LGBTQ+ STAFF EXPERIENCES AT UCL

TEACHING, RESEARCH AND INSTITUTIONAL CULTURE

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An LESG Report
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UCL staff and student members of Out@UCL marching in Pride in London 2024

FOREWORD

This study was conducted to document and explore the experiences of LGBTQ+ staff at UCL. It was commissioned by the LGBTQ+ Equality Steering Group (LESG) in 2020 in response to data from UCL's Staff Survey 2017 which reported that over 40% of UCL LGBTQ+ staff respondents stated that they were not completely able to talk about themselves openly or to be out at work. At this point, in the midst of the pandemic and during a time when working remotely was starting to become a fixture in our lives we wanted to gather more qualitative data so that we might understand why this was the case while more broadly eliciting the wider experiences from the LGBTQ+ community to ensure that the work of the steering group and any UCL policies were rooted in evidence and lived experiences while capturing the diversity of LGBTQ+ staff voices at UCL.

At the start of the project the small working group that was established to scope out this report couldn't have foreseen some of the big shifts in LGBTQ+ issues at UCL that would define a lot of the context for this research and the experiences of staff as a result. As discussions around LGBTQ+ rights and identifies at UCL have only intensified since the report was commissioned, the importance of the experiences documented in this report have become more important than ever. In the aftermath of UCL's decision to withdraw from Stonewall's Diversity Champions and Workplace Equality Index schemes a lot of effort was put in to produce an Action Plan to somewhat fill the void left by severing ties with Stonewall, which utilised the early findings from this study. However, as work continued analysing the data collected a lot more detail was generated which highlights areas that still need discussion and addressing. It is hoped that by taking this detailed data to the different domains of UCL we can co-produce a clearer set of recommendations and actions moving forward.

LGBTQ+ staff in this study believe that UCL has gradually become a more welcoming and inclusive place to work for lesbian and gay staff, particularly if they are also White, occupy senior roles, and are on secure contracts. By contrast, trans, bisexual, non-binary and queer staff experience UCL as a less supportive and sometimes toxic workplace. These different

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FOREWORD

◀ experiences within the LGBTQ+ community at UCL are stark and there is little evidence of improvement for the most marginalised members of UCL's LGBTQ+ community. As the co-chairs of LESG an Out@UCL, we hope that you will benefit from reading this report and that the experiences within it continue to feed into constructive dialogue within UCL and the wider higher education sector as to how we make universities a safe, welcoming and inclusive space for all LGBTQ+ staff and students. The report does contain multiple examples of parts of UCL that do this very well however as an institution there is much to learn from the evidence that demonstrates that this is not the experience for all LGBTQ+ staff.

Our thanks and appreciation goes to all members of the research team for their continued work and diligence over the years since the report was commissioned, particularly bearing in mind that doing research on one's own institution around issues that impact you personally is not an easy task, especially in the current climate of LGBTQ+ rights in the UK.

And to all the staff who volunteered their time to share their experiences and lives with candour, without who the report would not have been a success – we owe you massive gratitude.

So many of the participants told the research team that their main reason for their participation was born out of a strong desire to help to improve the experience of UCL for the whole LGBTQ+ community, while the data also shone strong solidarity within the LGBTQ+ staff community for one other.

Noel Caliste (he/him)
Jayne Flowers (they/them)

Co-chairs LESG / Out@UCL

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report was commissioned by the UCL LGBTQ+ Equality Steering Group (LESG) to understand the experiences of LGBTQ+ staff at UCL. It sought to build on and contextualise findings from a 2017 survey which found that 40% of LGBTQ+ staff at UCL did not feel able to be out at work. Online semi-structured interviews with 81 members of LGBTQ+ staff took place between June and September 2021 and included professional services staff and academic staff in every faculty and on academic, research and teaching contracts. An intersectional approach was adopted to understand how the experiences of staff varied within the LGBTQ+ community at UCL.

KEY FINDINGS

GENERAL CLIMATE FOR LGBTQ+ STAFF AT UCL

There were significant differences in the experiences of LGBTQ+ staff at UCL. In some ways these differences were in keeping with the social context for LGBTQ+ people in the UK, however it was also clear that the microclimate of UCL also shaped LGBTQ+ staff experiences.

- Most lesbian and gay staff, particularly if they were also White, found UCL to be a welcoming and inclusive place to work.
- Trans and non-binary staff are experiencing unprecedented levels of vulnerability, and in some cases discrimination, and some have left or are considering leaving their jobs at UCL.
- Lesbian, bisexual and gay staff were concerned about the treatment of trans and non-binary colleagues at UCL and went out of their way to express solidarity with the most minoritised members of the UCL LGBTQ+ community.
- Bisexual and pansexual staff in this study often felt invisible within LGBTQ+ spaces and within wider UCL contexts.
- Black and ethnic minority LGBTQ+ staff reported experiences of racism and intersectional exclusions while working at UCL.
- LGBTQ+ staff reported that sexism and classism were commonplace at UCL.
- The Institute of Education (IOE), UCL's Faculty of Education and Society was highlighted by IOE staff and colleagues from other faculties as being a particularly hostile place for LGBTQ+ staff and students.

UCL SENIOR LEADERSHIP

Overall, it was felt that UCL senior leadership is under-mining the pursuit of an inclusive university culture where all LGBTQ+ staff feel able to thrive.

