

DEPARTMENT FOR THE ECONOMY

SECTION 75 EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY SCREENING TEMPLATE

This form should be completed when considering options for a new policy, service or programme, or changing an existing policy, service or programme. Those policies identified as having significant implications for equality of opportunity must be subject to full EQIA.

The template will provide a record of the factors taken into account if a policy is screened out, or excluded for EQIA. It will be included in the quarterly Screening Report which is published on the Department's website.

Please complete the Cover Sheet Table below

Policy Title (in full):	Review of the NI Postgraduate Tuition Fee Loan - Consultation
Policy Aim	To review the current level of the Postgraduate Tuition Fee Loan (PGTFL) to ensure that it reflects the needs of the Northern Ireland economy, the higher education sector and individual students, and to ensure that access to higher education at postgraduate taught level is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay.
Decision (delete as appropriate)	Policy screened out without mitigation or an alternative policy adopted
Business Area:	Higher Education Division – HE Policy Branch
Contact:	Conor Brady
Date of form completion:	26 November 2020

Screening flowchart and template *(taken from Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 – A Guide for public authorities April 2010 (Appendix 1)).*

Introduction

Part 1. Policy scoping – asks public authorities to provide details about the policy, procedure, practice and/or decision being screened and what available evidence you have gathered to help make an assessment of the likely impact on equality of opportunity and good relations.

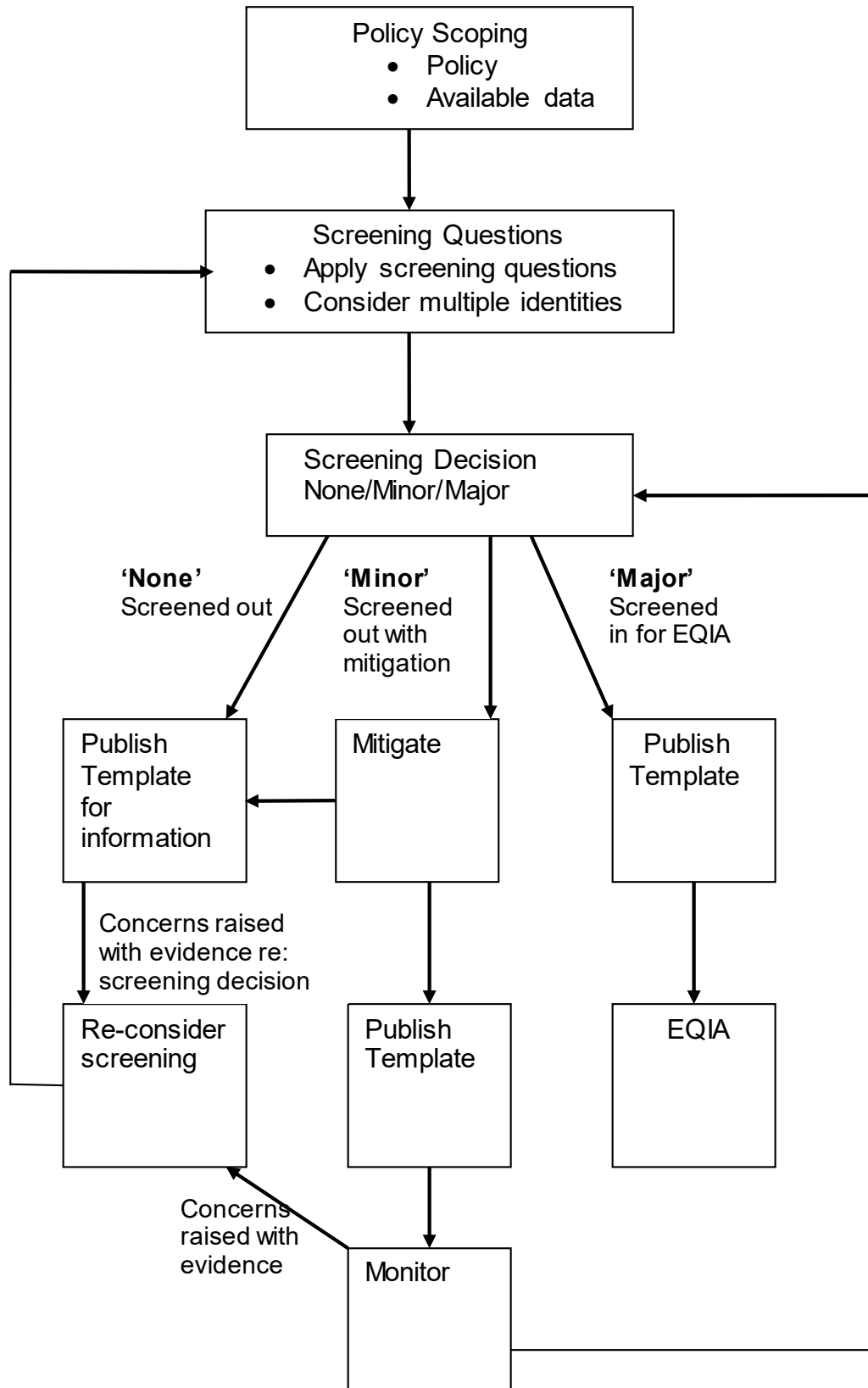
Part 2. Screening questions – asks about the extent of the likely impact of the policy on groups of people within each of the Section 75 categories. Details of the groups consulted and the level of assessment of the likely impact. This includes consideration of multiple identity and good relations issues.

