

University of Essex LGBTQ+ Staff Forum 28/08/2024

Officers

Chair: Stefan Pintilie

Trans Officer: Klaus Rowley

Bi Officer: Cerys Somers

Bi Officer: Aron Hugh

Purpose and Scope

The LGBTQ+ Staff Forum has been established to provide a supportive and inclusive platform for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual and questioning individuals of diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions within the University of Essex. The Forum aims to promote an equitable and inclusive workplace environment, advance LGBTQ+ issues and foster a sense of belonging for all employees and PhD students, regardless of whether they're out at work, or not.

The Forum provides a visible LGBTQ+ presence on our campuses to ensure we create and maintain a safe, inclusive environment in which we can all reach our full potential without fear of harassment or discrimination.

The Forum is self-organising but works in partnership with senior management at the University to ensure that the views and needs of LGBTQ+ staff are recognised and a working environment is created that encourages a culture of respect and equality for everyone, regardless of their sexual orientation and gender identity.

The Forum is self-managed and non-University driven. We are always looking for new members and voluntary coordinators to give a small amount of time to help manage the Forum and represent the Forum at events.

As a network, we are inclusive of people with multiple identities, and we aim to work with other staff networks to collaborate on areas such as gender, race and disability. We strive to provide a safe and confidential space for all members of the LGBTQ+ community.

Objectives

The aims of the group are:

- a. To provide a safe, confidential, and supportive environment for staff who identify as LGBTQ+ to meet and share experiences, opinions and concerns. This includes online meetings, physical meetings, event invites, and conversations within the closed subscription mailing list.
- b. To provide confidential support to all LGBTQ+ identified employees on LGBTQ+ issues.
- c. To provide networking, encouragement and peer support to LGBTQ+ staff.
- d. To be a visible group that can inform and influence the University's approach to LGBTQ+ issues by contributing experience, expertise and ideas.
- e. To promote the interests of LGBTQ+ staff employed at the University of Essex.
- f. To raise awareness of LGBTQ+ issues at the University.
- g. To celebrate significant events in LGBTQ+ culture and history.
- h. To promote education and knowledge sharing, empowering champions and equipping allies with information and confidence to challenge incidents of discrimination or harassment.
- i. To provide a confidential forum to discuss issues related to LGBTQ+ staff at the University and identify ways of challenging discrimination and stereotyping amongst colleagues, peers, students, visitors and stakeholders.
- j. To act as a consultation forum for the University of Essex People and Culture Department during the development of new and existing policies through strong links with the Inclusion Team.
- k. To contribute to staff development activities and training in LGBTQ+ related areas.
- l. To support the University's application to the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index.
- m. To identify good practice internally and externally from appropriate sources and provide links with external LGBTQ+ communities, groups and organisations.
- n. To communicate information and updates about LGBTQ+ events, events aimed at addressing the Forum's intersectional identities, staff development and other resources to Forum members.

Strategy for Intersectional Representation and Inclusion

- a. In order to be as inclusive as possible, the forum shall identify termly intersectional events and activities to be delivered or supported in partnership with the following networks (chosen for their historic underrepresentation within the University LGBTQ+ Staff Forum):
 - a. Trans and Non-binary Forum

- b. Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Staff Forum
 - c. Parents' Network
 - d. Access Forum
- b. The forum shall also promote, seek out or provide opportunities for members to attend events in relation to other protected characteristics including, but not confined to, faith, age, pregnancy and maternity and race.

Membership and Meetings

- a. Membership in the Forum is open to all employees who self-identify as LGBTQI+.
- b. Membership does not require disclosure of one's sexual orientation or gender identity.
- c. To become a member, individuals may simply express their intent to join the Form by subscribing to the closed subscription mailing list.
- d. All members are encouraged to actively participate in Forum activities and meetings. The Forum is organised by volunteer staff members who have offered up their time and services and who have been elected by other members of the LGBT+ Forum so they might act as liaisons for the group with senior University staff and Human Resources.
- f. Meetings are held approximately once a month. Dates, times and venue details of meetings are circulated using the Forum mailing list, and an online link provided for those members working from home or at other campuses.
- g. At least one termly "formal" business meeting will be held, to which the University Inclusion Champions for LGBT+ and Trans and Non-binary Staff may be invited. This meeting will be clearly labelled as such.
- h. There may be social events scheduled that will be open to all staff, friends and family of network members, or members of the LGBT+ Allies Group. These events will be clearly labelled as "open" to protect the identities of those members who may not be out to colleagues, friends, or family members.
- i. The group will aim to have regular meetings throughout the year, with video link between campuses.
- j. The group will aim to ensure intersectionality is supported by offering up standing agenda items for both bi and trans issues to be raised and by supporting and promoting events put on by other EDI networks.
- k. The group will aim to organise at least one social event per term, potentially in partnership with the Allies.

- l. Any member of staff who attends a meeting or joins the mailing list is considered a member of the Forum, unless they explicitly choose to opt out of membership.
- m. Mailing lists and Outlook invites will be monitored by the elected officers to ensure the confidentiality of the groups' members is protected. Members with concerns around confidentiality may broach these with the Network Chairs. We encourage and welcome suggestions for discussion topics for future network meetings and value input from members to help shape the group.
- n. Members of the Network are expected to treat each other with dignity and respect, in line with the University's Zero Tolerance Approach and Acceptable Behaviour Policy.
- o. Members are asked to respect the confidentiality of colleagues, since attendance at Forum meetings or as part of the Forum mailing list does not imply that any individual is open about their LGBTQ+ identity within the wider University.
- p. Members should understand that the mailing list, while expected to be confidential to members of the LGBTQ+ Forum, cannot be regulated as such as it is still vulnerable to Freedom of Information requests as it is maintained on the University server.

Governance

- a. The Forum will be governed by a Chair, or Co-Chairs, elected through a democratic process, and a set of officers representing different identities within the Forum (namely a Bi and Trans Officer) along with administrative officers, to be determined by the Chair and Forum at its first annual business meeting.
- b. The election process of officers will be as follows:
 - a. The Forum shall announce the upcoming election at least two weeks in advance.
 - b. Forum members interested in running for the position of Chair shall submit their candidacy in writing.
 - c. A member of the Forum not running for office shall release an email vote in the form of a survey to members of the Forum.
 - d. Members of the Forum will have the opportunity to cast their votes for the Chair candidates during a specified voting period.
 - e. The candidate with the highest number of votes will be declared as role holder.
- c. Term Limits
 - a. The Chair may serve a maximum of two consecutive terms (one term being equivalent to one academic year).

- b. After serving two consecutive terms, a Chair must step down from the position for a minimum of 1 year before being eligible to run for re-election.
- d. Amendment of Terms of Reference
 - a. These terms of reference shall be reviewed annually at the first business meeting of each academic year.
 - b. Amendments may be made by a majority vote of Network members during a termly Business meeting. Proposed amendments should be communicated to all members with reasonable notice in advance of the meeting.