

STEM Bursary Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)

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Policy Background

The Deputy First Minister announced on 8 October 2017 that the Scottish Government would introduce a bursary of £20,000 to attract graduate career changers to teaching from August 2018. Funding has again been made available for 100 bursaries in six key STEM subjects – Maths, Physics, Computing Science, Technical Education, Chemistry and Home Economics to enable career changers to undertake the one year Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) course from August 2019. These are the secondary school subjects currently with the greatest demand for teachers.

Applicants will be expected to hold a 2.1 degree or a minimum Initial Teacher Education (ITE) entry requirement with a relevant masters to teach Maths, Computing Science, Technical Education, Physics, Chemistry or Home Economics. Normal minimum entry requirements for teacher education courses set by the universities will also apply.

The bursary scheme also fits neatly with the Scottish Government's STEM strategy. In his announcement on 8 October 2017 Mr Swinney stated:

“We need to recruit more teachers in these subjects. And to do that, we need to reach beyond recent graduates and attract people who have the appropriate subject degree but are working in business or industry.

“These ‘career-changers’ still need to go through initial teacher education before they can become teachers – we will never compromise on quality - but we can make it easier for them to make that career change.

“And because we understand that they have to balance family and financial responsibilities that new graduates may not face, we understand that the prospect of giving up a salary for a year while they do their teacher training is a real barrier for them.”

Skills Development Scotland (SDS) will administer the bursary scheme. The elements announced by Mr Swinney have formed the basis of the criteria for eligibility for the bursary scheme.

EQIA Development Process

When the policy was first introduced, we ensured that equality issues were identified throughout the development process and we were mindful of the definition of protected characteristics contained in the Equality Act 2010 and guidance provided by the Equality and Human Rights Commission. An EQIA was prepared in September 2018, reflecting the relevant considerations from the policy development stage.

As we are changing the bursary criteria with effect from February 2019, we have prepared a new EQIA to ensure that the policy continues to promote the three needs of the public sector equality duty.

Data

The Teacher Census (Summary Statistics for Schools in Scotland, 11 December 2018) was used for any key data required in considering protected characteristics of age and gender – especially gender as 64% of the existing secondary school teacher workforce is female.

Protected Characteristics

Age

The key purpose of the bursary scheme, is to enable career changers to undertake a one year Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) Initial Teacher Education (ITE) course in Scotland that leads to the award of registered teacher status in the hardest to fill STEM subjects. In our discussions to develop a definition of career changer for the bursary criteria we were mindful to avoid either direct or indirect discrimination in relation to age. Whilst we are keen to encourage wider work experience into the profession we considered that three years' employment was the fairest minimal requirement that we might deem as reasonable to define as a career changer with experience gained in any STEM related industry. Any longer might make younger candidates out with scope, but some minimum is necessary to ensure that we attract high calibre candidates with some professional experience. In addition we built in flexibility of defining the years as three out of the last five years to enable those who may have had career breaks for whatever reason to come within scope. We have clarified the criteria for this year to make it clear that applicants must have spent at least three years out of full-time education (excluding those who have completed three years of a remunerated PhD which includes teaching experience). The purpose of this is once again to ensure that the scheme attracts genuine career changers who have relevant industry experience, rather than candidates who have been continuing their education.

Race

We are not aware of any evidence that indicates the Stem Bursary criteria could impact positively or negatively on this protected characteristic. The criteria for the bursary scheme has been developed in line with the SAAS residency criteria for funding. In addition an exemption for the requirement to evidence employment has been built into the scheme for those with refugee status.

Disability

We are not aware of any evidence that indicates the Stem Bursary criteria could impact positively or negatively on this protected characteristic. Anecdotal evidence does however indicate that people with disabilities may be less able to take up part-time employment to support themselves during full-time courses. It therefore seems likely that the bursary could have a positive impact in attracting STEM professionals with disabilities to undertake a career change into the teaching profession. Students will apply for PGDE courses in the normal way through existing university processes.

Gender

There is currently a gender imbalance in the teaching profession and marked differences in the characteristics of the primary and secondary (Teachers in Scotland 11 December 2018 publication):

	% Female	% Male
Teachers - primary	90%	10%
Teachers - secondary	64%	36%

Stem bursaries only apply to six secondary subjects which are the hardest to fill and will apply equally to any eligible individual regardless of gender. In addition in recognition that teaching is a highly female dominated profession and that 33% of secondary female teachers are under the age of 34 we built in an additional flexibility into the career changer definition (three years employment from the last five) to allow for periods of career breaks such as caring, family responsibilities or periods of unemployment. We are also removing the requirement to be in employment at the point of application to further strengthen this. We are not aware of any evidence that indicates the Stem Bursary criteria could impact positively or negatively on this protected characteristic as the criteria applies to all individuals. However, as people with caring responsibilities are predominantly women and are less likely to be able to work to support themselves during full-time study, it seems likely that the bursary could advance equality of opportunity for female candidates.

On the other hand, it is possible that the requirement to have been in employment for three out of the past five years may have a disproportionate adverse impact on women, given that more women than men are likely to take time out of work for childcare related reasons. To the extent that the policy might be considered indirectly discriminatory, we consider that it can be objectively justified. It is expressly aimed at career changers, with the stated objective of encouraging people into the teaching profession for certain key subjects. The purpose of the bursary is to ease the transition from giving up paid employment to undertake a year of teacher training. The policy does allow scope for career breaks for two out of the last five years, which is considered to be proportionate. There is no reasonable alternative for achieving the same policy aims.

Gender Assignment

We are not aware of any evidence that indicates the Stem Bursary criteria could impact positively or negatively on this protected characteristic.

Sexual Orientation

We are not aware of any evidence that indicates the Stem Bursary criteria could impact positively or negatively on this protected characteristic.

Religion or belief

We are not aware of any evidence that indicates the Stem Bursary criteria could impact positively or negatively on this protected characteristic.



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