Part 3. Screening decision – guides the public authority to reach a screening decision as to whether or not there is a need to carry out an equality impact assessment (EQIA), or to introduce measures to mitigate the likely impact, or the introduction of an alternative policy to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

Part 4. Monitoring – provides guidance to public authorities on monitoring for adverse impact and broader monitoring.

Part 5. Approval and authorisation – verifies the public authority's approval of a screening decision by a senior manager responsible for the policy.

A screening flowchart is provided overleaf.



Part 1. Policy scoping

The first stage of the screening process involves scoping the policy under consideration. The purpose of policy scoping is to help prepare the background and context and set out the aims and objectives for the policy, being screened. At this stage, scoping the policy will help identify potential constraints as well as opportunities and will help the policy maker work through the screening process on a step by step basis.

Public authorities should remember that the Section 75 statutory duties apply to internal policies (relating to people who work for the authority), as well as external policies (relating to those who are, or could be, served by the authority).

Information about the policy

Name of the policy Review of the NI Postgraduate Tuition Fee Loan – Consultation
Is this an existing, revised or a new policy? Revised
What is it trying to achieve? (intended aims/outcomes) To review the current level of the Postgraduate Tuition Fee Loan (PGTFL) to ensure that it reflects the needs of the Northern Ireland economy, the higher education sector and individual students, and to ensure that access to higher education at postgraduate taught level is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay.
Are there any Section 75 categories which might be expected to benefit from the intended policy? If so, explain how. Age: The current higher education funding system is open to people of all ages from 18 onwards. However, this policy is designed to ease access to postgraduate taught study in particular, which mature students (25 and over) are demonstrably more likely to utilise and need. Therefore older age groups are expected to benefit from this policy. Marital Status: The current higher education funding system does not exclude anyone on the basis of marital status. However, this policy is designed to ease access to postgraduate taught study in particular, which people of a marital status other than single are more likely to utilise and need. Therefore, this group of people is expected to benefit from this policy. Dependants: The current higher education funding system does not exclude anyone on the basis of whether or not they have dependants. However, this policy is designed to ease access to postgraduate taught study in particular, which people with dependants are more likely to utilise and need. Therefore, this group of people is expected to benefit from this policy.

Who initiated or wrote the policy?

The existing PGTFE policy from 2017 was initiated by the then Minister for Employment and Learning as part of the implementation of Graduating to Success, a Higher Education Strategy for Northern Ireland. This review has been led by the Department for the Economy's Higher Education Policy Branch, headed by Conor Brady.

Who owns and who implements the policy?

The policy will be implemented by the Department's Higher Education Division, the Student Loans Company, and the Education and Library Boards. It is owned by the Department for the Economy.

Implementation factors

Are there any factors which could contribute to/detract from the intended aim/outcome of the policy/decision?

If yes, are they:

- financial
- legislative
- other - please specify

Main stakeholders affected

Who are the internal and external stakeholders (actual or potential) that the policy will impact upon?

- staff
- service users
- other public sector organisations
- voluntary / community/trade unions
- other - please specify

Other policies with a bearing on this policy

Various policies emanating from the Northern Ireland Executive, such as the Innovation Strategy commitment to double the number of awards for postgraduate students, will have a bearing on this policy.

Various policies within the Department will impact upon this policy, including in particular the implementation of the Skills Strategy.

Student finance policies elsewhere in the UK and Ireland, owned by the respective governments there, will also have a bearing on this policy.

Budgeting policies by Her Majesty's Treasury will have an impact on this policy.

Available evidence

Evidence to help inform the screening process may take many forms. Public authorities should ensure that their screening decision is informed by relevant data.

What evidence/information (both qualitative and quantitative) have you gathered to inform this policy? Specify details for each of the Section 75 categories.

NB – Information on the composition of the Northern Ireland student population is collected by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), and has been used as the evidence base for this impact assessment. Please note the following –

1. Information on disability and ethnicity is collected on the basis of a student's self - assessment.
2. Religious affiliation is not a mandatory question and therefore can have a high non-response rate.
3. A new coding framework has been added to the HESA data collection for the Religion question in 2016/17, which includes an additional category for 'No Religion'.
4. Enrolments at the Open University (where the national centre is located in NI) have been removed from the figures for religion, marital status and dependants due to high levels of unknowns.
5. To prevent the identification of individuals, figures in the attached table are rounded to the nearest 5, with 0, 1 and 2 rounded to 0. Due to rounding, the sum of numbers in each row or column may not match the total shown.
6. Percentages are based on unrounded figures.

