

LGBT Staff Network Submission to the UCC Equality Committee Annual Report

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LGBT Staff Network Chair**

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1. Key Activities and Positive Developments

The primary aim of the LGBT Staff Network, set up in 2007 and publicly launched by President Michael Murphy in 2008, is to work in partnership with management and staff of UCC to create a safe, inclusive and diverse working environment at the University that encourages a culture of respect and equality for everyone regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, in order that every individual can reach their full potential without fear of discrimination. The Network acts as consultation forum on LGBT employment and welfare related issues for the Department of Human Resources; provides a forum for networking, information and peer support; works to increase the visibility of the Network in UCC and engage in outreach activities; and liaises with other groups, including staff and student societies in other third level institutions in Ireland and abroad to share information and best practice.

The Staff Network has made a significant contribution to equality, diversity and inclusion at UCC in all of these areas over the past year:

1.1 Consultation forum on LGBT employment and welfare related issues for the Department of Human Resources – Following an initiative by the LGBT Staff Network, members of the Network committee met with Mr. Barry O’Brien, Director of HR, on 24th March 2015 to discuss the current state of University equality policies and procedures with respect to its lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender staff. At this meeting we proposed that the University join the GLEN Diversity Champions workplace equality programme, intended to promote the inclusion of LGBT employees in the workplace. The matter was referred to the University Equality Committee, which at the time lay dormant due to the departure of its former Chair. The Staff Network successfully lobbied for the appointment of a new Chair, and at successive meetings of the Equality Committee for its unanimous endorsement of UCC’s membership in Diversity Champions. On 19th October 2016 UCC formally launched its membership, joining TCD and UCD and other third level institutions, and making it the first institution in the Munster region to do so. The Network is currently liaising with the HR Department regarding the implementation of the programme.

1.2 Forum for networking, information and peer support – The Network has organised numerous ‘meet and greet’ sessions and coffee mornings open to all members of University staff. With financial support from the University Staff and Social Club in the form of a

successful small grant application, it organised a public seminar on Religion and Homosexuality featuring contributions by expert guest speakers from the Universities of Nottingham and Chester in the U.K. We regularly respond to information queries by members of staff, and offer support where necessary. Members receive regular news and information updates via the Network's email distribution list.

1.3 Visibility and outreach activities – The Network was exceptionally active and visible during the successful marriage equality referendum campaign. We organised a very well attended public seminar at UCC featuring contributions by staff from the disciplines of Law, Government, and Applied Social Studies, and committee members published a wide range of local and national newspaper articles in the lead-up to the vote. We also engaged extensively with local LGBT community organisations, forging ties and contributing to the Cork LGBT Awareness Week.

1.4 Liaison with societies in other third level institutions to share information and best practice – The Network has played a leading role in this area over the past year. Committee members met with our counterparts in Trinity College Dublin to help them form their own LGBT Staff Network. These efforts bore fruit with the launch of the TCD Network in 2016. Following initiatives by the UCC committee, we have since met on several occasions with our counterparts in TCD and UCD to share information and best practice and collaborate on the creation of a national LGBT Staff Network.

2. Areas of Concern

There are a number of areas of serious concern that need to be addressed by the University as a matter of urgency.

2.1 Continuing prejudice and discrimination against LGBT staff – Stigma, prejudice, and discrimination create a stressful and sometimes hostile environment that can significantly affect the wellbeing of LGBT staff. Not being 'out' means consciously hiding crucial aspects of one's life, adjusting stories about the weekend to filter out any references to your sexuality, coming up with excuses for events where partners are invited. It is a conscious and constant effort to not be yourself in your professional environment. LGBT people are sometimes passed over for promotion, disciplined unfairly or even dismissed for no good reason. They may find that they are described as not being 'team players', due to conscious or unconscious bias on the part of line managers or because they are unable to be entirely open about their personal or social lives.¹

¹ See further: Waldo, Craig (1999) 'Working in a majority context: A structural model of heterosexism as minority stress in the workplace', *Journal of Counselling Psychology* 46(2): 218; Meyer, Ilan (2003) 'Prejudice, social stress, and mental health in lesbian, gay, and bisexual populations: conceptual issues and research evidence', *Psychological Bulletin* 129(5): 674.