- LGBTQ+ staff feel that the Provost's position on academic freedom and 'disagreeing well' is undermining the pursuit of an inclusive university culture and doing harm to the wellbeing of LGBTQ+ staff at UCL.
- There was a belief among some longer serving staff that UCL's commitment to LGBTQ+ EDI had stagnated and may even be sliding backwards under the current leadership.
- The University Management Committee's support of colleagues with gender critical beliefs has failed to appropriately attend to the profound negative impacts of these beliefs on the lives of LGBTQ+ staff, and particularly trans and non-binary staff at UCL.

KEY FINDINGS

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION AT UCL

LGBTQ+ staff in this study offered conflicting perceptions of UCL's approach and commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI). UCL's commitment to EDI was viewed by some as largely performative focussing on external symbols and statements and lacking any real institutional commitment to developing a more inclusive culture.

- The perception among staff was that UCL adopts a reactionary and piecemeal approach to LGBTQ+ EDI rather than a proactive approach to developing an inclusive culture.
- LGBTQ+ focused EDI induction and training for existing staff was felt to be largely non-existent and where it does take place it is not considered fit for purpose.
- LGBTQ+ staff described UCL's decision to fly the Pride flag over the Portico and references to LGBTQ+ history month in regular institutional communications as important expressions of solidarity. However, staff were concerned that these symbols and statements could obscure the need for UCL to make more substantive commitments to fostering an inclusive university culture.
- LGBTQ+ committees and networks were felt to be vital for connecting LGBTQ+ staff socially and facilitating interdisciplinary collaboration. This is particularly true for new staff at UCL. More work needs to be done to ensure these committees and networks are advertised to all new staff, professional services staff and clinical staff.
- UCL was felt to heavily rely on the volunteer and informal labour of LGBTQ+ staff to run committees and networks and support and mentor LGBTQ+ students and early career staff.

COMING OUT AND BEING OUT AT UCL

Coming out and being out at UCL is not a static state, nor a binary (out or not out) but something that is a highly personal and contingent process, one that required careful navigation. LGBTQ+ staff described nuanced strategies for determining whether and when it was safe to be out at work as they move within and between different roles and spaces. These negotiations were made easier or constrained by the respective histories and intersecting social positions and identities of staff. Most staff interviewed for this study agreed that being able to be out in the workplace was important, but not all felt able to be out, nor were out in all contexts or spaces.

- A central theme in experiences of being out at the workplace for LGBTQ+ staff were the challenges associated with discussing their families and personal relationships with colleagues.
- Another notable feature of participants' working lives at UCL was the additional labour involved in explaining LGBTQ+ lives to some colleagues and managers.

KEY FINDINGS

- LGBTQ+ staff also expressed fears that coming out would cause them to be labelled as "a problem", as "bringing sex" into the workplace or classroom, and that this in turn would lead to negative personal and professional repercussions.
- In addition to LGBTQ+ staff speaking about their own experience of being out at UCL, staff also spoke about the importance of seeing other visibly out colleagues.
- New staff described waiting to see who else was out in their local setting before deciding whether they also felt safe to do so.
- Coming out or being out was not always a choice for staff at UCL and required ongoing negotiation of different spaces. For example, some staff may be read as LGBTQ+ because of the way they express their gender. Trans staff, meanwhile, pointed to the impossibility of concealing their transition in the workplace.
- Early career staff experience significant levels of employment precarity and were less comfortable being out or speaking out on LGBTQ+ issues than their more established colleagues.
- Disciplinary context was also key with LGBTQ+ staff in arts and humanities and social sciences, or sexual health spaces being more likely to disclose their sexuality than colleagues in STEM disciplines.
- Line managers also play a significant role in shaping the experiences of LGBTQ+ staff and there were many positive examples of allyship and solidarity between and within Professional Services and academic teams.
- Trans, non-binary and queer members of staff found that colleagues and line managers had little understanding of their experiences and the specific challenges that they faced.

DISCRIMINATION, PREJUDICE AND HARASSMENT IN THE WORKPLACE

Lesbian and gay staff in this study reported several homophobic incidents. Bisexual and pansexual staff also drew attention to the erasure of their identities by colleagues. Reports of transphobia were common and appeared to be heightened by UCL's approach to academic freedom. Likewise, sexism and racism were raised as significant and ongoing issues that LGBTQ+ staff experience.

- These incidents ranged from everyday microaggressions to accounts of discrimination, prejudice and harassment from colleagues and students.
- While many of these incidents were attributed to individual perpetrators, LGBTQ+ staff also felt UCL lacked a proactive EDI culture which might go some way to designing out these incidents.
- Incidents were rarely formally reported due to a lack of knowledge of institutional mechanisms (e.g. Report and Support) and a lack of trust in the institutional response.
- LGBTQ+ staff who did not have first-hand experience of homophobia, transphobia, biphobia, sexism and racism reported how hearing about incidents affecting others contributed to a sense that UCL could be an unsafe place to work.

KEY FINDINGS

LGBTQ+ ROLE MODELS

Having visibly out LGBTQ+ members of staff and LGBTQ+ role models was seen as important for fostering a safe and welcoming environment for all LGBTQ+ staff.

