



Equality Impact Assessment Template

Before carrying out EqlA, you should familiarise yourself with the University's EqlA Policy Statement and Guidance and Checklist Notes, and undertake our online training on Equality and Diversity and EqlA. These, along with further information and resources, are available at www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/equality-diversity/impact-assessment

EqlA 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 Responsible Investment Policy sets out how the University will integrate Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) issues into the management of its investments, both treasury and endowment fund. It also sets out the principles and values that inform the University's approach to responsible investment, the areas where we have exclusions and will not invest, and our approach to social investments. The Responsible Investment policy sets the context on ethical management of University investments, which are required to be followed by treasury management and the Investment Committee in the direct management of investments.

B. Reason for Equality Impact Assessment (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: Dave Gorman

Job title: Director of Social Responsibility and Sustainability

School/service/unit: Department for Social Responsibility and Sustainability

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)?
- It is one which interested parties could reasonably expect the University to have carried out an EqlA?

E. Equality Groups

Section E.1: Evidence

- **What evidence has been used to identify the equality impacts of the policy or practice?**

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

The development, review, and monitoring of this policy is managed through engagement with the Investment Committee, the University Executive, Policy and Resources Committee and the University Court, as well as the ESG Advisory Group.

In May 2024, as part of the Responsible Investment Policy review, two Short-life working Groups were established to inform the development of the policy:

- The Short-Life Working Group on Definition of Armaments for Investments
- The Short-Life Working Group on Investment Approaches in the International Context

Both Groups produced summary reports of their discussions, which are publicly accessible via the webpage linked below.

From May to September 2024, all University students and staff were invited to share their views on proposed changes to the University's Responsible Investment Policy in an anonymous survey. Invitations to respond to the survey were sent to student societies and Staff Equality Networks for awareness and to enable the coordination of group responses.

Independent researchers analysed the 1,928 survey responses in Semester 1, 2024/25.

Although the opinions expressed in the survey indicated an unfamiliarity among students and staff of the progress made since the publication of the previous policy, the policy review considered all insights and sought to address underlying concerns and expectations driving opinions.

[Reviewing our Responsible Investment Policy](#)

Section E.2: Impact

- **Does the policy or practice have any identified negative impacts upon any protected characteristic groups? How will these negative impacts be mitigated?**
- **What opportunities for positive impact have been identified? Opportunities to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, or foster good relations between groups who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.**

The equality impacts of the policy have been assessed by reviewing the following sources of evidence:

- Impact reports from the University's social investment partners, which are governed by this policy
 - [Socially Positive Investments](#)
- The University's Climate Strategy: Zero by 2040
 - [Zero by 2040](#)
- The findings of the University's Responsible Investment Policy Review, including reports from short-life working groups and consultation survey
 - [Reviewing our Responsible Investment Policy](#)

There are three aspects to Responsible Investment Policy that directly address equality impacts and social injustice:

- The exclusions
- Integration of climate and biodiversity in investment approach
- Socially positive investments

E.2.1: The Exclusions

The Responsible Investment Policy is used for mitigating potential negative impacts of University investments through the use of exclusions. Exclusions are areas of activity that the University chooses not to invest in and are chosen because they are areas where the University has taken a view that investment would not be in line with its values and would cause unacceptable societal or environmental harms. The three exclusions chosen are fossil fuels, tobacco and controversial weapons.

Often those most harmed by the indiscriminate use of so-called controversial weapons are children, women and vulnerable groups so this exclusion makes a contribution to avoiding harm to those groups.

The exclusion for tobacco is due to the fact that as a world leading medical research and teaching University, investment in tobacco is not in line with University values to promote health.

Finally, climate change will affect the most vulnerable including women and children and people in the global south. This exclusion makes a contribution to avoiding harm to those groups from 'climate intensive' investments.

E.2.2: Integration of climate and biodiversity in investment approach

The Responsible Investment Policy is a vehicle for mitigating the negative impacts of climate change and damage to biodiversity and nature. The new policy makes a commitment to aim to align to a 1.5°C climate change pathway in line with climate science which, as noted above, alleviates harm to vulnerable groups.

The new policy will also explore how nature and biodiversity can be embedded into investments as harm to nature often endangers the most disadvantaged groups across society:

- Impacts on 'Sex' - according to the UN, 'the climate crisis is not "gender neutral". Women and girls experience the greatest impacts of climate change, which amplifies existing gender inequalities and poses unique threats to their livelihoods, health, and safety.'
 - [How Gender Inequality and Climate Change are interconnected \[UN Women\]](#)
- Impacts on 'Race' - many of the countries that are the least responsible for climate change will increasingly experience the worst impacts on it – countries in the 'Global South', in Africa, Asia, and South America.
 - [Climate Equality: A planet for the 99% \[Oxfam\]](#)

In addition to addressing gender and racial inequalities, the Policy also considers the following United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which have implications for wider economies and communities, and protected groups within these.

