THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Equality Impact Assessment – Student Support

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):

Student Support
The University is committed to providing its students with effective academic guidance and wellbeing support. The aim is to ensure that students have access to a support ecosystem of high quality and consistent support that meets their needs.

Student support was reviewed in 2019, and a new student support offering implemented in phases for academic years 2022/23 and academic year 2023/24, replacing the previous Personal Tutor-led model. That support is described in the Student Support Framework

It covers the support offering to ensure all taught students (undergraduate and postgraduate) have access to quality academic guidance and wellbeing support within each School/Deanery comprising four interrelated elements:

- Academic Cohort Leadership,
- Professional Services Student Experience Teams,
- Teaching Teams, and
- Peer Support

It also covers:

- Leadership and governance responsibilities
- Evaluation and monitoring of the delivery of support
- Information about key roles within student support

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: Lucy Evans

Job title: Deputy Secretary Students

School/service/unit: University Secretary's Group

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)

All nine of the protected characteristics will be discussed with any comments and impacts noted (see below) whilst recognising intersectionality and crossover between protected characteristics. In general, the student support model promotes inclusion, dignity and respect and has a zero-tolerance approach to any form of discrimination. To achieve this, its implementation includes
- Engagement with students, staff and their representatives to ensure detailed understanding of the support needs of different groups, and ensure that the model of student support implemented meets those needs
- Developing and delivering or sourcing high quality training and development activities for use with student support staff
- Using inclusive language, imagery and discourse in communication with students and staff

Student support will, where practical, be staffed by a qualified and diverse group of professional services staff in its student support and wellbeing roles, with the aim of ensuring visible diversity in the University's student support functions. The University recognises it has a diverse range of students, and professional services staff will be committed to understanding any identified support needs of those students, and developing a service that is responsive to those needs.

Student support impacts all academic staff and students and therefore has the potential to impact all 9 protected characteristics. The University does not believe that delivery of student support will result in any form of prohibited conduct. Implementation of the student support available considered unconscious bias, and includes training in understanding, and preventing, unconscious bias, in both recruitment process and induction of professional services staff. Training and guidance for staff delivering student support will acknowledge the diversity of those students, to best cater for their needs. Consideration of protected characteristics has been included in development of training plans and materials.

Age
The model as implemented does not limit or prejudice any student or staff member based on their age. The student support offering covers all taught students, irrespective of their age, at the University of Edinburgh. Age is not a factor in the recruitment of student support roles, or in how support is provided to individual students. Additionally, the Student Wellbeing Service is available to Post Graduate Research students, who will continue to receive academic and pastoral support from their Supervisors. Students with caring responsibilities will be able to attend sessions with Wellbeing Advisers or Student Advisers, e.g. accompanied by their child/ren.

Disability
The model as implemented does not limit or prejudice any student or staff member based on any disability. The model is committed to being accessible and available to all disabled students and staff. Appropriate ease of access to support disabled students is ensured by adequately trained resources in each School that can act as a first line of enquiry, choice for online and physical access, and effective integration of support teams with the student Disability and Learning Support Service.

Edinburgh University Students' Association (EUSA) also have a Disabled Students Officer who represents all self-identifying disabled students, including those with physical disabilities, experiences of mental illness, chronic health conditions, and specific learning differences. Implementation of the

student support offering listened to the needs of disabled students, where identified through the EUSA representatives on the Student Support Project Board, and of staff, and their representatives, via the Staff Disability Network.

Further information is available on University website (EdWeb) sites that provide staff and students with applicable details. EdWeb is governed by a [Website Accessibility Policy](#), which is designed to be accessible as far as possible in line with the [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 AA standard](#), including compatibility with assistive technology such as voice recognition software, screen readers or magnification software. In particular, EdWeb holds an [Accessibility Statement](#), as per The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018.

Reasonable adjustments will be put in place where necessary, for both staff and students such as the location of appointments to other accessible locations, having meetings online etc

Race (including ethnicity and nationality)
The University is committed to taking action against racism in its various forms, wishes to establish an ethos and culture that promotes inclusion, dignity and respect and has a zero-tolerance approach to any form of discrimination. The implementation of the student support offering considered the support needs of different groups of students, including Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) students, and ensured that staff are appropriately trained in those needs when they provide support to students.

It is noted that support will be provided in English, which is mitigated by the fact that the main teaching language of the University is English, and has [set English-language requirements](#) for all students in order to study at the University. There is a potential positive effect in that by offering student support practices and processes online, users can access the information and subsequently use browser translation tools to convert into their preferred language.

