Equality Impact Assessment

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): Change in operations of the School of Informatics (SoI) to implement measures to control the risk of transmission of Covid-19 within **APPLETON TOWER**
B. Reason for Equality Impact Asessment *(Mark Yes against the applicable reason):* • Proposed new policy/practice • Proposed change to an existing policy/practice (changing the way the School operates its buildings and facilities to reduce the risk of transmission of Covid-19) **Yes** • Undertaking a review of an existing policy/practice • Other (please state):
C. Person responsible for the policy area or practice: Name: Professor Jane Hillston Job title: Head of School School/service/unit: School of Informatics
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** • 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 **Yes**
- Disability **Yes**
- Race (including ethnicity and nationality) **Yes**
- Religion or belief **Yes**
- Sex **Yes**
- Sexual orientation **Yes**
- Gender reassignment **Yes**
- Pregnancy and maternity **Yes**
- Marriage or civil partnership[1] **No**

Background to the Policy

On 9 August 2021 Scotland moved to Beyond Level 0 which removed many of the restrictions that had been in place to reduce the risk of transmission of Covid-19. The University of Edinburgh subsequently issued guidance to Schools on controlling the risk within our buildings and ways of working. This changes the manner in which buildings and facilities have been operating both before the pandemic (ie. March 2020) and since the building was opened and occupied in September 2020.

Terminology: This EqIA has been written with staff in; however many of the issues affect Informatics' research and taught students as well.

Where there are references to line manager and the InfHR team for staff, the appropriate contacts for taught students is their Personal Tutor or ITO (Informatics Teaching Organisation), and the appropriate contacts for research students is their Supervisor or the IGS (Informatics Graduate School).

ALL GROUPS

1. **Individuals may be uncomfortable about raising equality issues with their line manager, personal tutor or supervisor.**

   Mitigation: Concerns can be raised confidentially with Vijay Nagarajan (Director of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion), Jane Hillston (Head of School), Joy Candlish (Director of Professional Services) or:

   - For staff: with InfHR
   - For taught students: with ITO
   - For research students: with IGS.

2. **Staff may not be able to continue working from home.**

   Mitigation: Staff can return to campus either full-time or adopt a hybrid working pattern to work some of their time on campus and some from home.

3. **Individuals with protected characteristics may not want to return to campus if they are in a high risk category.**

   Mitigation: Robust, consistent operating procedures will reduce this risk and provide reassurance. See also below under clinical vulnerability for further information and procedures.

4. **For some people with protected characteristics, timing of presence in the building can be an important issue, including (but not necessarily only) age, disability and**

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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.

caring responsibilities. Furthermore, travel to and from campus using public transport may be more difficult and riskier for some individuals with protected characteristics.

Mitigation:

- For staff and research students: Building opening hours (06:30-22:00 Monday to Saturday) allow for a reduction in public transport use at peak times and line managers and supervisors are encouraged to take a flexible approach to arrival and leaving times to allow individuals to avoid these peak times.
- For taught students: Timetable should provide flexibility for students to avoid public transport at peak times. Concerns can be raised with ITO if the timetable causes issues.

5. **Clinical vulnerability to Covid-19:**
   The terms **clinically extremely vulnerable (high risk)** has been defined by NHS on the NHS website: https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/people-at-higher-risk/whos-at-higher-risk-from-coronavirus/.

   The Scottish Government has paused shielding for the people in the clinically extremely vulnerable category; these people are advised to follow the same guidance as everyone else.

   An individual planning to return to work or study on campus who is in the clinically extremely vulnerable group, should contact their GP for advice on any additional specific measures which need to be implemented and these measures should be discussed with their line manager, Personal Tutor or supervisor. The individual does not need to disclose medical information to their PT, supervisor or manager and should advise them that they are in a vulnerable group and highlight any advice received. The individual may also ask for a personal risk assessment. This applies to anyone with a protected characteristic that may increase risk such as age, sex, disability, pregnancy and maternity, or race.

   The Scottish Government has developed guidance which includes a Covid-19 Occupational Risk Assessment Tool (https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-individual-risk-assessment-for-the-workplace/). This aims to assess vulnerability and help put measures in place for return to the workplace.

   The University has produced guidance for line managers (https://www.ed.ac.uk/news/covid-19/staff/additional-guidance-for-managers/managing-staff-who-are-returning-to-work-or-campus to assist with conversations around returning to campus.

6. **An individual with protected characteristics may not be able to carry out their research because they are waiting for a risk assessment before they return to the buildings.**

   Mitigation: Risk assessments should be done in a timely manner.

