

LGBTQ+ Equality Implementation Group

27 March 2023, 13:00-14:30

MS Teams online meeting

Minutes

Attendees

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

Introductions

The group were joined by two critical friends: an external EDI consultant who has partnered with UCL previously, and a UCL alumna with extensive experience within Higher Education. These two critical friends have informally volunteered their time to act as a sounding board and share their experiences within LGBTQ+ inclusion to guide LEIG's work.

Minutes and actions from previous meeting

Minutes from January's meeting were approved.

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

Updates following the conference at the IOE included: a collaborative conference between UCL and SOAS was organised in February focusing on intersectional feminism; a safe space workshop was run by the SU to support LGBTQ+ students distressed by current events. The SU are also planning to run a conference next academic year focusing on intersectional feminism.

Update on LGBTQ+ staff research project

LEIG received an update on the LGBTQ+ staff research project. 81 members of staff across all faculties were interviewed. The project should be completed in the next couple of months. The lead researcher is still awaiting participants to give their consent on the finalised project. As many participants have shared personal and sensitive experiences, it's important that they are not identified by the report. This process of obtaining consent is taking longer than anticipated.

While project is awaiting finalisation, key trends and issues are already apparent, and the LEIG Manager has used these findings to inform the action plan.

Action: LEIG Manager to re-circulate the most recent action plan for LEIG to read over.

General updates from EDI team

Head of EDI and Interim EDI Director have both left their roles and are being backfilled.

The Octagon Exhibit on LGBTQ+ spaces is now running and was funded by LEIG. The two other successful projects will run in the next academic year. The second round of the LEIG Fund is now open.

LGBT+ History Month piece garnered quadruple the engagement from the staff newsletter than last year which suggests growing interest in this comms work. VPEE are also marking Trans Day of Visibility which will be the first central news piece on this awareness day. LEIG Manager has coordinated a piece in partnership with VPEE.

LGBTQ+ action plan update

LEIG Manager outlined that plan is towards the final draft stage and has had strong engagement with key collaborators, which ensures the actions are feasible. The next step is to get this endorsed by the EDI Committee (EDIC); while we can commence work without this endorsement, having the EDIC's support does give the plan some weight, making the actions more likely to run smoothly,

LEIG Manager was asked about how departments should approach running local training. LEIG Manager said that individual charities and organisations can be used, but ideally, we would want a centralised LGBTQ+ training for all employees to attend. LEIG Manager said that we would want to have training available centrally before the end of the year; however, this might be ambitious and LEIG Manager is meeting with OD to discuss timelines.

LEIG Manager was also asked how UCL will assess progress on LGBTQ+ work now that Stonewall as an external feedback provider is not an option. LEIG Manager said that, once the action plan is approved, we can consider how best to imbed the action plan into the EDI team's business-as-usual and how key stakeholders can provide feedback on this work.

Guidelines for networks

There is desire for some guidelines regarding Out@UCL Teams sites and online spaces to ensure that they are uplifting and trans-inclusive. LEIG Manager said that this is important, though we should await direction from the new Director of EDI as these guidelines should be supported at a senior level to ensure they are robust.

AOB – wellbeing

Following from the above, members noted that staff have become responsible for safeguarding students on a level that is outside of their remit when the institution takes a stance that is detrimental to the wellbeing of LGBTQ+ students. Members noted that acting as a buffer carries a high emotional burden.

External critical friends offered some insight on remedying this. For example, there is a need to develop and support a network of "first responders" with LGBTQ+ knowledge who can support students and staff with these issues. Critical friends also noted that at other universities, these pastoral issues occurred, and staff and fellows were given training on specialist areas to provide support.

It was also noted that Report & Support responses have felt depersonalised and dismissive of concerns. There appears to be a lack of acknowledgement regarding the distress that certain events can have on LGBTQ+ individuals.

This led onto a conversation regarding how LGBTQ+ people and all minority groups are recognised for the emotional labour of supporting staff and students outside of their working remit. Some members made the point that this would come under the institutional citizenship section of UCL's appraisal process. Though it was noted that perhaps there was more that could be done in this space (for example, Inclusion Awards and other forms of recognition) as well as imbedding EDI into all roles.