



Supporting Lesbian, Gay, Bi Trans, Queer, Questioning (LGBTQ+) staff and students

We aim to maintain and promote an environment where members of the Cranfield community whatever their sexuality, gender identity or expression, feel equally welcome and valued, in line with our [University Values](#).

Introduction

LGBTQ+ identities can seem like a complex area especially for members of staff/managers who are not LGBTQ+ themselves, do not know any LGBTQ+ people or who have little experience of managing diverse teams. This guidance is intended to equip members of staff/managers with the understanding and expertise they need to support LGBTQ+ members of staff/students and create an inclusive, high-performing team.

According to Stonewall, it is estimated that that 5-7% of the population in the UK define themselves as LGBTQ+.

What is the definition of lesbian, gay, bi,trans, queer and questioning (LGBTQ+)?

Sexual orientation is an enduring sexual, emotional and/or romantic attraction towards others. Heterosexuals are attracted to members of the opposite gender while homosexuals are attracted to members of their own gender.

- **Lesbian** - refers to a woman who has an emotional, romantic and/or sexual orientation towards women.
- **Gay** - refers to a man who has an emotional, romantic and/or sexual orientation towards men. It is also a generic term for lesbian and gay sexuality - some women or non-binary people define themselves as gay rather than lesbian.
- **Bi** - Refers to a person who has an emotional and/or sexual orientation towards more than one gender.
- **Trans** – an umbrella term to describe people whose gender is not the same as, or does not sit comfortably with, the sex they were assigned at birth. Trans people may describe themselves using one or more of a wide variety of terms, including (but not limited to) transgender, cross dresser, non-binary, genderqueer (GQ).

- Queer – is a term used by those wanting to reject specific labels of romantic orientation, sexual orientation and/or gender identity.
- Questioning – is the process of exploring your own sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

Further definitions can be found here on the Universities [LGBTQ+ Glossary of Terms](#).

For the purpose of this guidance:

- the term 'identity' will cover (but is not limited to) sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.
- 'harassment and bullying' will cover (but are not limited to) homophobic, biphobia and transphobic behaviour.

Being 'out' at work/at University

Some members of staff/students may regard others or their own 'identity' as a private matter. However, whether a staff member/student feels comfortable to be 'out' at work or University (open about their identity) or not can impact on their performance and wellbeing. Research by Stonewall has demonstrated that staff who are out at work are overwhelmingly more content at work and consider that their performance improves too.

LGBTQ+ people who are not 'out' are unlikely to complain about harassment or bullying for fear that if they do, their identity will become widely known. Those who are not out at work/University may feel they need to adopt different identities between home and work/University, and act in a way that is inconsistent with their own identity. They may therefore experience isolation and invisibility because their true self is not known to others.

LGBTQ+ people are often vulnerable to being 'outed' against their will (perhaps inadvertently by colleagues or fellow students). This may have consequences where some members of staff or students have strongly opposing beliefs, as it may cause concerns about the possibility of homophobic, biphobia or transphobic bullying or harassment.

LGBTQ+ members of staff and students should be in control about who they are out to and when. Some LGBTQ+ people may be comfortable for some colleagues/students to know and not others – partially out - so it is not appropriate to assume that others know about a colleague or fellow student's identity. Deliberately outing a colleague or student can be very harmful and considered harassment under the University's [Dignity at Work](#) and/or [Dignity at Study policy](#).

The experience of LGBTQ+ people

LGBTQ+ people can face particular issues in wider society. For example:

- They may experience pressure to conform to 'cultural norms' and have to acquire coping strategies to confront bias and hostility. Knowing that being out can make them more vulnerable to prejudice, and deciding who to trust can be stressful;
- Where an LGBTQ+ person is not out, they may be concerned about work events and social gatherings where there is an expectation of being accompanied by a partner;
- According to research by Stonewall, some lesbians and bi women consider that being a woman is a bigger barrier at work than being gay, and so will be wary about being out at work to avoid double discrimination;
- There is a conflict for some people between their faith and sexual orientation. Some people of faith can be hostile to LGBTQ+ people, which can alienate LGBTQ+ people of faith. Similarly, some LGBTQ+ people of faith face discrimination from people who believe people cannot be LGBTQ+ and a person of faith.
- LGBTQ+ staff may be seen by colleagues as role models for LGBTQ+ students and thus it may be assumed that they will undertake all the pastoral care of LGBTQ+ students, which may be burdensome. There may also be assumptions that an out LGBTQ+ staff member will take responsibility for LGBTQ+ issues in the workplace;
- Bi people may face a struggle for acceptance with either lesbian or gay people as well as with heterosexual colleagues;
- Black and minority ethnic LGBTQ+ people sometimes feel they have to choose whether to identify with their ethnicity or sexual orientation, rather than both. They may face racism from other LGBTQ+ people or homophobia from people from the same cultural or ethnic background.

It is important not to make assumptions about someone's identity, for example, try use 'partner' rather than 'girlfriend' or 'husband' in conversation unless they state otherwise.

Harassment of LGBTQ+ people at work/at University

LGBTQ+ people, and those perceived to be LGBTQ+, sometimes experience homophobia, biphobia or transphobia, hostility, harassment or prejudice which can go unrecognised and unchallenged.

One of the most common manifestation of this is 'jokes' and banter in their place of work or study, which members of staff/managers need to 'nip in the bud' where it promotes negative stereotypes of LGBTQ+ people or uses offensive language e.g. the word 'gay' in a pejorative sense.