AGE

7. **Older individuals**: **Restricted access to the building and the use of rotas may occasionally require people to work longer hours on a particular day. This may be detrimental to some older individuals.**

   Mitigation: This will be mitigated through the communication of the clear expectation that staff and students are not compelled to work excessive hours during the day, and that lengthy operational tasks can, where possible, be shared between team members. Part-time staff should not be expected to work longer than their usual hours.

DISABILITY

8. **General disability: Restricted access to the building and the use of rotas may occasionally require people to work longer hours on a particular day. This may be detrimental to some disabled people who work part-time.**

   Mitigation: This will be mitigated through the communication of the clear expectation that staff and students are not compelled to work excessive hours during the day, and that lengthy operational tasks can, where possible, be shared between team members. Students should discuss concerns with their PT or ITO; or with their supervisor or IGS.

9. **Invisible disabilities: People with disabilities that are not visible may be criticised for using the lifts or going against one-way circulation systems within buildings. They may also need to reveal their disabilities to obtain priority access to lifts or other facilities.**

   Mitigation: This issue has been highlighted in the building induction and user guides and signage is located near lifts about invisible disabilities. People are encouraged to use the stairs if they can.

10. **Reduced and impaired mobility: For those individuals who may require assistance to exit the building in case of a fire, a risk assessment will be required to determine whether the appropriate support is available at the times they wish to access the building.**

    Mitigation: If the usual support is not available for the times that the individual will be in the building, other suitable individuals will be trained to provide this support.

11. **Reduced and impaired mobility: Travel to and from campus using public transport may be more difficult and riskier, with cycling or walking not suitable as alternatives.**

    Mitigation:

    - For staff and research students: Supervisors and line managers are encouraged to take a flexible approach to arrival and leaving times to allow individuals to avoid peak public transport times. Individuals who are concerned that they may be at increased risk because of public transport usage can bring this up with their supervisor or line manager in the first instance. Supervisors and line managers should engage with the individual, taking into account their particular circumstances, to ameliorate risk while at the same time ensuring that individuals are not excluded from undertaking research activities or other work that they are able and willing to do.
    - For taught students: Timetable should provide flexibility for students to avoid public transport at peak times. Concerns can be raised with ITO or PT if the timetable causes issues.

12. **Conditions requiring urgent access to toilet facilities: For example, Irritable Bowel Syndrome, Crohn's disease, those experiencing severe menopause symptoms and menstrual problems.**

    Mitigation: Individuals in this group will not need to abide by any one-way systems that may be in place to access the toilets and may take the most direct route. Given there will be no one-way systems in Appleton Tower, this is unlikely to be an issue – however an individual may need to ask to have priority access when entering a two-way corridor without explaining why.

13. **Visual impairments: Signage may not be readable, and the changed routing will make the building more difficult to navigate.**

Mitigation: Those with visual impairments should be offered an individual risk assessment and a revised Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) if required. Approved signage in the buildings has been produced by the University in consultation with the University's Disability Service. The national body – Colour Blind Awareness – has reviewed the signage and approved the visual contrast that addresses all combinations of colour blindness.

14. **Hearing impairments: Face coverings are required in indoor spaces when on campus and this may have a negative impact on people who lip-read.**

   Mitigation: If required, provide facial PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) that allows for lip-reading.

15. **Autism and related conditions: People with autism can find new experiences and changes to be overwhelming and to lead to increased anxiety.**

   Mitigations:

   - For staff and research students: Before anyone can return to work in the School's buildings, they will be required to take a return to campus induction which will provide information about the new practices which allows people to familiarise themselves with the new ways of working in the buildings before they arrive at the buildings themselves. Individuals who have concerns can request an in-person tour from Facilities' staff without having to provide an explanation as to why.
   - For taught students: Individuals who have concerns can request an in-person tour from the ITO staff without having to provide an explanation as to why.

16. **Autism and related conditions**: **For neurodivergent, especially autistic people, public spaces can be hard to deal with. They can be overwhelming, loud and bright. Areas where queuing is required can also be challenging. One-way systems and reduced capacity within kitchens, pantries and print areas may require queuing. This could be stressful and challenging for autistic staff and students.**

   Mitigation: Flexibility in break times will allow individuals to avoid queuing, as will hybrid working patterns (for staff and research students) which will reduce occupancy of the building and smaller classes sizes (maximum 50 in most classes) (for taught students).

17. **Mental health: Existing mental health problems such as anxiety, depression and OCD may be exacerbated by the new ways of working both on and off campus.**

   Mitigation: Individuals working or studying on campus can discuss these issues with:

   - Taught students: their Personal Tutor or ITO
   - Research students: their supervisor or IGS
   - Staff: their line manager or the InfHR team.

   Concerns can also be raised confidentially with the people listed below who can be approached for discussion of equality issues (see under All Groups). For people working from home, the SoI is signposting available support in email and on the SoI Covid-19 website, and people can contact their line manager, supervisor, the InfHR team or the HoS if they are experiencing problems.