- LGBTQ+ staff looked to senior leaders to be LGBTQ+ role models or allies and expected them to provide leadership on all aspects of equality, diversity, and inclusion.
- To see LGBTQ+ staff in senior management roles was especially important for both new and existing staff.
- Staff felt there were not enough LGBTQ+ role models at all levels of the university and that role models needed to be more diverse and encompass staff from more diverse LGBTQ+ identities and experiences.
- Many LGBTQ+ staff had taken on or found themselves in mentoring roles for LGBTQ+ staff and students. All these roles come with additional labour that is often not recognised in workload allocations.

LGBTQ+ STAFF AND TEACHING

There was huge variation in whether and in what circumstances LGBTQ+ staff chose to come out to students. LGBTQ+ staff described a state of vigilance and management of boundaries between their personal lives and professional lives in the classroom.

- Uncertainties around coming out to students, particularly undergraduate students were a common theme.
- Some LGBTQ+ staff, however, view coming out as an important pedagogic and political act and want to be LGBTQ+ role models for students.
- Early career staff, including PGTAs, reported feeling particularly vulnerable and underprepared for how to approach teaching as an LGBTQ+ person at UCL.
- LGBTQ+ staff who teach gender studies or address issues related to gender and sexuality in their teaching were almost always open to students about their own identities and lived experiences, feeling that this was significant for modelling reflexivity and enacting a critical pedagogy.
- Some LGBTQ+ staff felt uncertain about whether and how to be out to international students, particularly when students were from countries where being LGBTQ+ was illegal.
- LGBTQ+ staff working in STEM were less likely to be out to students because they felt it was unrelated to the curriculum or pedagogy.
- In some departments, LGBTQ+ staff have found strong institutional support for teaching about gender and sexuality to undergraduates, postgraduates and taking on PhD students who are interested in these themes.
- Many LGBTQ+ teaching staff were also heavily involved in efforts to diversify, decolonise and queer their curricula, but noted the difficulties in getting this work embedded in meaningful ways.

KEY FINDINGS

LGBTQ+ STAFF AND RESEARCH

Two key themes emerged from discussions with LGBTQ+ staff who are actively engaged in research at UCL. First, many staff felt that UCL does not have robust institutional structures that link gender and sexuality research and teaching at UCL. Staff working in these areas describe being in siloes, are under supported and missing out on potential opportunities for collaboration. Second, international travel is both a concern and a barrier for LGBTQ+ staff researching international contexts, attending conferences, or meeting colleagues for international collaborations in countries which are hostile to LGBTQ+ people.

- Staff involved with cross faculty research networks such as qUCL or who contributed research-led teaching on the interdisciplinary MA in Gender, Society and Representation expressed how important these spaces were for feeling part of a supportive and nurturing research community.
- Staff doing gender and sexuality research in faculties that have not traditionally prioritised research in these areas felt particularly isolated.
- Many staff working on issues of sexual and/or gender diversity felt vulnerable researching topics and issues that were tied to aspects of their identities and lived experiences. Such research work appears to involve a different kind of emotional labour than researching something that is of less direct personal relevance.
- LGBTQ+ staff teaching about and researching gender and sexuality felt increasingly policed, more vulnerable, and in some cases felt directly targeted by colleagues who sought to advance gender critical beliefs.
- When LGBTQ+ staff travel internationally for fieldwork, conferences and to meet with international collaborators, they can experience threats that are directly related to their gender and sexuality. For example, LGBTQ+ staff who travel to countries where homosexuality is illegal.
- In some cases, staff choose not to travel, or a local ethics committee decided that they should not travel. These decisions have negatively affected the careers of LGBTQ+ staff.
- LGBTQ+ staff appear to be unaware that UCL has a duty of care to ensure their safety and security while on university business abroad and instead feel that decision-making is something they must navigate alone.

LGBTQ+ STAFF IN CLINICAL SETTINGS

Clinical settings produced their own complexities and challenges for LGBTQ+ staff, particularly in relationship to their patients.

- Clinical staff felt that displaying visible signs of being a member of the LGBTQ+ community, for example with a rainbow lanyard or badge, helped create a sense of safety for LGBTQ+ patients.
- Clinical staff also felt they were also judged as less professional because of being openly LGBTQ+.
- There is some creative and innovative practice being led by LGBTQ+ staff in clinical settings such as LGBTQ+ themed vignettes and role plays which

KEY FINDINGS

can help support staff development on inclusive clinical practice.

- The arrangement of faculties and departments at UCL seems to isolate clinical professionals from LGBTQ+ activities of the university at large as the clinics are separate to the 'academic' university.

LGBTQ+ STAFF IN PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

Many of the issues discussed above were shared by staff in Professional Services. The following were issues that appeared to be specific to this group.

- LGBTQ+ staff in Professional Services describe choosing to work in the higher education sector because they believe it to have a more inclusive culture than other sectors.
- Professional Services staff at UCL experience an entrenched hierarchy between academic and professional services staff, though central LGBTQ+ EDI spaces appear to be able to disrupt these hierarchies.
- Some Professional Services spaces (e.g., Estates) were felt to be less comfortable spaces to be LGBTQ+ than others.
- The importance of local leadership to set the tone and encourage workplace cultures that value diversity and inclusion were seen as key drivers of positive experiences for Professional Services staff.

