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**A conversation with LGBTQ+ students on the
importance of joining an inclusive workplace:
HEIs and Employers**

Summary

Issues

Access and Widening
Participation (WP)

WP in the workplace

WP in HE

Inclusive Employers

- Successful recruitment strategies for postgrads
- Successful participation strategies for postgrads

Conclusions: joint efforts

Issues:

- Graduates go back into the closet when they enter the job market (62%)
- First employment
- Isolation, invisibility, and marginalisation
- Discrimination
- Fear of... (the above)

 **The Economist** ▸ **Pride and Prejudice**
3 March 2016 · 🌐

62% of graduates go back into the closet when they move from university into employment, says Lloyd's CEO Inga Beale. We need to start using words like lesbian, gay and transgender more openly #EconPride

“When I came out, my team were so nervous they didn’t know what to say. Barely



What is it like being LGBT in the workplace today?

- Employment protection only came in to place for LGB people in **2003**
- **1 in 5** (19%) LGB people still experience bullying and harassment at work
- **26%** of LGB workers are not at all open about their sexual orientation at work
- **62%** of graduates go back into the closet when they enter the job market
- **More than half** (55%) of trans people have experienced negative comments or behaviour at work because of being trans

 **Stonewall**
Cymru


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#CyfartalynyGwaith
#EqualatWork

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 **Stonewall**
Acceptance without exception

How can LGBTQ+ people feel welcome in the workplace, if the norm is to stay closeted?

- 1 LGBT people may still find “differential treatment due to their sexual identity”, homophobia and transphobia in the workplace, and can feel isolated even in ostensibly “LGBT friendly” environments ([Rumens & Kerfoot, 2009: 765](#)).
- 2 Stereotypes that confuse gender expression for gender identity or that mistake sexual orientation with gender identity may also lead to stigma in the workplace (Yoder and Mattheis, 2016: 6).
- 3 Discrimination and the fear of discrimination have a negative impact on LGBT people in the workplace (Pizer et al., 2012), and the resulting higher anxiety is often found correlated to **lower rates of successes and job satisfaction** ([see Griffith & Hebl, 2002](#)).

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4

Organisations fail to realise that a ‘non-political’ or apolitical behaviour is, in fact, **a political statement by itself**, which may marginalise members of the community. Similarly, ‘non-action’ can be perceived as a statement by the broader community.

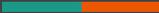
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Not actively involved in LGBTQ+ debates, or when they are simply not aware of inclusive policies, they may be perceived as making a statement. They may be indirectly validating heteronormative discriminatory behaviours, and contributing to obliterate the visibility of, and further marginalise, communities whose very existence is political ([Rumens 2014](#)).

6

LGBTQ+ individuals continue to experience workplace “invisibility, erasure, and silence, both self- and other imposed” (Hill 2009: p. 38). According to recent surveys in STEM, c. 40% to 50% LGBTQ professionals are “open to no one” or “to a few” of their co-workers ([Human Rights Campaign Foundation 2014; Yoder and Mattheis, 2016](#)).

WP in the Workplace



1. Identify the barriers faced by LGBT candidates and staff in the recruitment process and career development pathways
2. Explore how to evaluate your current recruitment campaigns and learn creative ways to **engage LGBT jobseekers**
3. Identify ways to increase participation of LGBT employees in existing career development pathways and use your employee network group to enhance career development opportunities

WP in HE

- HEIs to dedicate resources for LGBT+ students in **Widening Participation** departments to improve support for students not just on recruitment and outreach programmes, but also for success and progression (as part of WP strategies).
- WP in certain universities already support LBGT+ students, both UG and PG.
- The key to successfully widening participation is through attracting students from different groups and ensuring that they are **successful not only in moving into employment but also in securing appropriate graduate employment.**





WP in HE

Without role models of individuals from their communities who have succeeded in this way, many in the target groups will simply continue with the view that HE is for the privileged and ‘not for the likes of them’. In other words, to ensure that the sector really changes and widens participation as a whole, there is a need to approach the strategies and activities holistically and to include changes in learning and teaching and **student support arrangements within that approach, including employment and career.**

The HEFCE advised HEIs to develop widening participation strategies in accordance with the ‘**Student Life Cycle**’ which broke down the possible stages of engagement an HEI could have with a learner so as to help them succeed. The Student Life Cycle was broken down initially into the following stages (HEFCE, 2001b): Aspiration Raising, Pre-entry support, Welcoming and induction, In-course support, **Employment and career.**



Inclusive employers

Successful recruitment strategies for postgrads. However, employers' practices can discriminate against graduates from under-represented groups: promote good practice amongst employers. Purcell et al (2002, p.16) good practice adopted by employers encompasses the following characteristics:

- **Recruitment** is intertwined with marketing – business case for diversity and use new approaches to reach students from different institutions, backgrounds and ages.
- **Clarity about the skills and competencies** sought, and therefore avoid requirements that indirectly exclude some graduates (e.g. flexibility of working hours and/or place).
- Effective **networks with professional associations and HEIs** to help ensure they reach graduates they need, and that these potential employees are encouraged to apply.
- They offer flexible work patterns.
- They align **practice with policy** and manage human resources strategically, even when aspects of the recruitment process are outsourced. This involves staff training to help eradicate **bias from the recruitment process**, and ensuring commitment at all levels of the organisation, e.g. via a '**senior champion**'.



Inclusive employers

Successful participation strategies for postgrads. In an article from the Nature Careers Community, Neil Reavey (2019) suggests simple steps to improve inclusivity, and empower LGBTQ+ employees and the wider community:

1. Creating events and a local network for students, researchers and employees
2. Creating development opportunities to inspire others
3. Collaborating with other LGBTQ+ charities and groups
4. Become a recognised organisation for LGBTQ+ inclusion

Other suggestions include

1. The use of **gender-neutral and inclusive language**, offering **gender-neutral toilets**
2. Inviting LGBTQ+ speakers and role models to the workplace
3. Supporting local and regional LGBTQ+ events ([LGBT+ Physicists, 2013](#))

Conclusions: joint efforts. HE sector and employers

- A collaborative approach
- Universities' duty of care
- Universities WP strategies to include success and career developments, especially in identifying inclusive employers
- Collaborations with Career Services of universities
- Awards and accreditations: e.g. Stonewall
- Good inspirations from PSEQ (Equality Duty) and Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG)
- Effective networks with professional associations and HEIs





Thanks