UCC can seek to counter such experiences by mainstreaming LGBT equality and visibly securing an LGBT-friendly work environment where one can be oneself in a culture of respect, and where one will be fully supported by the organisation in cases where this has negative consequences.²

2.2 Lack of specific support structures and policies for transgender and intersex staff and students – In contrast to other leading Universities in Ireland such as Trinity College Dublin and University College Dublin, UCC has almost no support structures in place for its transgender and intersex staff and students. It has also largely failed to address the distinctive needs and concerns of its non-binary staff and students. While the University is currently preparing its first Gender Identity and Gender Expression Policy Document, much more work needs to be done in this area as a matter of urgency.

2.3 Absence of necessary infrastructure, governance structures and financial support to address these problems – As highlighted at the Workshop on the Public Sector Duty in Universities and Institutes of Technology, held at UCC on 17th October 2016, UCC currently lacks the equality and inclusion infrastructure and governance structures necessary to address these issues. This means that a disproportionate share of the burden of addressing them falls on a very small number of staff in the Equality Committee and HR Department. It also entails an unsustainable *ad hoc* approach to matters that require long-term strategic planning.

More specifically, almost all of the workload for addressing LGBT-related staff issues at UCC is currently borne by the LGBT Staff Liaison Officer and Chair of the LGBT Staff Network (both of these elected positions are presently occupied by the same individual). In contrast to its counterparts at other third level institutions (e.g., Trinity College Dublin), the LGBT Staff Network receives no University financial support and thus must rely almost exclusively on small voluntary staff member contributions insufficient to fund any but the most meagre activities. The tremendous amount of work currently undertaken by a handful of staff members on the committee is without any financial remuneration or (for the most part) University recognition, and while the LGBT Staff Liaison Officer is formally entitled to ‘release from work duties, expenses, etc. as per the usual norms agreed by HR for trade union representatives’ this has not been recognised or implemented at School or Department level.

2.4 Delay in acting on the Equality Committee’s recommendations regarding the Diversity Champions programme – The LGBT Staff Network formally proposed to HR that the University join GLEN’s Diversity Champions workplace equality programme in March 2015.

² See further: King, Eden B., and Jose M. Cortina (2010) ‘The social and economic imperative of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered supportive organizational policies’, *Industrial and Organizational Psychology* 3(1): 69-78; Özbilgin, M.F., Beauregard, T.A., and Sürgevil, O. (2011) ‘Voice, silence, and diversity in 21st century organizations: Strategies for inclusion of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender employees’, *Human Resource Management* 50(1): 131-146.

The Equality Committee unanimously endorsed this recommendation in November 2015. One year later, the HR induction and policy checklists sent to the Department of Human Resources following the University's decision to join the programme in April 2016 have not yet been returned. The University has also not yet acted on the Equality Committee's recommendation that it submit a Workplace Equality Award application for 2017.

3. Recommendations for Reform, Additional Resources, New Strategy

The LGBT Staff Network requests – in a spirit of partnership – that the following concrete actions be considered by the University as a two year, LGBTI equality action plan, until the end of the Academic Session 2017-2018.

3.1 Strategic

- Develop an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy for staff and students which fully mainstreams LGBTI equality, as well as a formal Gender Identity and Gender Expression Policy document supporting Transgender staff and students in the University. Take all necessary actions to ensure that the culture and practice of the University supports the implementation of the policy.
- Take proactive steps to ensure LGBTI employees can come out at work without any negative impact on their careers by ensuring that an appropriate workplace culture and diversity policies and procedures are in place and universally understood.
- Promote affirmative disclosure: Coming out at work is a profoundly personal decision. Employers should be a sensitive facilitator to those who wish to come out at work. Disclosure should be welcomed, but no pressure should be exerted on LGBTI individuals to disclose their identity.
- Consider ways that LGBTI staff can be recognised in the University with UCC proactively demonstrating that it values its LGBTI staff and that UCC is an LGBTI friendly workplace and employer.

