

STEM Bursary Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)

March 2021

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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 and this funding was also made available in 2019-20 and 2020/21. Funding has again been made available for up to 150 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 2021. These are the secondary school subjects currently with the greatest demand for teachers.

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

In his announcement for the opening of the 2021 scheme, Mr Swinney stated that “the success of the scheme demonstrates that teaching is recognised as an attractive profession. Those that decide to apply for the bursaries will step into a rewarding and exciting new career. STEM is an integral part of our future economic and social development, and education, training and lifelong learning have a critical role to play in enthusing and encouraging everyone to build a strong base of STEM skills and knowledge.”

Skills Development Scotland (SDS) will administer the bursary scheme. Applicants need to meet the specific criteria to be eligible for the bursary scheme. Further details can be found at: <https://stembursaryscotland.co.uk/>

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 March 2019 and again in 2020, reflecting the relevant considerations from the policy development stage.

As we are changing the bursary criteria with effect from March 2021, we have

prepared a new EQIA to ensure that the policy continues to promote the three needs of the public sector equality duty.

Data

“Schools in Scotland - summary statistics: 2020” published on 15 December 2020 was used for any key data required in considering the protected characteristics of age and gender. Gender is particularly significant given that 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 36 months employment was the fairest minimal requirement that we might deem as reasonable to define as a career. Any longer might make younger candidates out with scope, but a minimum period of experience is necessary to ensure that we attract high calibre candidates. In addition, to recognise the challenges some applicants may have experienced due to the impact of the COVID - 19 pandemic, we have proportionately reduced the number of months an applicant must have been in work from 36 months out of the 60 months immediately preceding the date of application to 36 months out of the 72 months immediately preceding the date of application.

Applicants must have spent at least 36 months 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 rather than candidates who are looking to continue 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 Schools in Scotland - summary statistics: 2020" published on 15 December 2020.

Teachers	% Female	% Male
Teacher- Primary	89%	11%
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 (36 months employment from the last 72 months) to allow for periods of career breaks such as caring, family responsibilities or periods of unemployment. 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 36 out of the last 72 months 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.

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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