

LGBTQ+ Equality Implementation Group

27 July 2023, 10:00 – 11:30

MS Teams Online Meeting

Attendees

More than the minimum number of attendees required were present. The meeting was quorate.

Introductions

Minutes and actions from previous meeting

Minutes from May's meeting were approved.

Action: EDI team to upload minutes to LEIG (LGBTQ+ Equality Implementation Group) webpage.

Communications strategy for launching the LGBTQ+ action plan

LEIG Manager briefly discussed the strategy for launching the LGBTQ+ action plan.

All comms relating to the action plan should cover one or more of the below objectives.

1. Reassure the community of UCL's unwavering commitment to LGBTQ+ equality.
 - Following the polarising decision to cut ties with Stonewall, it is vital that UCL clearly demonstrates authentic commitment to supporting its LGBTQ+ staff and students.
2. Encourage all at UCL to recognise the value of LGBTQ+ equality.
 - A communications campaign with messaging from the Provost will help staff and students see this work as a priority and increase their proclivity to engage with the central EDI team in its efforts to advance LGBTQ+ inclusion. This may make some actions on the plan easier to scale up and consequently increase their impact.
3. Ensure LEIG's work and the work of key stakeholders is celebrated authentically.
 - It's important to ensure that the institution effectively spotlights the key players (such as LEIG and LESG) and is honest about the reality for LGBTQ+ staff and students at UCL. This will avoid pinkwashing, demonstrate integrity, and thus garner respect from the LGBTQ+ community.
4. Mitigate undue criticisms of the action plan and EDI work in general.
 - Effective communication of the LGBTQ+ action plan will ensure that any concerns about the plan are alleviated, and any undue criticisms of LGBTQ+ inclusion and EDI work are anticipated and allayed so that the EDI team can commence work on positive actions.

LEIG Manager outlined a proposal for the order in which we contact stakeholders; however, we will defer to the Provost's Office and VPEE for their thoughts on what is the most effective.

Members commended the thoroughness of the strategy.

Action: LEIG Manager to meet with Provost's Office and VPEE to discuss the communications strategy.

LEIG Manager also discussed an FAQ document that will help anyone who has a role in championing the plan to understand its context and field questions.

The group also discussed potential ways the Provost and senior leadership could demonstrate their support to LGBTQ+ inclusion when the plan is launched. Some suggestions included:

- Donation (one-off or direct debit) to the Gender Expression Fund. This would demonstrate authentic personal commitment to EDI.
- Allyship statements, encompassed by action 2.1 of the LGBTQ+ action plan.
- Attending an LGBTQ+ training with the EDI team as a commitment to further learning and open-mindedness.
- Commit to spotlighting LGBTQ+ work more regularly in comms.
- A video statement.

Students' Union update

Equity and Inclusion Officer introduced themselves and mentioned their manifesto's focus on championing LGBTQ+ rights; they look forward to working with LEIG.

Promoting the success of the LEIG Fund

Members discussed how to effectively spotlight the success of the LEIG Fund. Suggested ideas for promoting projects included hero videos and blogs as these are the most evergreen.

It was also suggested that the Vice Deans of EDI could champion LEIG projects in their faculties as they meet regularly and are supportive of EDI work.

Members also agreed on the importance of various comms teams across UCL promoting this work throughout the year for consistent and widespread coverage.

Action: LEIG Manager to brainstorm with LEIG volunteers and meet with VPEE to discuss ways to promote the LEIG Fund.

Critical friends suggested checking in with volunteers' line managers to ensure they have the capacity to support with this.

International Non-Binary People's Day – responses on social media

Members noted that the Trans Network co-chairs were subjected to transphobic (and in some cases racist) harassment on Twitter following their participation in International Non-Binary People's Day. Members again noted the lack of a social

media policy that advises UCL staff to be respectful online. It was noted that trans people are particularly vulnerable to online harassment and doxing. Doxing is the process of revealing personal details about someone to identify, harass and humiliate them.

There was also discussion as to how appropriate it was for staff to publicly criticise a UCL comms piece featuring their junior transgender colleagues, thus opening them up to offensive comments from the public. This also raised questions about the line between freedom of speech and workplace harassment.

Members noted a greater need for safeguarding staff wellbeing, as well as public support from senior champions to publicly set the tone of respect and ensure LGBTQ+ community members feel supported when participating in EDI work.

One of the Trans Network co-chairs explained that these sorts of incidents reminded them of the bullying that happened at school where harassment would happen off-site and thus allow the school to not take action. It was suggested that UCL needs to be more duly diligent.

Critical friends noted that they were concerned regarding UCL's lack of social media policy. They mentioned that existing dignity and anti-harassment policies could be drawn upon to create this.

However, it was noted that Statute 18 complicates the issue of where the line is between freedom of speech and harassment. Although, it was noted that if UCL expects marginalised groups to continue sharing their knowledge and lived experience in the interest of supporting institutional EDI work, senior members of staff should be expected to vocally support these members of staff.

EDI Director mentioned that HR are developing some UCL guidance regarding cyber harassment and presumes there will be widescale consultation. Also noted this should be an issue noted by the new Pro Provost EDI when they begin their role.

It also noted that senior figures offer soft support to marginalised individuals is appreciated and better than nothing, but there is still a hesitance from those senior figures to directly name the inappropriate behaviour (i.e. avoiding the mention of harassment).

Action: LEIG Manager to speak with EDI Director and HR and report back on the cyber harassment guidance in the next meeting.

Action: LEIG Manager to meet with Trans Network co-chairs and others to discuss examples of Freedom of Speech leading to homo/transphobic and racist harassment online.

Reflections Report

LEIG Manager outlined that a Reflections Report will be drafted to summarise LEIG's tenure, including successes, challenges and hopes for the future. Members were asked to think about the challenges of this work. Based on these reflections, members said it was worth noting the need for:

- A social media policy or disagreeing well guidance.

- Senior support
- Assurance of this work's longevity post LEIG. For example, a clear handover from LEIG Manager to their successor and some timelines of success would be helpful.
- Reviewing how effective it is to 'marking our own homework'. Question raised as to whether a case should be made in the future for UCL to review its relationship with Stonewall in order to regain some external and impartial scrutiny.
- An ongoing (rather than fixed-term) EDI Manager.
- Effectively recognising and rewarding citizenship as volunteers give time to advance EDI.
- Clarity around who will feed into the review of the LGBTQ+ action plan and what this self-audit process would look like.

Action: Members to continue feeding into LEIG Manager regarding reflections and we will review at next meeting.

Action: LEIG Manager to meet with a member to discuss citizenship.

Volunteers for proofreading and feeding back on LGBTQ+ guidance documents

Action: LEIG Manager to speak with colleagues who have volunteered to feedback on LGBTQ+ webpages on EDI website.

Senior allyship

LEIG Manager suggested a need for members to consider senior members of staff who can advocate for the action plan once it's launched. Members shared some details.

Action: everyone to please feedback to LEIG Manager around senior allies. Suggest friends of friends as a way in.