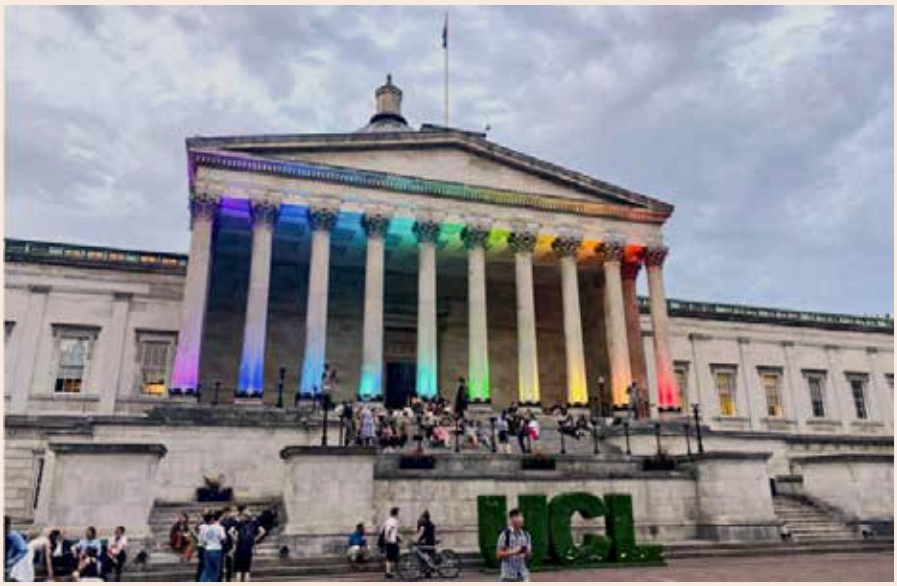
LGBTQ+ STAFF AND COVID-19

Project data collection took place at a time when the COVID-19 pandemic was still having a significant impact on the everyday lives of staff. Most staff were working online and were not able to come into the university for work.

- Some staff identified new affordances of working remotely such as the ability to add a rainbow flag to their virtual background or put pronouns in their screenname an easier way to be open about their gender and sexuality at work.
- However, some LGBTQ+ staff felt the move to online working had made being out or coming out to their colleagues and students harder due to the loss of informal spaces and conversations.
- The pandemic was particularly challenging for LGBTQ+ staff who started work at UCL during the pandemic as they felt isolated and unable to access and participate in LGBTQ+ networks and social events.
- For some LGBTQ+ staff there was a palpable sense of relief that they did not have to negotiate potential discrimination and harassment in the commute to and from work.
- Others described how the pandemic and the move to online working blurred the boundaries between work life and home life in ways that made some LGBTQ+ staff feel more vulnerable and isolated, while for others it afforded new opportunities to get to know colleagues better.
- Loneliness and a lack of community were common themes, and it appears that LGBTQ+ staff struggled to know about and access resources, networks, and support.

BACKGROUND CONTEXT & STUDY RATIONALE

LGBTQ+ STAFF LIVES AT UCL: THIS STUDY



● The impetus for this piece of research was data from the UCL Staff survey in 2017 in which 40% of UCL LGBTQ+ staff respondents in UCL's Staff Survey stated that they were not completely able to talk about themselves openly or to be out at work. In 2019 the LGBTQ+ Equality Steering Group (LESG) decided to commission a piece of exploratory, in-depth and qualitative research that would more systematically investigate the experiences of LGBTQ+ people at the university to better understand what UCL felt like from an LGBTQ+ perspective and to identify issues and problems and any areas where improvements needed to be made. In 2021 an LESG working group was established to oversee the development of a piece of research. The aim was not for a representative piece of work, rather research which allowed a deeper and more nuanced exploration of the multiple and intersectional experiences of the LGBTQ+ community than a survey typically allows. This study also sought to move beyond a simple discussion of being "out" or not in the workplace to understand the everyday negotiations and contestations that staff navigate.

● The study was initially funded via LESG, but further funding was subsequently secured via the Pro-Provost EDI office from Deans from multiple UCL Faculties. The findings in this report are based on 81 in-depth interviews with LGBTQ+ staff from across the UCL academic and professional services. This makes it the most comprehensive piece of qualitative research on LGBTQ+ staff experiences at UCL and one of the most in-

BACKGROUND CONTEXT & STUDY RATIONALE

◀ depth studies conducted on LGBTQ+ staff experience in UK higher education. The data collection phase of this research project fell within a period when LGBTQ+ policies at UCL were subject to change and contestation. A timeline of significant policy changes and initiatives both prior to and following the data collection phase is provided below for context.

