

Responding to Questions or Opposition

The following information is provided as an example of how to respond to any questions, opposition, or assumptions that you may hear about LGBT+ inclusion.

Won't this be offensive to people of differing religious, cultural, or conservative backgrounds?

LGBT+ inclusion is not about trying to change individual values or beliefs. It is about behaviour and how colleagues interact with each other and students in a professional, respectful way. The very nature of diversity means that people will have religious, cultural or attitudinal differences, but we don't stop at diversity.

Diversity = difference

Inclusion = interacting with all differences respectfully

An individual's personal values and beliefs are their own. It is behaviour that inclusion targets. It is also against the law to discriminate, harass, or bully individuals because of their individual differences, such as sexual orientation or gender. By supporting LGBT+ inclusion via the Ally Programme we're stating that harmful, discriminatory or exclusive behaviours targeting those who identify, will not be tolerated.

Sexual orientation is a personal thing; it doesn't belong in the workplace.

"I don't talk about my sex life at work, so why should they be allowed to flaunt theirs?"

Every single person has a sexual orientation, for most it's heterosexual. The difficulty is that for many heterosexual people their orientation does not come into question. It is such an innate part of them that it doesn't even occur to them that their orientation is always on display.

We talk about our families, we bring our partners to events, we may have photos on our desk. Yet if someone mentions a same-sex partner or if they tell someone they are gay, then suddenly that part of their identity takes over. From that point on they are the "gay" colleague instead of just a great colleague. We wouldn't ever imagine talking about our "heterosexual" colleague.

While most of us go through daily life without having to give our orientation a second thought, many lesbian, gay and bisexual people go through daily life safeguarding that part of themselves. Why? Because sometimes, that small piece of information can be detrimental to workplace and social relationships.

You cannot divorce a person from their orientation. If people are encouraged to bring their whole selves to work then sexual orientation, regardless of what it is, is a workplace issue.

I don't believe in preferential treatment, raising one group above another.

This is not what diversity and inclusion initiatives are about.

For Example:

The majority of people talk freely about their family or social life – *the majority of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people think about it first.*

The majority of people don't hesitate when filling out forms asking for their sex or gender – *the majority of transgender and intersex people do.*

This is not about giving one group special treatment. It is about creating an even playing field where people are welcomed and made to feel included. It is about allowing everyone (without exception) the privilege of being themselves and not worrying about how their diversity may impact on their work or study.

We shouldn't be forcing people to come out.

LGBT+ inclusion is not about forcing people to come out and it is definitely not about trying to find all the LGBT+ staff or students and use them as spokespersons or advocates. It is about visible inclusion so that even if someone is not out, they still know that they are in an inclusive environment.

There will be many colleagues, regardless of how they identify, that will get involved in inclusion initiatives. But equally, there will be many who prefer to not get involved. Under no circumstances should we assume anything because of this choice. It is up to an individual to decide how they act.

We don't have enough LGBT+ people here to warrant the time and effort.

The most probable answer to this is, yes we do.

For many people the risk of being out in the workplace is too great or throws up too many challenges. There are not enough messages of inclusion to convince someone their orientation or gender identity wouldn't be an issue. As a result, a significant number of people spend time and effort editing conversations and avoiding workplace relationships or events. Our student cohort are at a critical time in life where issues of sexual and gender identity may be more fully explored as they move into adult life. University life for students should allow for development and inclusion. Surely the small amount of time and effort put into a visible inclusion initiative is worth the effect it will have on our colleague's and student's experiences.

LGBT+ inclusion isn't about forcing people into the open; it is about creating an environment where, regardless of whether or not someone is out, they feel assured that it wouldn't be an issue.