18. **Mental health: Some individuals may have short-term mental health problems predominantly caused by any requirement to work from home.**

   Mitigation: Where possible, research students and staff should be given an opportunity to work on campus for all or part of the week, although this is not an equality requirement as short-term health issues do not constitute a protected characteristic. However, it is

important to be aware that if this situation continues for more than a year, that an individual in this situation could be considered to have disability, and appropriate mitigations are required. Taught students should discuss any issues with the ITO or Personal Tutor.

19. **RELIGION OR BELIEF: The chaplaincy and mosque may be closed from time to time, which may result in a lack of nearby religious facilities.**

   Mitigation: At this stage, the chaplaincy and mosque will be open. Requests for additional or alternate space can be requested through Facilities. Ablutions can be completed in any available washroom facility.

SEX

20. **Women: Some women prefer to use women-only toilet for religious or other reasons.**

   Mitigation: There are women-only toilets in the building with free sanitary products.

21. **Women: More women occupy administrative roles that may continue working from home for a longer period. This may disproportionately affect women in terms of isolation/mental health and in relation to working from home in unsuitable workspaces.**

   Mitigation: For those staff continuing to work from home, the SoI is signposting available support in School communications and on the SoI Covid-19 website, and people can contact their line manager, supervisor, the InfHR team or the HoS (Head of School) if they are experiencing problems.

22. **Carers**: **Many individuals have taken on increased caring responsibilities during the COVID- 19 period e.g. childcare, home schooling, elderly care. There is evidence to show that during the Covid-19 pandemic, women in particular have taken on higher levels of caring responsibilities, e.g. childcare, home schooling, elderly care.**

   Mitigation: Supervisors and line managers are required to take caring responsibilities into account when creating work plans. For PGR students and staff who are unable to work on campus because of their caring responsibilities, supervisors and line managers should engage with the individual, taking into account their particular circumstances. Taught students should discuss any issues with the ITO or Personal Tutor.

23. <u>**SEXUAL ORIENTATION**</u>: **Some LGBT+ people may be hiding aspects of their lives from people that they are living with or may be forced to shelter in situations where their identity is not fully accepted. Any requirement to continue to work from home may cause disproportionate feelings of isolation and mental health and wellbeing problems for LBGT+ people.**

   Mitigation: The SoI has offered the opportunity for students and staff to work flexibly – and there is no requirement for PGR students to work fully on campus or from home. For those continuing to work from home, the SoI is signposting available support on the SoI Covid-19 website as is the University for both staff and students, and people can contact their line manager, supervisor, the InfHR team or the HoS if they are experiencing problems. Taught students should discuss any issues with the ITO or Personal Tutor.

24. <u>**GENDER REASSIGNMENT**</u>: **There is evidence that the lack of explicit gender-neutral facilities in higher education institutions causes indirect discrimination and increases the risk of harassment for individuals who have undergone gender reassignment in addition to non-binary staff and students.**

Mitigation: There are gender neutral toilets in Appleton Tower on Level 3. Individuals who are concerned about impacts to them arising from new operating procedures that relate to their gender reassignment can bring this up with:

- Research students: their supervisor or Graduate School
- Taught students: their Personal Tutor or ITO
- Staff: their line manager or the InfHR team

Concerns can also be raised confidentially with the people listed below who can be approached for discussion of equality issues (see under All Groups).

- ***Other available information about the needs of relevant equality groups:***
- The threat posed by Covid-19 is without recent precedent, with all areas of the University affected. To this end a College level virtual "Microsoft Team" has been created to collate and share impacts at each of the Schools of College of Science and Engineering.

  Information available through the UK government inquiry into the impacts of Covid-19 on people with protected characteristics has been consulted. The evidence for impacts on protected groups will change as new information becomes available. The School will keep up to date with information and incorporate new evidence of equality impacts as they arise. We will be monitoring particularly the UK government inquiry findings: "Unequal impact: Coronavirus (Covid-19) and the impact on people with protected characteristics" which will look especially at impact relating to gender, disability and BAME individuals https://committees.parliament.uk/work/227/unequal-impact-coronavirus-covid19-and-the- impact-on-people-with-protected-characteristics/

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

  The gaps in evidence for assessment of these new practices will be filled by further consulting with protected characteristic groups as this practice is implemented and changed in response to the Scottish government guidelines. The School's return to campus induction and building user guide will also make it clear how to raise equality-related concerns and this will be fed into review of the practices. In particular, concerns can be raised confidentially with the Graduate School (for PGR students), InfHR (for staff), Teaching Office (for taught students), Vijay Nagarajan (Director of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion), Jane Hillston (Head of School) and Joy Candlish (Director of Professional Services).