Section 75 category	Details of evidence/information																																							
Religious belief	<p>The current higher education funding system does not exclude anyone on the basis of religious belief; however, it is worth noting that the number of Roman Catholics outweighs the number of Protestants across the entire student population (see table below).</p> <p>Information on religious belief is only collected by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) in respect of Northern Ireland (NI) domiciled students studying in NI. Moreover, it is important to note that religious affiliation is not a mandatory question and it can have a high non response rate.</p> <p>The latest available data (for academic year 2018/19), shows the following religious composition of NI domiciled postgraduate taught students at NI Higher education Institutions (HEIs):</p> <p>NI domiciled enrolments at NI HEIs by religion - 2018/19</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="418 934 1380 1291"> <thead> <tr> <th rowspan="2">Religion</th> <th colspan="2">Postgraduate taught</th> <th colspan="2">Student Population Total</th> </tr> <tr> <th>Number</th> <th>%</th> <th>Number</th> <th>%</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Protestant</td> <td>2,190</td> <td>34%</td> <td>13,145</td> <td>31%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Roman Catholic</td> <td>3,115</td> <td>48%</td> <td>20,865</td> <td>50%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other</td> <td>110</td> <td>2%</td> <td>1,105</td> <td>3%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Not known</td> <td>340</td> <td>5%</td> <td>3,360</td> <td>8%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>No Religion</td> <td>750</td> <td>12%</td> <td>3,685</td> <td>9%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td>6,505</td> <td>100%</td> <td>42,165</td> <td>100%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)</p> <p>This evidence is reflective of the known religious composition of the entire student population in NI and, as such, suggests that people of certain religious beliefs are not disproportionately more likely to utilise or need postgraduate taught study and associated financial support.</p>	Religion	Postgraduate taught		Student Population Total		Number	%	Number	%	Protestant	2,190	34%	13,145	31%	Roman Catholic	3,115	48%	20,865	50%	Other	110	2%	1,105	3%	Not known	340	5%	3,360	8%	No Religion	750	12%	3,685	9%	Total	6,505	100%	42,165	100%
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Political opinion	<p>The current higher education funding system does not exclude anyone on the basis of political opinion.</p> <p>Information on political opinion is not collected by HESA. There is however a strong correlation between religious belief and political opinion in Northern Ireland and, on that basis, the evidence pertaining to religious belief could be broadly taken to apply here also.</p>																																							

<p>Racial group</p>	<p>The current higher education funding system does not exclude anyone on the basis of racial group.</p> <p>As shown below, the ethnic composition of NI domiciled postgraduate taught students is not dissimilar to the known ethnic composition of the total NI student population. White is by far the most prevalent grouping in all categories, reflective of the ethnic composition of NI's total population.</p> <p>NI domiciled enrolments at NI HEIs by ethnicity - 2018/19</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="418 541 1404 1138"> <thead> <tr> <th rowspan="2">Ethnicity</th> <th colspan="2">Postgraduate taught</th> <th colspan="2">Student Population Total</th> </tr> <tr> <th>Number</th> <th>%</th> <th>Number</th> <th>%</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>White</td> <td>6,415</td> <td>96%</td> <td>44,550</td> <td>97%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Irish traveller</td> <td>5</td> <td>0%</td> <td>10</td> <td>0%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Black</td> <td>35</td> <td>1%</td> <td>155</td> <td>0%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Indian</td> <td>35</td> <td>1%</td> <td>160</td> <td>0%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pakistani</td> <td>15</td> <td>0%</td> <td>50</td> <td>0%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Bangladeshi</td> <td>0</td> <td>0%</td> <td>20</td> <td>0%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Chinese</td> <td>20</td> <td>0%</td> <td>120</td> <td>0%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other Asian</td> <td>10</td> <td>0%</td> <td>180</td> <td>0%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mixed</td> <td>45</td> <td>1%</td> <td>315</td> <td>1%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other</td> <td>20</td> <td>0%</td> <td>80</td> <td>0%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Unknown/Information refused</td> <td>80</td> <td>1%</td> <td>465</td> <td>1%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td>6,680</td> <td>100%</td> <td>46,110</td> <td>100%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)</p> <p>This evidence, therefore, does not suggest that any racial grouping in particular is more likely to utilise or need postgraduate taught study and associated financial support.</p>	Ethnicity	Postgraduate taught		Student Population Total		Number	%	Number	%	White	6,415	96%	44,550	97%	Irish traveller	5	0%	10	0%	Black	35	1%	155	0%	Indian	35	1%	160	0%	Pakistani	15	0%	50	0%	Bangladeshi	0	0%	20	0%	Chinese	20	0%	120	0%	Other Asian	10	0%	180	0%	Mixed	45	1%	315	1%	Other	20	0%	80	0%	Unknown/Information refused	80	1%	465	1%	Total	6,680	100%	46,110	100%
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<p>Age</p>	<p>The current higher education funding system does not exclude anyone on the basis of age.</p> <p>HESA collects information on the age of enrolments, with categories ranging from 20 and under, 21 to 24, and 25 and over.</p> <p>As shown below, the known age composition of postgraduate taught enrolments is significantly different from that of the total NI student population.</p>																																																																					

NI domiciled enrolments at NI HEIs by age group - 2018/19

Age group	Postgraduate taught		Student Population Total	
	Number	%	Number	%
20 and under	5	0%	16,920	37%
21 to 24 inclusive	2,010	30%	13,510	29%
25 and over	4,665	70%	15,685	34%
Unknown	0	0%	0	0%
Total	6,680	100%	46,110	100%

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)

This evidence suggests that older students are much more likely to utilise and need postgraduate taught study and associated financial support.