TIMELINE OF UCL LGBTQ+POLICIES/ ACTIONS/ ACTIVITIES

2006	UCL joins Stonewall's UK Diversity Champions programme
July 2009	Staff LGBTQ+ social network Out@UCL set up
	LGBTQ+ Equality Steering Group (LESG) was established as a separate, formalised steering committee that serves UCL in an advisory capacity through the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion unit (EDI)
	UCL starts submitting to Stonewall's Workplace Equality Index
August 2014	UCL becomes the first university to join Stonewall's Global Diversity Champion programme for international employers
December 2014	qUCL research centre and network in gender and sexual diversity research launched
January 2018	UCL named in Stonewall's Top 100 employers list as evidenced by Stonewall's Workplace Equality Index
March 2020	UCL opted out of Stonewall Diversity Champion programme for one-year citing cost saving as the reason.
January 2021	LESG starts scoping research project into the experiences of LGBTQ+ staff
May 2021	Trans Network established
Summer 2021	UCL decided that it did not then have sufficient capacity in the EDI Team to submit to the 2022 Workplace Equality Index.
Summer 2021	Data collection for this project occurs
December 2021	UCL Academic Board votes not to rejoin Stonewall Diversity Champions and Workplace Equality Index schemes on the grounds that Stonewall's advice clashed with the principles of academic freedom and that formal ties to Stonewall might inhibit academic work and discussions within UCL about sex and gender identity.
	University Management Committee votes unanimously not to rejoin Stonewall schemes.
	The LGBTQ+ Equality Implementation Group (LEIG) is announced as a task and finish group to understand the concerns and priorities of LGBTQ+ staff and students and develop a set of actions to address them.
June 2022	LEIG formed
October 2022	UCL launches Gender Expression Fund
October 2023	UCL LGBTQ+ Action Plan launched

BACKGROUND CONTEXT & STUDY RATIONALE

LGBTQ+ STAFF LIVES IN UK UNIVERSITIES

- There is a small but growing body of research on the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer (LGBTQ+) staff and students at UK universities. Much of this research focuses exclusively on student experiences or the combined experiences of staff and students within one or more higher education institution (HEI). Several professional bodies and learned societies have also conducted research into the experiences of LGBTQ+ members. These include reports by the Royal Historical Society (2020) and Institute of Physics Royal Astronomical Society and Royal Society of Chemistry (2019).

- Overall, the situation for LGBTQ+ staff at UK universities appears to have improved over the past few years. In a 2009 survey involving 781 professional staff and 720 academic staff, Advance HE's Equality Challenge Unit found that approximately a third of lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) staff were out to colleagues and students. This is contrasted with a survey by University and College Union in 2021 which found that 91% of LGBT staff were out at work. Ward and Gale (2017) suggest there is a relationship between this improvement within universities and a more progressive social and legislative context (e.g., the introduction of the Equalities Act 2010) in the UK.

- Lee (2023) notes, however, that LGBTQ+ staff are still more comfortable being out to colleagues than students. Comfort about being out at work also appears to vary by discipline with Reggiani et al, (2023) reporting that visibility is still a risk for LGBTQ+ academics and PhD students in STEM. A study by Cambridge University (2019) also found staff and students in the humanities and social sciences found it easier to be out than those working within STEM subjects. Trans and non-binary staff and students find coming out and being out a more challenging process than cisgender peers (lgbtq+@cam, 2019). It should be noted, therefore, that LGBTQ+ staff cannot be treated as a homogenous group and research must attend to the nuanced differences in gender and sexualities as well as the implications of other intersecting characteristics.

- Coming out and being out at work is just one indicator of the climate for LGBTQ+ staff within UK universities. For example, despite a study for UCU (Sundberg, Boyce & Ryan-Flood 2021) finding that 91% of LGBTQ+ staff were out at

BACKGROUND CONTEXT & STUDY RATIONALE

40%

IN 2017 40% OF UCL LGBTQ+ STAFF RESPONDENTS IN UCL'S STAFF SURVEY STATED THAT THEY WERE NOT COMPLETELY ABLE TO TALK ABOUT THEMSELVES OPENLY OR TO BE OUT AT WORK

work, the same study also noted that LGBTQ+ staff faced high levels of discrimination and prejudice, so much so that over three quarters have considered leaving the sector (Sundberg, Boyce & Ryan-Flood 2021). Furthermore, Black, trans and non-binary staff continue to experience multiple intersecting discriminations (Sundberg, Boyce & Ryan-Flood 2021). A recent study of LGBTQ+ researchers in STEM found that staff working in these areas were more likely to experience career limitations, harassment, and professional devaluation than their non-LGBTQ+ peers (Cech & Waidzunas, 2021).

- The wider social and political context for LGBTQ+ people in the UK has changed since the Ward and Gale (2017) study was published, and this appears to be having an impact on staff in UK universities. Debates about trans rights, freedom of speech and its relationship to academic freedom, as well as a rise in hate crime directed towards LGBTQ+ people are all shaping the experiences of staff in UK. This study, which explores the experiences of LGBTQ+ staff at UCL, has taken place with this body of research in mind and within the shifting national context in the UK, which is outlined in more detail in the next section.

LGBTQ+ STAFF LIVES IN THE BROADER UK CONTEXT

- The British Social Attitudes survey (1983-2023) found that attitudes towards same-sex relationships have become increasingly accepting over the past three decades. These findings are supported by a recent study conducted by Opinium on behalf of Stonewall that found that "the United Kingdom is, on the whole, supportive and respectful of lesbian, gay, bi and trans people" (2022: 17). Despite this broadly positive picture, a closer look at the BSA survey data reveals that in 2023 only 67% of the British public thought that lesbian and gay relationships were "not wrong at all". The nation also appears to be at a tipping point where improvements in social attitudes towards LGBTQ+ people are plateauing and may even be reversing. In 2022, research by YouGov found "an erosion of permissiveness towards transgender rights" in the short time between 2018-2022.