When used appropriately, banter can be fun, team-building, reduce stress and raise morale. However, it can also contribute towards a hostile environment, even when it

is not directed towards a singular individual banter may cause an LGBTQ+ person who is not open about their sexuality to feel unsafe. Managers or members of staff should intervene if they think someone is feeling uncomfortable and stop any offensive comments. If in doubt seek advice from the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team.

Managers or members of staff who do not take firm action to curtail inappropriate banter and jokes could be viewed as complicit in the harassment and risk low team morale, reduced productivity, and complaints from staff.

Trans staff/students

Trans issues are distinct from sexual orientation issues, although they are sometimes conflated. Someone who identifies as Trans is someone whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs to the gender they were assigned at birth. They might have identified with the opposite gender from an early age.

Some trans people may choose to affirm their gender through medical treatment instead of using gender reassignment. Gender reassignment is an outdated and contested term, and largely focused on binary and medical notions of transitioning.

Transition at work is a crucial part of the process, 40% of Trans people are not living permanently in their affirmed gender because of fear of discrimination in the workplace.

Examples of transphobia may include:

- Deliberately ignoring someone's preferred gender pronouns or using their former name
- Disclosing someone's trans history without consent
- Gossiping or speculating about someone's gender
- Questioning someone's ability to 'pass' as their affirmed gender

It is best not to assume how someone identifies but to ask which terms they use and the gender pronouns they would prefer you to use.

Reclaiming 'queer'

The word queer has a complex history and has been used pejoratively against members of the LGBTQ+ community. However, the word is being reclaimed by LGBTQ+ people with some seeing it as an inclusive term that encompasses different sexual orientations, gender expressions and gender identities.

Not all members of the LGBTQ+ community are comfortable with this word because of the way it has been used in the past, but some people choose to identify themselves as queer. It is not appropriate to refer to a person as queer unless they have explicitly stated that they identify as such.

Being an LGBTQ+ Ally

Listen, learn: With an open mind speak with your LGBTQ+ colleagues/students, but be respectful if people don't want to talk about their personal experiences.

Challenge assumptions: Don't assume you know your colleagues' or students' gender and/or sexual orientation. Remember, even if someone has a same-gender partner they may not identify as gay or lesbian, they might be bi or queer or rather not label themselves at all.

Speak up: Banter or jokes about someone's sexual orientation and/or gender identity /expression can be harmful. As an ally it is important not to let others do this and to call it out. Gently but firmly let them know that it's not ok. Sometimes LGBTQ+ people don't want to be the only ones calling people out, and your voice can make a powerful difference to someone else's life. However, please do consider when it might be more appropriate to give the floor to an LGBTQ+ person to allow them to speak for themselves (but if the situation becomes more contentious, they should contact their local HR team for support).

Information and support for LGBTQ+ students

The University understands that LGBTQ+ students may face different challenges during their time at the University, therefore the following information has been provided regarding welfare support and information.

Support

The University has a confidential counselling service that is available to all students free of charge. When required, personal counsellors seek to help students to focus clearly on their problems and to work towards an outcome which the individual student feels to be appropriate. Further details can be found [here](#).

Dignity at Study

Underpinning the University's [Dignity at Study Policy](#) is the belief that staff and students should be free from intimidation or discrimination, harassment and bullying. Harassment in any form is unacceptable behaviour and will not be permitted or condoned by the University.

You may seek a confidential discussion with any of the staff listed below that you feel able to approach. You have the right to be accompanied at such a discussion by a friend or representative of the Cranfield Students' Association. The purpose of the discussion will be to discuss the nature of the problem and how to arrive at an acceptable solution through informal channels.

The following members of staff can be approached for support, advice or assistance:

- Staff in the Student Advice Centre (including the Head of Student Support and Wellbeing)

- Tutors/Supervisors, Course Directors, or other staff closely linked with the management of your studies
- Directors of Education and Directors of Research
- Staff in Education Services (including the Academic Registrar and the Assistant Registrars)
- Staff in the Cranfield Students' Association
- Heads of Academic and Administrative Departments

Other useful internal resources

[General Student Handbook](#)

[Student Handbook \(Student Welfare\)](#)

[Student Advice Centre](#)

Further Resources (Staff and Students):

Internal support

- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team diversity@cranfield.ac.uk
- [Glossary of Terms](#)
- [Dignity at Work Policy](#)
- [Diversity & Inclusion Strategy](#)
- [PAM Assist](#)

External support

- [stonewall.org.uk/](https://www.stonewall.org.uk/) UK's leading LGBTQ+ advocacy organisation
- [LGBT+ switchboard](#) provide an information, support and referral service considering issues around their sexuality and/or gender identity.
- [Helpline – Galop](#) support all LGBT+ people who've experienced hate crime, domestic abuse or sexual violence
- [QTIPOC organisations](#) - This is a list curated by the Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic/People of Colour Staff Network of the organisations, community groups and social spaces that are creating incredible work and support for QTIPOC (queer, trans and intersex) people in the UK.
- [Opening Doors London](#) is the largest UK charity providing activities, events, information and support services specifically (LGBTQ+) people over 50.
- [Mermaids](#) supports transgender, nonbinary and gender-diverse children and young people until their 20th birthday, as well as their families and professionals involved in their care.
- [Biscuit](#) is a mixed purpose organisation catering to modern bi women, femmes and those assigned female at birth. Biscuit also has a [list of Bi organisations around the UK](#)

For other groups in the UK, consult [What's in my area](#)

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