Marital status

The current higher education funding system does not exclude anyone on the basis of marital status.

As shown below, the marital status of postgraduate taught enrolments is different from that of the total NI student population, with a higher percentage falling within categories other than “single”.

NI domiciled enrolments at NI HEIs by marital status - 2018/19

Marital status	Postgraduate taught		Student Population Total	
	Number	%	Number	%
Single	3,920	60%	34,900	83%
Married/civil partnership(CP)	2,040	31%	4,080	10%
Separated	70	1%	240	1%
Divorced/CP dissolved	100	2%	220	1%
Widowed	10	0%	40	0%
Co-habiting	300	5%	710	2%
Unknown	65	1%	1,975	5%
Total	6,505	100%	42,165	100%

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)

This evidence suggests that people of a marital status other than single are more likely to utilise and need postgraduate taught study and associated financial support.

Sexual orientation

The current higher education funding system does not exclude anyone on the basis of sexual orientation.

	Data on the sexual orientation of enrolled students in NI HEIs or graduates in the labour market is not available.																													
Men and women generally	<p>The current higher education funding system does not exclude anyone on the basis of gender.</p> <p>As shown below, the gender composition of NI domiciled postgraduate taught students is not dissimilar from the gender composition of the total NI student population, where female enrolments outweigh male enrolments.</p> <p>NI domiciled enrolments at NI HEIs by sex - 2018/19</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th rowspan="2">Sex</th> <th colspan="2">Postgraduate taught</th> <th colspan="2">Student Population Total</th> </tr> <tr> <th>Number</th> <th>%</th> <th>Number</th> <th>%</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Male</td> <td>2,410</td> <td>36%</td> <td>19,345</td> <td>42%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Female</td> <td>4,265</td> <td>64%</td> <td>26,765</td> <td>58%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td>6,680</td> <td>100%</td> <td>46,110</td> <td>100%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)</p> <p>This evidence, therefore, does not suggest that any gender grouping in particular is disproportionately more likely to utilise or need postgraduate taught study and associated financial support.</p>	Sex	Postgraduate taught		Student Population Total		Number	%	Number	%	Male	2,410	36%	19,345	42%	Female	4,265	64%	26,765	58%	Total	6,680	100%	46,110	100%					
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Disability	<p>The current higher education funding system does not exclude anyone on the basis of whether they have a disability or not. A range of added support measures are in place to support students with disabilities to access higher education.</p> <p>HESA collects information on whether students are disabled or not, and is collected on the basis of a student's self-assessment.</p> <p>As shown below, the disability profile of postgraduate taught enrolments is not significantly different from that of the total NI student population.</p> <p>NI domiciled enrolments at NI HEIs by disability - 2018/19</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th rowspan="2">Disability status</th> <th colspan="2">Postgraduate taught</th> <th colspan="2">Student Population Total</th> </tr> <tr> <th>Number</th> <th>%</th> <th>Number</th> <th>%</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Disabled</td> <td>655</td> <td>10%</td> <td>5,530</td> <td>12%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Not disabled/Not known</td> <td>6,025</td> <td>90%</td> <td>40,580</td> <td>88%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Unknown</td> <td>0</td> <td>0%</td> <td>0</td> <td>0%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td>6,680</td> <td>100%</td> <td>46,110</td> <td>100%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)</p>	Disability status	Postgraduate taught		Student Population Total		Number	%	Number	%	Disabled	655	10%	5,530	12%	Not disabled/Not known	6,025	90%	40,580	88%	Unknown	0	0%	0	0%	Total	6,680	100%	46,110	100%
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This evidence, therefore, does not suggest that any disability grouping in particular is disproportionately more likely to utilise or need postgraduate taught study and associated financial support.

Dependants

The current higher education funding system does not exclude anyone on the basis of whether or not they have dependants. A range of measures are currently in place to support students with childcare and adult caring responsibilities.

As shown below, the known dependency profile of postgraduate taught enrolments is significantly different from that of the total NI student population, with a higher percentage of students with dependants, particularly young people/children.