- SDG 13 Climate Action: By prioritising investment in low carbon technologies and renewable energy, as well as companies committed to net zero emissions targets, the University will be supporting the wider transition to a net zero economy. The Financial Stability Board (FSB) has already identified climate change as a potential systemic risk to economic growth, via stranded assets (transition risk) and physical damage to assets and infrastructure (physical risk).
- SDG 14 and 15 Life Below Water, Life on Land: The financial sector drives nature loss through the activities it lends to, insures and invests in. It is also exposed to financial risks from short and long-term nature loss. Redirecting investment away from nature damaging activities to those that enhance nature could put biodiversity on a path to recovery by 2050. Proposed changes to the Policy involve exploring

frameworks like the Taskforce for Nature-related Financial Disclosures (TNFD) in order to map the University's investment impact on nature.

[United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#)
[Taskforce for Nature-related Financial Disclosures](#)
[Financial Stability Board](#)

E.2.3: Socially Positive Investments

The Responsible Investment Policy is also a vehicle for delivering positive impacts to a range of protected characteristic groups through Socially Positive Investments.

The Policy directly supports SDG 1, No Poverty and SDG 10, Reduced Inequalities through Social Investment, as well as SDG 5, Gender Equality by supporting female and diverse-led ventures.

Examples of the positive impacts delivered through the Social Investment Fund include:

- Ada Ventures: Their 'Inclusive Alpha' focus creates opportunities for groups who are underrepresented or underserved in the venture capital space, such as women, people from a minority ethnic background, and disabled people.
 - [Ada Ventures](#)
- Big Issue Invest: Power Up Scotland and the Growth Impact Fund
 - Power Up Scotland invests in Scottish ventures such as Hey Girls, which tackles period poverty
 - [Power Up Scotland: meet the recipients](#)
 - The Growth Impact Fund aims to tackle inequality and promote racial justice by supporting diverse and minority founders and entrepreneurs historically locked out of social investment.
- Giant Ventures: Focused on climate and health
 - [Giant Ventures](#)
- Social and Sustainable Capital: Their social housing fund providing additional housing provision for those affected by homelessness.
 - [Social and Sustainable Capital](#)
- Prosper Social Finance: The UK's first student-led Socially Responsible Investment Fund enables University of Edinburgh students to practice real-world investing. This social enterprise re-directs its profit to Invisible Cities, an Edinburgh-based charity supporting homeless people to become tour-guides in the city.
 - [Prosper Social Finance](#)

[Socially Positive Investment](#)

[Investing for Good - a Social Enterprise and Social Investment Strategy for the University of Edinburgh - December 2019](#)

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.

~~**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 EqlA and how the policy or practice will be monitored in relation to its equality impact (or note where this is specified above).

The ESG Advisory Group will continue to oversee the Social Investment Fund on behalf of the University Executive.

We will commence active reporting on a new social impact investment framework from 2025.

The Investment Committee commenced active annual monitoring of a wide range of climate change metrics in 2024. Once further work on embedding nature and social impacts is completed in 2025-27, then further consideration will be given to what further active monitoring is required.

All endowment fund managers are required to adhere to the Principles for Responsible (PRI) guidelines on the integration of ESG issues into investment management.

[Principles for Responsible Investment](#)

The University has agreed to establish a Responsible Investment Advisory Group later in 2025 that will, inter alia, oversee the implementation of the new policy including considering questions of human rights.

[Responsible Investment Advisory Group](#)

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

Following approval in 2025, further work will be undertaken in a limited number of areas before the policy is further updated in 2026-27. The policy will then be reviewed in 2030.

[Reviewing our Responsible Investment Policy](#)

H. Publication of EqlA

Can this EqlA be published in full, now? **Yes**

~~If No – please specify when it may be published or indicate restrictions that apply:~~

I. Sign-off

EqlA undertaken by (name(s) and job title(s)):

Dave Gorman

Director of Social Responsibility and Sustainability

Bethany Parsons

CSG EDI Manager

Cat Rossiter

SRS Communications Manager

Accepted by: Dave Gorman
Director of Social Responsibility and Sustainability
20/05/2025

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