- The most recent BSA results showed that attitudes towards people who are transgender have become markedly less liberal over the past three years: 64% described themselves as not prejudiced at all against people who are transgender, a

BACKGROUND CONTEXT & STUDY RATIONALE

37.5%

FOR THE WHOLE COMMUNITY, THERE HAD BEEN AN OVERALL INCREASE OF 37.5% IN REPORTED ANTI-LGBT+ HATE CRIMES IN THE LAST TWO YEARS. (GALOP 2023).

◀ decline of 18 percentage points since 2019 (82%). Only 30% thought someone should be able to have the sex on their birth certificate altered if they wanted to, down from 53% in 2019.

● It is notable that official statistics published by the UK government in October 2021 showed that LGBT+ hate crimes are on the rise and have grown at double the rate of other forms of hate crime since 2019 (Home Office, 2021). In 2020/2021, 2,630 Hate Crimes against trans people were recorded by the Police, an increase of 16% from the previous year (Home Office, 2021). More recent ONS figures (2023) showed reported hate crime experienced by the trans community had increased by 11% – nearly double the number of transphobic hate crimes reported in 2020/21. While hate crimes on the basis of sexual orientation had decreased by 6% in the 2023 ONS they were still up by 112% in the last five years. For the whole community, there had been an overall increase of 37.5% in reported anti-LGBT+ hate crimes in the last two years. (Galop 2023). Hate crimes based on sexual orientation and transgender identity are the most likely to involve violence or threats of violence. As the anti-LGBT+ violence charity has noted, these figures "have never captured the true picture of hate crime in this country. The Government's own research shows that over 90% of anti-LGBT+ hate crimes go unreported – this is a case of poor data not reflecting reality. It's clear that data collection from police reporting alone does not reflect the true picture of hate crime in the UK" (Galop 2023).

● Alongside this documented increase in hate crime, there has been an intensification and polarisation of political discourse on the legal status of trans identities since the consultation on the Gender Recognition Act (GRA) in 2016. In 2022, the UK government decided not to reform the GRA, which would allow trans people to self-identify their gender, while the proposed ban on LGBTQ+ conversion therapy was initially changed to no longer extend to conversion therapies experienced by trans people but has since been dropped altogether. In recent Tory leadership elections, candidates have made debates about trans lives one of the cornerstones of their campaigns.

● Research by the independent regulator of the UK's newspapers and magazines found that there has been a 400 per cent increase in media coverage of trans lives between 2010 and 2019 (IPSO, 2020). Content analysis of this trend

BACKGROUND CONTEXT & STUDY RATIONALE

◀ suggested that the tone of coverage has changed and the 'honeymoon period' which focused 'respectfully on the human interest' of trans experience was over and had been replaced by 'a more heated debate, and sometimes a more strident tone' on matters of policy and law (IPSO, 2020: 66).

● In 2022, the UK (alongside Poland, Russia and Hungary) was also criticised by the Council of Europe for its 'extensive and often virulent attacks on the rights of LGBTI people'. In this report, the UK was singled out for the growth in what the council called 'highly prejudicial anti-gender, gender-critical and anti-trans narratives which reduce the fight for the equality of LGBTI people to what these movements deliberately mischaracterise as "gender ideology" or "LGBTI ideology".

METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN

- The aim of this large scale qualitative study was to gain an in depth understanding of the experiences of LGBTQ+[1] staff at UCL. It sought to identify how staff navigate their everyday working lives at UCL and whether and in what ways they might experience discrimination. It was informed by intersectionality theory (Crenshaw, 1989), which attends to the ways in which systems of inequality "intersect" to create unique dynamics and effects. To this end, this study has sought to highlight the diversity of LGBTQ+ staff experiences and pay particular attention to the patterns that emerge between and within other aspects of identity, professional roles, faculties, and career stages.

- There are more than 13,000 staff at UCL, spanning Professional Services and academic roles. The study sample was drawn from those staff at UCL who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, intersex, or other minoritised genders and sexualities. Students were only included in this study if they were also employed at UCL as researchers, administrators, or post-graduate teaching assistants (PGTAs). A decision was made to focus on the experiences of staff at UCL so that a fine-grained analysis of this group could take place, paying attention to different career stages and areas of work. As a next step, a similar project on LGBTQ+ students at UCL will be needed.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- This study was guided by the following research questions:

- **How do UCL staff negotiate their LGBTQ+ identities at work?**
- **Are LGBTQ+ staff experiencing bullying, harassment, discrimination, or prejudice at work?**
- **If so, how does this manifest?**
- **How might other aspects of staff identities shape these experiences?**
- **Are there patterns in the data that can guide recommendations for creating a more inclusive university culture?|**

ETHICS AND DATA PROTECTION

- This study received research ethics committee approval and was registered with UCL Data Protection.

1. LGBTQ+ functions as an umbrella term for minoritised gender and sexual identities. The plus (+) sign is used to represent the impossibility of listing every configuration of identity. LGBTQ+ has been used as the standard notation in this report because this is the framing used by LESG who commissioned this report. In instances where other research or study participants have used different umbrella terms (e.g., LGBT or LGBTI) these have not been changed.

METHODOLOGY

DATA COLLECTION

- Once consent was obtained, interviews were scheduled with participants at a time convenient to them. The interviews followed a semi-structured format and were held online using Microsoft Teams. The interview schedule/topic guide can be found in Appendix 3. Interviews were recorded and transcribed by a UCL approved transcription service. Transcripts were made available to participants via a private link on SharePoint to review and edit. Giving participants the opportunity to review and edit their transcript in this way enabled the research team to develop an iterative approach to informed consent.