NI domiciled enrolments at NI HEIs by dependants status - 2018/19

Dependants	Postgraduate taught		Student Population Total	
	Number	%	Number	%
Young people/children (YP/C)	1,660	26%	4,135	10%
Other relative/friends (OR/F)	100	2%	290	1%
Both YP/C & OR/F	160	3%	405	1%
No dependants	4,530	70%	36,020	85%
Unknown	60	1%	1,315	3%
Total	6,505	100%	42,165	100%

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)

This evidence, therefore, suggests that people with dependants are more likely to utilise or need postgraduate taught study and associated financial support.

Needs, experiences and priorities

Taking into account the information referred to above, what are the different needs, experiences and priorities of each of the following categories, in relation to the particular policy/decision? Specify details for each of the Section 75 categories

Section 75 category	Details of needs/experiences/priorities
<p>Religious belief</p>	<p>The options in the consultation are designed to ensure that access to postgraduate taught education is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay, irrespective of religious belief.</p> <p>Catholics do preponderate over Protestants across Northern Ireland's entire student population. However, the available evidence (shown in the previous section) suggests that people of certain religious beliefs are not disproportionately more likely to study postgraduate taught courses.</p> <p>The Department is also aware that some religious groupings may have difficulty with the current loans based system of student support. Islam in particular forbids 'riba', which is typically interpreted as (excessive) interest. Real interest rates have been attached to student loans elsewhere in the UK, compounding this issue.</p> <p>However, in Northern Ireland under the current system student loans do not bear real interest rates. Nor do the majority of policy options contained in the consultation precipitate their introduction. The utilisation of the PGTFLL loan product is entirely optional.</p>
<p>Political opinion</p>	<p>The options in the consultation are designed to ensure that access to postgraduate taught education is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay, irrespective of political opinion.</p> <p>Given the strong correlation between religious belief and political opinion in NI, some of the issues raised in the religious belief category may be applied here also.</p>
<p>Racial group</p>	<p>The options in the consultation are designed to ensure that access to postgraduate taught education is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay, irrespective of racial group.</p>

	<p>The available evidence (shown in the previous section) does not suggest that certain racial groupings utilise or need postgraduate taught study, and associated financial support, over others.</p>
Age	<p>The options in the consultation are designed to ensure that access to postgraduate taught education is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay, irrespective of age.</p> <p>The available evidence (shown in the previous section) suggests that older people are more likely to utilise and need postgraduate taught study and associated financial support.</p> <p>The policy options in the consultation seek to improve the financial support available, better addressing the needs of older people.</p>
Marital status	<p>The options in the consultation are designed to ensure that access to postgraduate taught education is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay, irrespective of marital status.</p> <p>The available evidence (shown in the previous section) suggests that people of a marital status other than single are more likely to utilise and need postgraduate taught study and associated financial support.</p> <p>The policy options in the consultation seek to improve the financial support available, better addressing the needs of people with a marital status other than single.</p>
Sexual orientation	<p>The options in the consultation are designed to ensure that access to postgraduate taught education is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay, irrespective of sexual orientation.</p> <p>Whilst data is not available, there is no indication that people of different sexual orientation are more dependent on postgraduate taught study and associated financial support.</p>
Men and women generally	<p>The options in the consultation are designed to ensure that access to postgraduate taught education is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay, irrespective of gender.</p> <p>While females are more likely to enter higher education than males, the evidence (shown in the previous section) does not indicate that any gender group is disproportionately more dependent on postgraduate taught study and associated financial support.</p>

Disability	<p>The options in the consultation are designed to ensure that access to postgraduate taught education is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay, irrespective of disability.</p> <p>The available evidence (shown in the previous section) does not indicate that people with or without disabilities are more dependent on postgraduate taught study over others. Across all kinds of study, students with disabilities will need additional help in the form of translators, specialist equipment, signers, etc. All of these types of support are made available as part of the Disabled Students Allowance (DSA), which is available to students at all levels, including postgraduate taught.</p>
Dependants	<p>The options in the consultation are designed to ensure that access to postgraduate taught education is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay, irrespective of dependency status.</p> <p>Given the age profile of postgraduate students, people with dependants to care for are more likely to utilise and need postgraduate taught study and associated financial support. As the policy options considered in the consultation seek to aid access to these forms of study, they can be expected to have a positive impact on people with dependants.</p>

Part 2. Screening questions

Introduction

In making a decision as to whether or not there is a need to carry out an equality impact assessment, the public authority should consider its answers to the questions 1-4 which are given on pages 10-12 of this Guide.

If the public authority's conclusion is **none** in respect of all of the Section 75 equality of opportunity and/or good relations categories, then the public authority may decide to screen the policy out. If a policy is 'screened out' as having no relevance to equality of opportunity or good relations, a public authority should give details of the reasons for the decision taken.

If the public authority's conclusion is **major** in respect of one or more of the Section 75 equality of opportunity and/or good relations categories, then consideration should be given to subjecting the policy to the equality impact assessment procedure.

