



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

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):

Library Online Fines and Fees Payments via DiscoverEd

B. Reason for Equality Impact Assessment (delete as applicable):

- **Proposed new policy/practice**

C. Person responsible for the policy area or practice:

Name: **Barry Croucher**

Job title: **Head of Help Services**

School/service/unit: **IS User Services**

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 **No**
- is relevant to the promotion of equality (in terms of the Public Sector Equality Duty 'needs' as set out in the Policy and Guidance)? **No**
- 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? (delete any that are not relevant):

- Age
- Disability
- race (including ethnicity and nationality)
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation
- gender reassignment

- pregnancy and maternity
- marriage or civil partnership¹

All of the above as detailed below.

Add notes against the following statements where applicable/relevant:

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

Currently, Library fines incurred by Library borrowers through late return of borrowed items, and Library fees (replacement cost, administration charge) incurred by Library borrowers through loss or damage of borrowed items, must be paid in cash or by credit/debit card at Library Helpdesks. Payments for fines are often of very small amounts, mainly coinage

In 2014/15 the total sum collected was £74,000 in fines/fees; £12,000 in replacement charges for lost books.

We currently have 3,338 registered disabled students (9.5% check of the student population), although we recognise that not all disabled users declare a disability. We will require the online system to be accessible to disabled users by ensuring it meets as far as possible the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines version 2 AA standard as required by the University Web Accessibility Policy and demonstrate compatibility with the main forms of assistive technology. In addition, all users will continue to be able to pay fines in person, and if required, by phone at the Main Library and Noreen & Kenneth Murray Library.

Providing the choice for Library borrowers who incur fines/fees to pay online would be of benefit to the protected characteristics of age, disability, pregnancy and maternity, by not requiring attendance at a Helpdesk and so reducing physical effort and travel costs.

Also by allowing payment at any time of the day, rather than during Helpdesk opening hours, all protected characteristics may find online payment more convenient.

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

As this is a new service, take up of the service is unknown. Usage will be monitored through the first year of operation, and any feedback relating to the protected characteristics noted and acted upon where reasonable.

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

Online payment does require an internet connection and web browser which may exclude Library borrowers from certain socio-economic groups who may not have a personal device or internet provider. It also requires a bank account and a debit or credit card accepted by the payment system used by the University (Visa, Mastercard, American Express). However, this method of payment is being provided as an additional method and existing methods of payment remain available.

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.

Also, the University provides 24 hours access to computing facilities for all enrolled students and staff so there should not be any discrimination to these users, on the basis of income, caused by online systems. Staff and students of other UK Higher Education Institutions have access to the eduroam wireless network and can access the online system provided they have a personal device.

- If the policy/practice contributes to advancing equality of opportunity²

It is possible the new service will advance equality of opportunity for protected characteristics of age, disability, pregnancy and maternity, by providing the means to pay Library fines/fees at any time from anywhere.

In addition, all protected characteristics may find online payment allows further borrowing. This is because the Library imposes a systematic block on further borrowing if a total debt of more than £10 is accrued and is unpaid. Currently, this block can only be lifted by means of paying by cash or credit/debit card during the hours of Helpdesk opening (74 hours per week in Semester in the case of the Main Library). Since the Library is open far longer (133 hours per week in Semester in the case of the Main Library) Library borrowers with debts of more than £10 are prevented from borrowing potentially for 59 hours per week. The ability to pay online means Library borrowers can pay outwith Helpdesk opening hours and so borrow more items – furthering their academic study.

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

By improving the ease with which fines can be paid and the ability to do so remotely it is hoped this will demonstrate how the university is constantly seeking to find ways to improve access for users from across the protected characteristics.

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

Online payment does require interaction with the internet and online systems (DiscoverEd and WPM Education payment provider) which may present barriers to the protected characteristics of age, disability, race. However, these online systems are designed to be accessible and usable and meet University requirements (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines version 2).

For any users who, due to a reason related to their disability, cannot use online systems, they will be able to seek assistance via University staff on campus, or by phoning or emailing the Information Services helpline.

Primary users of online fine and fee payments will be enrolled on courses at the University, where English is the teaching language, and so presenting the service in English should not create any disadvantage. In addition, we will endeavour to support any users who do not speak English in their use of the systems through the IS helpline and on campus staff support.

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

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

There is a communications plan for the launch of the new service which utilises a wide variety of electronic and print methods; also, anyone may request the information in another format or language and this will be provided where reasonable.

Although DiscoverEd and WPM Education Payment Gateway are in English, there should not be an expectation from users that the systems will be available in any other language, as the teaching language of the University is English. We will endeavour to support any users who do not speak English in their use of our systems through the IS helpline and on campus staff support.

The EqIA for the Library Management Platform (Library and University Collections) which covers DiscoverEd, published in February 2015 and updated in January 2016 finds that “We have had no issues reported regarding the system’s accessibility or any requests for assistance due to the system only being provided in English, nor has there been any negative feedback about either of these issues.”

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

The University Student Disability Service and the International Office have been informed of the development of the new service.

The Information Services Disability Information Officer has been involved in reviewing the development of the new service.

- 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:

None

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. (Delete the options that do not apply):

Option 1: No change required – the assessment is that the policy/practice is/will be robust.

Providing additional, alternative means of paying Library fines/fees extends choice and is usually beneficial. The new service will be monitored through its first year of operation, and any feedback taken into account and changes made where reasonable.

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 new system will be advertised in a variety of accessible formats and it will be highlighted that the old methods of payment will remain if the new online method is not suitable.

- all feedback about the system will be monitored for any positive or negative comments related to any of the 9 protected characteristics.

2. When will the policy/practice next be reviewed? **August 2017**

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)): **Barry Croucher, Head of Help Services**

Accepted by (name): **Bryan MacGregor, Director of User Services Division, Information Services**

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

Date: **18th July 16**

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