3.2 Culture & Leadership

- Create role models by publicising the success of high profile LGBTI people in UCC.
- Ensure that the UMT leadership, Heads of School and Unit Managers understand and enact their critical roles in creating an inclusive and respectful culture for LGBTI employees.
- Appoint a senior-level champion for LGBTI equality who does not need to be LGBTI themselves (as occurs in the Irish Prison Service, Dublin Bus, Google, Microsoft, IBM and Accenture).
- Good policy on its own is never enough – it must be made to live within the organisation. Conduct regular measurement of the perceived workplace culture on key attributes related to equality, diversity and inclusion.

- Mainstream LGBTI equality within social and informal settings, making it clear that social events which include partners and children are equally open to same-sex partners and their children.

3.3 GLEN Diversity Champions & LGBT Staff Network

- Demonstrate active support for the UCC LGBT Staff Network and communicate to all Heads of Schools and Heads of Unit in the University that members of the Network are entitled to attend Network meetings and events as part of their working day.
- Allocate an annual University stipend to support the work of the Network.
- Communicate to the relevant Heads of Department and School the University's policy that the LGBT Staff Liaison Officer is formally entitled to 'release from work duties, expenses, etc. as per the usual norms agreed by HR for trade union representatives'.
- UCC to sign up for the GLEN Workplace Equality Index with a submission in 2017 that is championed by the President and UMT.

3.4 Equality Data

- Collect, analyse, report on and benchmark UCC in relation to LGBTI equality data concerning:
 - Staff recruitment, selection and promotion.
 - Employee engagement.
 - Membership of University decision making committees, groups and forums.
 - Monitor and track employee perceptions of LGBTI diversity and inclusion over time.
 - Support through Strand A of EDI research seed funding an online, UCC staff survey of LGBTI awareness and engagement in the workplace.

3.5 HR Recruitment, Selection & Training

- Building upon the LGBTI staff survey, undertake an assessment of and action plan aimed at eliminating barriers to the participation and promotion of LGBTI staff in the University.
- Mainstream LGBTI equality within the promotions and development policies and frameworks for Faculty, Technical and Professional Staff at UCC.
- Mainstream LGBTI equality in recruitment by actively including LGBTI staff in recruitment materials and communications, thereby encouraging LGBTI people to apply for jobs in UCC (see example of a job advertisement from the University of Sheffield Hallam in the appendix, page 9).
- Mainstream LGBTI equality in staff training by developing training to challenge stereotypes about LGBTI people by, for example, including LGBTI staff as a category to be acknowledged as part of staff induction training and training of managers; and

as specific examples in workplace anti-bullying and harassment campaigns & procedures.

- Make the unconscious bias training that is currently being rolled out at UCC mandatory for every staff member in a leadership or management position including Heads of Schools, Programme Deans, Graduate School Directors, Unit Managers, Line Managers and everyone who participates on an interview board.
- Incorporate LGBTI awareness and information into new staff orientation day presentations.

3.6 Performance Management, Terms & Conditions

- Mainstream LGBTI equality within the framework for promotions.
- Include LGBTI employees in any oral or written examples UCC uses to explain to staff their work related benefits.
- Communications to all staff about their terms and conditions should never assume that they are either heterosexual or LGBTI.

3.7 Communications

- Images used in publicity materials send a powerful message and should include same-sex couples where appropriate. Revisit public statements, images and communications which are used to market UCC to potential students to ensure they recognise the diversity of people who use UCC services and include LGBTI staff and students.

3.8 Supporting Transgender and Intersex Staff and Students

- Include Transgender staff as a group of under-represented and disadvantaged staff to be mainstreamed within and supported through the UCC Athena Swan Initiative.
- Introduce a programme of training by the Transgender Equality Network (TENI) for UCC staff on supporting transgender students, and a programme for line managers and Heads of School/Unit for supporting transgender employees.
- Review UCC student and staff registration processes to expand the gender options that students can select. The rigid adherence to M and F as the only options on student records is deeply problematic for non-binary and intersex students.
- Allow staff and students to alter their UCC email accounts to reflect the name that they are using to identify themselves.
- Gender neutral bathrooms are of very significant benefit to the non-binary or gender fluid constituency of the Transgender community. Conduct a best practice study to identify how this is being addressed in other universities - both in Ireland and abroad - in conjunction with an audit of the current toilet facilities in UCC that are male, female, disabled and unisex.