Religion or Belief
The model as implemented does not limit or prejudice any student or staff member based on their religion or beliefs. As part of efforts to establish an ethos and culture that promotes inclusion, dignity and respect within the new student support model, professional services staff are committed to understanding any identified support needs of those of different faith groups or none, and developing a service that is responsive to those needs. The model delivery included involvement of Chaplaincy to help inform that implementation. The University will look to ensure that the service and staff offering that service and enabled the flexibility to ensure they can reserve times of religious observance

Sex
The model as implemented does not limit or prejudice any student or staff member based on their sex. During its design and implementation, the EUSA Women's Officer and the Gender Equality Sub-Committee were consulted, via the EDI Committee. Consideration of how School/Deanery-based support teams can best support the University drive to reduce incidences of gender-based violence, primarily against women, and to support survivors of assault better, are included in relevant plans and materials. The model implementation did not require any changes to systems to capture any additional information on sex, gender or sexual orientation. No additional personal information other than that held by central records will be needed to access this service

Sexual Orientation
The support offered to students does not limit or prejudice any student or staff member based on their sexual orientation. During design and implementation of support offering, the Staff Pride Network and EUSA LGBT Officer were consulted, via the EDI Committee. The implementation did not require any changes to systems to capture any additional information on sex, gender or sexual orientation. We do not record any details of an individual's sexual orientation, except where that is relevant to the support being offered, volunteered by the student, and held with their consent.

Gender Reassignment
The support offered to students as implemented does not limit or prejudice any student or staff member based on whether they are undergoing, or have undertaken, gender reassignment.

During design and implementation of the support offering, the EUSA Trans/Non-Binary Officer was consulted, via the EDI Committee. Staff providing student support can access transgender awareness training, and are suggested to do so, to help them advise students on practical implications that may arise when transitioning.

The implementation of the support offering did not require any changes to systems to capture any additional information on sex, gender or sexual orientation.

Pregnancy and Maternity
The support offered to students does not limit or prejudice any student or staff member based on any pregnancy, family or child-care factors. The University will seek to facilitate access for students with dependent children when meeting with staff providing support.

Existing policies and procedures for student absence due to pregnancy, family leave and child-care have been amended to take account of roles provided within the model.

Marriage or Civil Partnership[1]

The University vision involves a continuing commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion for students, staff and the general public. The University has a single Equality Strategy to ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion are guiding principles in our pursuit of academic excellence.

Other Notes
Add notes against the following applicable statements:

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

As noted above.

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

At this stage we feel we have 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:**

The University believes that its support offering will not lead to any form of prohibited conduct. Moreover, a review of the Student Support offering will be continually undertaken, whereby all feedback, positive or negative, related to any of the nine protected characteristics will be appraised and acted on accordingly. Student Advisers, Wellbeing Advisers and other staff supporting students will have reasonable adjustments made in accordance with HR policies.

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

Recruitment of any new roles comply with HR guidance on equality and diversity. The establishment of professional services student support roles, trained in relevant equality and diversity issues, offers an excellent opportunity to advance equality of opportunity for different groups by ensuring that the student support offering is understanding of and responsive to the needs of different groups of

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

students. It is improved for students by their being supported by professional services with mandatory training of EDI-related matters.

As part of the Student Support offering, all students have access to a Wellbeing Adviser, and taught students have access to a Student Adviser.

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

By having considered impacts, positive and negative, on the nine protected characteristics via the new model, and subsequently this EqIA, the University is demonstrating its continued commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion. As part of the student support offering, enhanced peer support and cohort building (with academics acting as "Cohort Leads") are in place, which should create an environment where good relations are fostered across all communities and subcommunities within the student population.

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

The student support offering will provide benefits to all students by providing a flexible and clear way to engage with professional services staff, with both in-person and online support available to students. Staff, students and the general public can use the internet and IT facilities via free 24 / 7 access across campus, in particular the George Square Main Library. Users can access equipment necessary to engage with the service. Similar initiatives are offered at local libraries across the UK and beyond.

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

Communications are a key part of the model. Communication (EdWeb) content will aim to comply with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1 AA standards. An accessibility statement has been added to each is added in line with The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018. Any video content will have human-corrected captions. Any information provided on the support offering can be provided in alternative formats, if required, free of charge.

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

Support as provided to students will be monitored, with any feedback, positive or negative, related to any of the nine protected characteristics, being audited and responded to appropriately. In particular, should we receive any negative feedback, we will take all appropriate steps to resolve the issue and work towards updating colleagues in addition to the EqIA itself.

- **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:**

Nothing other than that stated 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 outlined above and below.

~~**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 Deputy Secretary, Students, or their delegated nominee, will be responsible for monitoring the work in relation to this EqIA in line with governance of the model as implemented, including:
     o Reviewing and responding to all feedback for any comments, positive or negative, related to any of the 9 protected characteristics, and
     o Advising staff of the need to make reasonable adjustments where appropriate, and the need to provide information in alternative formats upon request.

2. **When will the policy/practice next be reviewed?**
   The Student Support offering will be monitored on a regular basis. Any feedback positive or negative related to nine protected characteristics will be audited and responded to appropriately. Moreover, this EqIA will be updated as and when any significant changes are made, or when we receive any substantive feedback, positive or negative, related to any of the nine protected characteristics.

H. Publication of EqIA

- Can this EqIA be published in full, now? **Yes**/~~No~~

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)): Ranald Swanson, Senior Project Manager, Strategic Change

Accepted by (name): Lucy Evans, Deputy Secretary Students, University Secretary's Group; Student Support Project Board (August 2023)

Date: 23 August 2023

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