DATA ANALYSIS

- A reflexive thematic approach to analysis was used to analyse the interview data (following Braun & Clarke, 2022). As a first step, a series of codes were developed, informed by the research literature on LGBTQ+ staff in higher education. Then, additional codes were developed as the research team engaged with the data. The coding summaries were then used to generate higher level themes and these themes were subsequently used to help structure the report.

RESEARCHER POSITIONALITY

- The research team are located within diverse disciplinary contexts from across the social science and humanities, they are at different career stages, and all have experience conducting gender and sexuality research. The research team all identify as members of the LGBTQ+ community. To support the well-being of researchers involved in this project and to aide a critical reflexive approach to data collection and analysis, the LGBTQ+ counselling service London Friend was made available to the research team.

REPORTING AND DISSEMINATION

- Prior to publication, participants were presented with all direct quotes from their interviews intended for use in this report and were asked to provide input on the way their quotes were attributed. The research team wanted to ensure that participants felt that appropriate steps had been taken to keep them anonymous and that appropriate attributions were used. Providing participants with information about the situated use of their data within the report was another feature of the iterative approach to informed consent used during this project.

Excerpts of interview data from all 81 participants have been included in this report.

The report was peer reviewed by two senior UCL academics and also reviewed by the LESG working group prior to publication.

INTRODUCTION TO THE DATA

PROFESSIONAL ROLES

Online interviews lasting between 30 minutes and 1 hour 30 minutes were conducted with 81 LGBTQ+ staff. Participants were from diverse professional backgrounds and included staff on academic and professional services contracts. Participants represented all 11 UCL faculties, varied in seniority between Grade 5 – Grade 10, and were on range of temporary, fractional and permanent contracts.

Table 1

PARTICIPANTS' JOB ROLES

Academic	52	PGTA	7
		With Clinical Responsibility	5
		Research Assistant/ Associate/Fellow	15
		Lecturer/Associate Professor/ Reader/Professor	25
Professional Services	29	Sitting within University Professional Services	10
		Sitting within Faculties	19

Table 2

PARTICIPANTS BY UCL FACULTY

Faculty	Arts and Humanities	8
	Bartlett (Built Environment)	7
	Brain Sciences	6
	Engineering Sciences	2
	Institute of Education	14
	Laws	1
	Life Sciences	1
	Mathematical and Physical Sciences	10
	Medical Sciences	4
	Population Health Sciences	9
	Social and Historical Sciences	9

INTRODUCTION TO THE DATA

PERSONAL IDENTITIES

While it was relatively straightforward to categorise the professional identities of the participants in this study, it was much harder to assign clear and distinct categories to other aspects of participant identities. Rather than ask participants to select from pre-defined categories, at the start of each interview the research team asked participants to describe their gender, sexuality and any other intersecting aspects of their identities they felt might be relevant to their experiences at UCL.

As the quote below exemplifies, some participants also explained that their identity exceeds singular categorisation, while others foregrounded the relationality and situatedness of their decision to articulate their gender and sexuality in any given way.

So, I describe myself as queer. I don't always say that to people that I'm speaking to. Sometimes I'll say gay. Sometimes I'll say lesbian. Sometimes I'll say bisexual, like I have had relationships with men. If it was a percentage, I'd say like 95% of my relationships have been with women. Then also, maybe I technically identify as pansexual but then don't really use that terminology, but yes...I'll often say gay to someone maybe who I might perceive as less, like less, I don't know. Sometimes I'll judge it as like this is maybe, yes that I'd maybe feel better or safer to just say gay."

Taking account of the complexities pointed to in this quote, an overview of how the 81 participants in this project described their gender, sexuality is provided in the tables below. Some participants used multiple words to describe their gender and sexuality (e.g, trans and non-binary) and where this has occurred all terms have been counted. For this reason, the totals in the tables below add up to more than 81.

INTRODUCTION TO THE DATA

Table 3

SELF-DEFINED GENDER OF PARTICIPANTS

Gender	Agender	1
	Intersex	1
	Men	43*
	Non-binary	10**
	Trans	8
	Women	26*

* Includes trans participants who described themselves as men or women
** Includes non-binary participants who described themselves as intersex and trans

Table 4

SELF-DEFINED SEXUALITY OF PARTICIPANTS

Sexuality	Asexual	1
	Bisexual	16
	Gay	40
	Lesbian	12
	Pansexual	3
	Queer	15

An overview of how participants self-reported their race and/or ethnicity is summarised below.

Table 5

SELF-DEFINED ETHNICITY OF PARTICIPANTS

White	70	British	31
		European	21
		Other	18
Minoritised Ethnicities	11	Black British	1
		British Pakistani	1
		European	1
		British Asian	1
		Mixed White and Asian	1
		Asian	3
		East Asian	1
		Chinese Asian	1
		Mixed race	1

1

THE BIG PICTURE

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- LGBTQ+ staff in this study believe that UCL has gradually become a more welcoming and inclusive place to work for lesbian and gay staff, particularly if they are also White, occupy senior roles, and are on secure contracts. By contrast, trans, bisexual, non-binary and queer staff continue to experience UCL as an unsupportive and difficult workplace. These different experiences within the LGBTQ+ community at UCL are stark and there is little evidence of meaningful support for the most marginalised members of the LGBTQ+ community at UCL. Of significant concern to LGBTQ+ staff in this study is the stance taken by senior leadership at UCL on academic freedom.