If the public authority's conclusion is **minor** in respect of one or more of the Section 75 equality categories and/or good relations categories, then consideration should still be given to proceeding with an equality impact assessment, or to:

- measures to mitigate the adverse impact; or
- the introduction of an alternative policy to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

In favour of a 'major' impact

- a) The policy is significant in terms of its strategic importance;
- b) Potential equality impacts are unknown, because, for example, there is insufficient data upon which to make an assessment or because they are complex, and it would be appropriate to conduct an equality impact assessment in order to better assess them;
- c) Potential equality and/or good relations impacts are likely to be adverse or are likely to be experienced disproportionately by groups of people including those who are marginalised or disadvantaged;
- d) Further assessment offers a valuable way to examine the evidence and develop recommendations in respect of a policy about which there are concerns amongst affected individuals and representative groups, for example in respect of multiple identities;
- e) The policy is likely to be challenged by way of judicial review;
- f) The policy is significant in terms of expenditure.

In favour of 'minor' impact

- a) The policy is not unlawfully discriminatory and any residual potential impacts on people are judged to be negligible;
- b) The policy, or certain proposals within it, are potentially unlawfully discriminatory, but this possibility can readily and easily be eliminated by making appropriate changes to the policy or by adopting appropriate mitigating measures;
- c) Any asymmetrical equality impacts caused by the policy are intentional because they are specifically designed to promote equality of opportunity for particular groups of disadvantaged people;

- d) By amending the policy there are better opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

In favour of none

- a) The policy has no relevance to equality of opportunity or good relations.
- b) The policy is purely technical in nature and will have no bearing in terms of its likely impact on equality of opportunity or good relations for people within the equality and good relations categories.

Taking into account the evidence presented above, consider and comment on the likely impact on equality of opportunity and good relations for those affected by this policy, in any way, for each of the equality and good relations categories, by applying the screening questions given overleaf and indicate the level of impact on the group i.e. minor, major or none.

Screening questions

1 What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, for each of the Section 75 equality categories? minor/major/none		
Section 75 category	Details of policy impact	Level of impact? minor/major/none
Religious belief	<p>The policies considered in the consultation are designed to ensure that postgraduate taught student support funding reflects the needs of the Northern Ireland economy, the higher education sector and individual students, and to ensure that access to postgraduate taught education is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay, irrespective of their religious beliefs.</p> <p>The available evidence does not indicate any disproportionate impacts for people of different religious beliefs.</p>	None
Political opinion	<p>The policies considered in the consultation are designed to ensure that postgraduate taught student support funding reflects the needs of the Northern Ireland economy, the higher education sector and individual students, and to ensure that access to postgraduate taught education is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay, irrespective of their political opinion.</p> <p>The available evidence does not indicate any disproportionate impacts for people of different political opinions.</p>	None
Racial group	<p>The policies considered in the consultation are designed to ensure that postgraduate taught student support funding reflects the needs of the Northern Ireland economy, the higher education sector and individual students, and to ensure that access to postgraduate taught education is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay, irrespective of their racial groupings.</p>	None

	<p>The available evidence does not indicate any disproportionate impacts for people of different racial groupings.</p>	
Age	<p>The policies considered in the consultation are designed to ensure that postgraduate taught student support funding reflects the needs of the Northern Ireland economy, the higher education sector and individual students, and to ensure that access to postgraduate taught education is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay, irrespective of their age.</p> <p>The available evidence indicates that the policies considered in the consultation will have a disproportionate impact on older people. This is because older people are more likely to utilise postgraduate taught provision and associated financial support. However, as the proposals within the review seek to improve the level of support for, and the access to, postgraduate taught provision, the impact is anticipated to be positive.</p>	Minor - positive
Marital status	<p>The policies considered in the consultation are designed to ensure that postgraduate taught student support funding reflects the needs of the Northern Ireland economy, the higher education sector and individual students, and to ensure that access to postgraduate taught education is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay, irrespective of their marital status.</p> <p>The available evidence indicates that the policies considered in the consultation will have a disproportionate impact on people of a marital status other than single. This is because these groups are more likely to utilise postgraduate taught provision and associated financial support. However, as the proposals within the review seek to improve the level of support for, and the</p>	Minor - positive

	<p>access to, postgraduate taught provision, the impact is anticipated to be positive.</p>	
<p>Sexual orientation</p>	<p>The policies considered in the consultation are designed to ensure that postgraduate taught student support funding reflects the needs of the Northern Ireland economy, the higher education sector and individual students, and to ensure that access to postgraduate taught education is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay, irrespective of their sexual orientation.</p> <p>The available evidence does not indicate any disproportionate impacts for people of different sexual orientations.</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>Men and women generally</p>	<p>The policies considered in the consultation are designed to ensure that postgraduate taught student support funding reflects the needs of the Northern Ireland economy, the higher education sector and individual students, and to ensure that access to postgraduate taught education is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay, irrespective of their gender.</p> <p>The available evidence does not indicate any disproportionate impacts for people of different genders.</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>Disability</p>	<p>The policies considered in the consultation are designed to ensure that postgraduate taught student support funding reflects the needs of the Northern Ireland economy, the higher education sector and individual students, and to ensure that access to postgraduate taught education is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay, irrespective of whether or not they have a disability.</p> <p>The available evidence does not indicate any disproportionate impacts for people with or without disabilities.</p>	<p>None</p>