- As an interim measure on gender neutral bathrooms run an information and awareness campaign to lessen the amount of hostility that some Transgender people encounter when they use bathrooms on campus.
- Establish a programme to raise Transgender and particularly Intersex awareness for all staff in the University, Faculty, Professional and Technical.
- Establish a formal dialogue between the University and Trans students by means of engagement with the relevant student societies and SU representatives.

3.9 Developing the Necessary University Infrastructure and Governance Structures to Engage with Equality and Inclusion Issues at UCC

- Appoint a Vice President for Equality and Inclusion, as recommended by the HEA and in accordance with the University's Public Sector Duty obligations.
- Enhance equality linkages with academic committees.
- Introduce equality committees at School and Department levels.
- Establish regular consultations with trades unions regarding equality issues.
- Organise workshops to determine national and international best practice regarding equality and inclusion governance structures, following the example of the 17th October 2016 UCC Workshop on the Public Sector Duty in Universities and Institutes of Technology.

4. KEY PRIORITIES OVER THE NEXT YEAR UNTIL THE END OF THE ACADEMIC SESSION 2016-17

- Mainstream LGBTI equality within the promotions and development policies and frameworks for Faculty, Technical and Professional Staff at UCC.
- Introduce a programme of training by the Transgender Equality Network (TENI) for UCC staff on supporting transgender students, and a programme for line managers and Heads of School/Unit for supporting transgender employees.
- Support through Strand A of EDI research seed funding an online UCC staff survey of LGBTI awareness and engagement in the workplace in partnership with GLEN.
- Develop an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy for staff and students which fully mainstreams LGBTI equality, as well as a formal Gender Identity and Gender Expression Policy document supporting Transgender staff and students in the University. Take all necessary actions to ensure that the culture and practice of the University supports the implementation of the policy.
- Appoint a senior-level champion for LGBTI equality who does not need to be LGBTI themselves.

- Communicate to the relevant Heads of Department and School the University's policy that the LGBT Staff Liaison Officer is formally entitled to 'release from work duties, expenses, etc. as per the usual norms agreed by HR for trade union representatives'.
- UCC to sign up for the GLEN Workplace Equality Index with a submission in 2017 that is championed by the President and UMT.

APPENDIX: EQUALITY & DIVERSITY PAGE FROM A STANDARD RECRUITMENT ADVERTISEMENT, SHEFFIELD HALLAM UNIVERSITY

Equality and diversity

Equality and diversity are essential to our academic and business strengths. We believe that excellence comes through recognising the value of each individual.

We aim to create an environment that respects the value of each individual and the diversity of staff and students in the University's community. This will enable them to contribute fully, and to derive the maximum benefit and enjoyment from their involvement in University life.

POSITIVE ABOUT DISABILITY

We use the two ticks symbol, along with other likeminded employers, to show our commitment to good practice in employing people with a disability. It also enables people with a disability to know which employers will be positive about their abilities.



LEADING ON WOMEN IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

The increasing role that women play in a variety of science, engineering and technology roles at Sheffield Hallam University has been acknowledged with the Athena SWAN Bronze Award.



ONE OF THE BEST UNIVERSITIES IN THE UK TO BE GAY

We are proud to be a Stonewall Diversity Champion, and we are one of only six universities to achieve 10 out of 10 in Stonewall's Gay by Degree Guide 2015 which rates gay-friendly universities.



IMPROVING EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR ETHNIC MINORITIES

As a member of Race for Opportunity, we are committed to improving employment opportunities for ethnic minorities across the UK. We achieved the silver banding for race inclusion in the Business in the Community Gender and Race Benchmark 2014.

