability Service (SDS) has identified a need to offer an alternative form of support to PhD students with long-term enduring health problems, in addition to their regular 1:1 sessions with a Specialist Mentor currently provided.
- Other (please state): Commencement of pilot of new practice of student support for students studying at PhD level.

C. Person responsible for the policy area or practice:

Name: Martin Judd

Job title: Assistant Director: Student Support

School/service/unit: Student Disability Service

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
- is relevant to the promotion of equality (in terms of the Public Sector Equality Duty 'needs' as set out in the Policy and Guidance)?
- It is one which interested parties could reasonably expect the University to have carried out an EqIA?

E. Equality Groups

To which equality groups is the policy/practice relevant and why? (add notes against the following applicable equality group/s)

- age – Students are eligible for this support regardless of their age.
- disability – Offering of group support sessions for PhD students presenting with long-term diagnosable mental health conditions.

- race (including ethnicity and nationality) - Students are eligible for this support regardless of their race. The sessions will be conducted in English, but as this is the primary teaching language of the University, this will not lead to disadvantage.
- religion or belief - Students are eligible for this support regardless of their religion or belief
- sex - Students are eligible for this support regardless of their sex
- sexual orientation - Students are eligible for this support regardless of their sexual orientation
- gender reassignment - Students are eligible for this support regardless of their gender
- pregnancy and maternity – the sessions will be run at different times offering some flexibility and enabling those with young children or caring responsibilities to have options to attend. Sessions will also be run remotely in the first tranche of students.
- marriage or civil partnership¹ - there is no impact on marriage or civil partnership status

Add notes against the following applicable statements:

On any available information about the needs of relevant equality groups: At present SDS is able to provide 1:1 sessions with a Mental Health Mentor for PhD students with long-term enduring mental health conditions that affect their studies. These sessions are recommended as a result of a formal assessment being carried out with the student and the provision of medical evidence which documents the student's needs. Funding for such provision is available to a significant number of UK students via their local funding body (i.e. SFE, SAAS etc.). However, this funding only provides for a very specific type of support – regular 1:1 sessions with a specialist Mental Health Mentor. In order to ensure consistency of support, regardless of funding, this has been the model for support adopted for all students. In recent years there has been a significant increase in the numbers of PhD students seeking and needing support for Mental Health problems. Consequently, the service is considering alternative means to supplement the 1:1 provision that will continue to remain in place. This pilot is being trialled to ascertain whether group sessions can be a positive intervention for PhD students. It is being offered only to those PhD students who are currently waiting for 1:1 support. The format of the sessions will be tailored to PhD students presently attending mentoring support with all sessions being delivered by a member of SDS's Specialist Mental Health Mentor Team.

- Any gaps in evidence/insufficient information to properly assess the policy, and how this be will be addressed: N/A
- If application of this policy/practice leads to discrimination (direct or indirect), harassment, victimisation, less favourable treatment for particular equality groups: The PhD students being offered this new provision are made aware that it will not affect their present 1:1 support and that these group sessions are an additional provision being made available to them. Participation in this pilot is entirely voluntary.

If the policy/practice contributes to advancing equality of opportunity² This pilot is intended to supplement the support that is already available to PhD students with Mental Health issues. In doing so, it is hoped that those PhD students will have an opportunity to share common experiences in a safe and supportive space. If there is an opportunity in applying this policy/practice to foster good relations: In making this additional support option available to PhD students Specialist Mentor, it is hoped that these students will recognise the positive steps being taken by SDS and the University to make additional support available to them.

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.

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? NA
- How the communication of the policy/practice is made accessible to all groups, if relevant? As the pilot is only available to those PhD students accessing 1:1 Specialist Mentor Support, wider communication is not currently required or appropriate.
- How equality groups or communities are involved in the development, review and/or monitoring of the policy or practice? As well as receiving feedback directly from student participants, all students who attend any of the Group Sessions will be asked to complete an evaluation of the sessions. All feedback will be analysed and will inform future development of the initiative.
- 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: NA

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. The introduction of an additional provision for PhD students followed by an evaluation of this provision ensures a robust practice.

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). An anonymous evaluation of the sessions will be conducted at the conclusion of a 3 months time period
2. When will the policy/practice next be reviewed? April 2021

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)):

Accepted by (name): Paddy Corscadden

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

Date: 07/01/2021

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