Dependants	<p>The policies considered in the consultation are designed to ensure that postgraduate taught student support funding reflects the needs of the Northern Ireland economy, the higher education sector and individual students, and to ensure that access to postgraduate taught education is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay, irrespective of whether or not they have dependants.</p> <p>The available evidence indicates that the policies considered in the consultation will have a disproportionate impact on people with dependants. This is because these groups are more likely to utilise postgraduate taught provision and associated financial support. However, as the proposals within the review seek to improve the level of support for, and the access to, postgraduate taught provision, the impact is anticipated to be positive.</p>	Minor - positive
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2 Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 equalities categories?		
Section 75 category	If Yes , provide details	If No , provide reasons
Religious belief		The policies considered in the consultation are designed to ensure that postgraduate taught student support funding reflects the needs of the Northern Ireland economy, the higher education sector and individual students, and to ensure that access to postgraduate taught education is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay, irrespective of their religious beliefs.
Political opinion		The policies considered in the consultation are designed to ensure that postgraduate taught student support funding reflects the needs of the Northern Ireland economy, the

		higher education sector and individual students, and to ensure that access to postgraduate taught education is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay, irrespective of their political opinion.
Racial group		The policies considered in the consultation are designed to ensure that postgraduate taught student support funding reflects the needs of the Northern Ireland economy, the higher education sector and individual students, and to ensure that access to postgraduate taught education is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay, irrespective of their racial groupings.
Age	<p>The policies considered in the consultation are designed to ensure that postgraduate taught student support funding reflects the needs of the Northern Ireland economy, the higher education sector and individual students, and to ensure that access to postgraduate taught education is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay, irrespective of their age.</p> <p>The available evidence indicates that the policies considered in the consultation will have a disproportionate impact on older people. This is because older people are demonstrably more likely to utilise postgraduate taught provision and associated financial support. As the proposals in the consultation seek to improve the level of support for, and the access to, postgraduate taught provision, it is anticipated that they will better promote equality of opportunity for people of different ages.</p>	

<p>Marital status</p>	<p>The policies considered in the consultation are designed to ensure that postgraduate taught student support funding reflects the needs of the Northern Ireland economy, the higher education sector and individual students, and to ensure that access to postgraduate taught education is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay, irrespective of their marital status.</p> <p>The available evidence indicates that the policies considered in the consultation will have a disproportionate impact on people of a marital status other than single. This is because these groups are demonstrably more likely to utilise postgraduate taught provision and associated financial support. As the proposals in the consultation seek to improve the level of support for, and the access to, postgraduate taught provision, it is anticipated that they will better promote equality of opportunity for people of different marital statuses.</p>	
<p>Sexual orientation</p>		<p>The policies considered in the consultation are designed to ensure that postgraduate taught student support funding reflects the needs of the Northern Ireland economy, the higher education sector and individual students, and to ensure that access to postgraduate taught education is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay, irrespective of their sexual orientation.</p>
<p>Men and women generally</p>		<p>The policies considered in the consultation are designed to ensure that postgraduate taught student support funding reflects the needs of the Northern Ireland economy, the higher education sector and individual students, and to ensure that access to postgraduate taught education is</p>

		based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay, irrespective of their gender.
Disability		The policies considered in the consultation are designed to ensure that postgraduate taught student support funding reflects the needs of the Northern Ireland economy, the higher education sector and individual students, and to ensure that access to postgraduate taught education is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay, irrespective of whether or not they have a disability.
Dependants	<p>The policies considered in the consultation are designed to ensure that postgraduate taught student support funding reflects the needs of the Northern Ireland economy, the higher education sector and individual students, and to ensure that access to postgraduate taught education is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay, irrespective of whether or not they have dependants.</p> <p>People with dependants are more likely to utilise postgraduate taught provision and associated financial support. As the proposals in the consultation seek to improve the level of support for, and the access to, postgraduate taught provision, it is anticipated that they will better promote equality of opportunity for people with dependants.</p>	

3 To what extent is the policy likely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group? minor/major/none		
Good relations category	Details of policy impact	Level of impact minor/major/none
Religious belief	The policies considered in the consultation will seek to ensure that access to postgraduate taught support funding is open to all with the ability to learn, irrespective of financial means or religious beliefs. It is therefore anticipated that it will promote the continuation of existing good relations between people of different religious beliefs.	None
Political opinion	The policies considered in the consultation will seek to ensure that access to postgraduate taught support funding is open to all with the ability to learn, irrespective of financial means or political opinions. It is therefore anticipated that it will promote the continuation of existing good relations between people of different political opinions.	None
Racial group	The policies considered in the consultation will seek to ensure that access to postgraduate taught support funding is open to all with the ability to learn, irrespective of financial means or racial groups. It is therefore anticipated that it will promote the continuation of existing good relations between people of different racial groups.	None