- ***Could application of this policy/practice lead to discrimination (direct or indirect), harassment, victimisation, less favourable treatment for particular equality groups?***

  The implementation of this new practice has the potential to impact on equality in a number of ways outlined in the document, and potential ways not identified, to impact indirectly on equality. These potential impacts are justified in achieving the aim of protecting staff and students from Covid-19. The indirect risk is mitigated by measures aimed at allowing individuals in one or various groups to take a more flexible approach to their work. In addition, we encourage any individuals who notice that their circumstances have deteriorated and who are not included here to reach out to:

  - Research students: their supervisor or Graduate School
  - Taught students: their Personal Tutor or ITO
  - Staff: their line manager or the InfHR team

  Individuals who are clinically vulnerable and/or a member of an equality group may ask for a risk assessment and this information will appear in the Building User Guide.

- *Will the policy/practice contribute to advancing equality of opportunity[2] ?*

  The new practices work towards enabling staff and students from all protected characteristic groups to undertake hybrid working or fully on campus working. The implementation of the practices will be monitored to assess the advancing of equality of opportunity, and modified when and where possible, taking the Scottish Government's route map into account.

- *Is there an opportunity in applying this policy/practice to foster good relations?*

  Applying this practice and ensuring its good communication will provide reassurance to **all** staff and students that their health, safety, and well-being are being prioritised, and that issues of equality have been carefully considered. Continued support for staff and PGR students to work flexibly, via hybrid working can foster good relations with those for whom flexible working allow them to maintain good work-life balance.

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

  No other protected groups will be affected beyond those which have already been identified, but there will be some inherent inequality for other groups.

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

  The return to campus induction and building user guide will be made available to all staff and PGR students, with particularly important information communicated via email. Printable versions will also be available for those that require them. Staff and PGR students will be required to complete an online form to confirm that they have read and understood the induction and guide.

  Building related procedures will be communicated to taught students and signage available throughout teaching and study spaces.

  Guidance to managers has been provided by the university (as mentioned above). This guidance emphasises that managers must take the principle of equality, diversity and inclusion into account, as well as due confidentiality of personal information. Furthermore, it proposes one-to-one return-to-campus conversations, and this will provide an opportunity for managers to consider equality issues and for individuals to raise these issues, as well as their clinical status with respect to Covid-19. The opportunity to discuss equality issues with line managers or the InfHR team will be communicated to all staff.

  All communications will be produced in line with the standard accessibility practices used in the SoI, including plain text emails and alt tags for pictures so that screen readers are supported. Any videos produced will be subtitled.

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

  The building and facilities operating practices were developed by the SoI Building Review Working Group in August 2021, following the recommendations contained within the University's *Guidance for Controlling the Risk of Transmission of Covid-19* dated August 2021. Advice on the potential impacts on those with protected characteristics was taken from consultation that occurred with a wide range of individuals in July 2020, when buildings were first re-opened following lockdown – which included:
  - Race and Ethnicity - University Edinburgh Race Equality Network (EREN)
  - Religious Belief – University of Edinburgh Chaplaincy – Honorary Muslim Chaplin
  - and Muslim Belief Contact
  - College of Science & Engineering ED&I Committee

- College of Science & Engineering buildings review group members
- College of Science & Engineering HR.

Also consulted were internet resources from the National Autistic Society (https://www.autism.org.uk) on autism in the workplace.

The practices will be monitored on an ongoing basis after implementation and factors re-evaluated as governmental and University policy is revised over time. Modifications will be approved via the Facilities and Technical Services Manager for local and building-wide modifications, or via Head of School and Director of Professional Services for any change in practices affecting the entire School.

- ***Is there potential or actual impact of applying the policy or practice, with regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality and promote good relations:***

  Applying this practice and ensuring its good communication will provide reassurance to all staff and students that their health, safety, and well-being are being prioritised, and that issues of equality have been carefully considered. This practice aims to provide opportunities for as many research staff and students in the identified research labs as possible to resume practical laboratory work.

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 **Yes**

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 Head of School and the Facilities & Technical Services Manager have incorporated the mitigations outlined in this document into the School's Operational Plans, return to campus induction and building user guide.

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

   The building and facilities operating practices will be reviewed periodically and at each stage of the Scottish Government or University guidance for controlling the risk of transmission of Covid-19. Responsibility for monitoring and implementation of any changes rests with the Director of Professional Services in consultation with the Director of EDI, Head of School, and Facilities and Technical Services Manager.

H. Publication of EqIA

Can this EqIA be published in full, now? **Yes, there are no reasons to delay this.**

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)):

Joy Candlish, Director of Professional Services

Accepted by (name):
Professor Jane Hillston, Head of School

Date: 20/9/2021

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