4 Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?		
Good relations category	If Yes , provide details	If No , provide reasons
Religious belief	While the policies considered in the consultation are not directly related to the promotion of good relations between people of different religious beliefs, it would be hoped that by helping to integrate more people into education and, beyond, sustained employment, a consequence would be to promote good relations.	
Political opinion	While the policies considered in the consultation are not directly related to the promotion of good relations between people of different political opinions, it would be hoped that by helping to integrate more people into education and, beyond, sustained employment, a consequence would be to promote good relations.	
Racial group	While the policies considered in the consultation are not directly related to the promotion of good relations between people of different racial groups, it would be hoped that by helping to integrate more people into education and, beyond, sustained employment, a consequence would be to promote good relations.	

Additional considerations

Multiple identity

Generally speaking, people can fall into more than one Section 75 category. Taking this into consideration, are there any potential impacts of the policy/decision on people with multiple identities?

(For example; disabled minority ethnic people; disabled women; young Protestant men; and young lesbians, gay and bisexual people).

Older people
People with dependants
People of a non-single marital status



It is anticipated that people falling within one or more of these groups will be advantaged through an improved level of financial support for, and access to, postgraduate taught provision, of which they typically utilise more.

Provide details of data on the impact of the policy on people with multiple identities. Specify relevant Section 75 categories concerned.

As shown in the evidence section above, each of these categories are demonstrably more likely to utilise postgraduate taught provision. As policies considered in the consultation seek to ensure that access to postgraduate taught education is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay, a positive impact on people falling into one or more of these categories is anticipated.

Part 3. Screening decision

If the decision is not to conduct an equality impact assessment, please provide details of the reasons.

The equality screening has identified a number of minor impacts of the policies under consideration for equality of opportunity for people of three Section 75 categories (age, marital status and dependants), as well as a number of opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity.

However, all of the impacts identified are positive in nature, and so an equality impact assessment has not been deemed necessary.

If the decision is not to conduct an equality impact assessment the public authority should consider if the policy should be mitigated or an alternative policy be introduced.

Mitigation or alternative policies are not required as all identified impacts are positive in nature.

If the decision is to subject the policy to an equality impact assessment, please provide details of the reasons.

N/A

All public authorities' equality schemes must state the authority's arrangements for assessing and consulting on the likely impact of policies adopted or proposed to be adopted by the authority on the promotion of equality of opportunity. The Commission recommends screening and equality impact assessment as the tools to be utilised for such assessments. Further advice on equality impact assessment may be found in a separate Commission publication: Practical Guidance on Equality Impact Assessment.

Mitigation

When the public authority concludes that the likely impact is 'minor' and an equality impact assessment is not to be conducted, the public authority may consider mitigation to lessen the severity of any equality impact, or the introduction of an alternative policy to better promote equality of opportunity or good relations.

Can the policy/decision be amended or changed or an alternative policy introduced to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations?

If so, give the **reasons** to support your decision, together with the proposed changes/amendments or alternative policy.

N/A – all minor impacts are positive

Timetabling and prioritising

Factors to be considered in timetabling and prioritising policies for equality impact assessment.

If the policy has been '**screened in**' for equality impact assessment, then please answer the following questions to determine its priority for timetabling the equality impact assessment.

On a scale of 1-3, with 1 being the lowest priority and 3 being the highest, assess the policy in terms of its priority for equality impact assessment.

Priority criterion	Rating (1-3)
Effect on equality of opportunity and good relations	N/A
Social need	N/A
Effect on people's daily lives	N/A
Relevance to a public authority's functions	N/A

Note: The Total Rating Score should be used to prioritise the policy in rank order with other policies screened in for equality impact assessment. This list of priorities will assist the public authority in timetabling. Details of the Public Authority's Equality Impact Assessment Timetable should be included in the quarterly Screening Report.

Is the policy affected by timetables established by other relevant public authorities?

N/A

If yes, please provide details

Part 4. Monitoring

Public authorities should consider the guidance contained in the Commission's Monitoring Guidance for Use by Public Authorities (July 2007).

The Commission recommends that where the policy has been amended or an alternative policy introduced, the public authority should monitor more broadly than for adverse impact (See Benefits, P.9-10, paras 2.13 – 2.20 of the Monitoring Guidance).

Effective monitoring will help the public authority identify any future adverse impact arising from the policy which may lead the public authority to conduct an equality impact assessment, as well as help with future planning and policy development.

The options contained in the consultation will be monitored throughout further policy development and implementation to ensure any outcomes are identified and assessed for their impact on equality of opportunity and good relations.

Part 5 - Approval and authorisation

Screened by:	Position/Job Title	Date
Julie Ryan	Staff Officer	20/11/2020
Approved by:		
Conor Brady	Grade 7	26/11/2020

Note: A copy of the Screening Template, for each policy screened should be 'signed off' and approved by a senior manager responsible for the policy, made easily accessible on the public authority's website as soon as possible following completion and made available on request.