- LGBTQ+ staff in this study offered conflicting perceptions of UCL's approach and commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion. For some, visible symbols such as flying the Pride flag over the Portico during LGBTQ+ History Month were significant statements of solidarity while others were concerned that these symbols only serve to obscure the lack of commitment to substantive institutional cultural change and support for LGBTQ+ staff and students. UCL's commitment to developing and supporting LGBTQ+ staff committees and networks was particularly welcomed by participants. For staff who know about these networks, they were referred to as vital for facilitating connections between colleagues within and between faculties, as well as between academic and professional services staff. However, there appear to be barriers to staff finding out about local and institutional networks and more needs to be done to signpost to these groups during new staff induction. Furthermore, the overreliance on volunteer labour to set up and direct these important activities was pointed to as unsustainable.

- When making sense of their experiences of working at UCL, LGBTQ+ staff tended to focus on their local work environment (i.e., lab, research centre, department, or faculty) and were less likely refer to the wider university context unless they had a role in central services, were involved in university wide networks (e.g., Out@UCL), or felt particularly affected by institutional decision-making. LGBTQ+ staff experiences of their local work environments were diverse, and for academic staff these experiences also appeared to be closely connected to wider disciplinary norms. Being out in STEM disciplines presented different challenges than for staff in the social

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◀ sciences and humanities. Local faculty and departmental cultures also shaped staff experiences. The Institute of Education (IOE) was highlighted by several participants working both within and outside of the faculty as being a hostile place for LGBTQ+ staff and students. Irrespective of discipline, faculty location or job role, line managers play a significant role in shaping the experiences of LGBTQ+ staff.

● UCL's location in a large cosmopolitan city was significant for many LGBTQ+ staff. British, and international staff gave examples of how UCL's central London location informed their decision to apply for a job and/or was a contributing factor in them deciding to stay. These staff tended to perceive London as more socially liberal, and by extension more accepting of LGBTQ+ lives than other parts of the UK. Staff also felt that UK higher education was more likely to be welcoming and supportive of LGBTQ+ identities than other employment sectors, a sentiment that was particularly notable in interviews with professional services staff.

● Project data collection took place at a time when the COVID-19 pandemic was still having a significant impact on the everyday lives of staff. At this point, most staff had been working from home for over a year and were continuing to negotiate the direct and indirect impacts of the virus. The move to online working appeared to have had the most significant impact on them. For some LGBTQ+ staff there was a palpable sense of relief that they did not have to negotiate potential discrimination and harassment in the commute to and from work. Others described how the pandemic and the move to online working blurred the boundaries between work life and home life in ways that made some LGBTQ+ staff feel more vulnerable and isolated, while for others it afforded new opportunities to get to know colleagues better. The pandemic was particularly challenging for LGBTQ+ staff who started work at UCL during the pandemic. Loneliness and a lack of community were common themes, and it appears that LGBTQ+ staff struggled to know about and access resources, networks, and support.

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WORKING AT UCL AS A LGBTQ+ MEMBER OF STAFF

For the most part, lesbian and gay staff perceived UCL to be an inclusive place to work for themselves and other lesbian and gay colleagues.

> "I've never personally had any challenges because of being a gay man, I wear it as I am" (Gay man, Lecturer)

> "[...] for me personally, I've never really had a big problem with being out to my team, or to other colleagues I work with and I am married so, you know, I will occasionally bring my husband into a conversation, you know, if something happens, or if we came back from holiday or something like that. So, you know, that's never been really a major problem." (Gay man, Professional Services)

> "I tend not to shy away from talking about my home life and the fact that my husband and I did something at the weekend, it's just something that I can bring up in conversation easily and feel like I can talk about it... it's just not an issue." (Gay man, Research Fellow)

> "I've been out for a very long time - for decades and decades. And it's never something that I hide, it's not, I don't really say, "Hi, I'm a lesbian" but it will come out pretty quickly, pretty naturally. If I talk about what I've been doing on the weekend, I talk about my partner. Yes, so it does, it comes out straight away pretty much in the end. And that's, you know I work in the arts and humanities... so my colleagues are almost all liberal minded, I mean all my colleagues here are fabulous." (Lesbian woman, Associate Professor).

This was particularly true for lesbian and gay staff occupying more privileged positions, such as professors, those with permanent jobs, and those with other intersecting privileges. Lesbian and gay staff who are also people of colour, early career and/or on temporary contracts on the other hand were less likely to describe UCL as an inclusive and welcoming place to work.

UCL was not perceived by LGBTQ+ staff in this study to be a supportive, safe, and welcoming place for trans, bisexual, non-binary, or queer staff.

> "I think probably things are getting better on the whole for LGB people. I believe that people who identify as bisexual still sort of struggle to be themselves at work and so, I hope that that's improving. My sense is that it's improving. But I don't think it's improving for trans people, I think it's going in the opposite direction for people who are trans... I think my biggest concern at work is that some part of my community, that trans people I feel are having a tough time and I would like them to be really supported." (Lesbian woman, Associate Professor)

> "So, I think it's a very personal experience depending on who you talk to [...] I'm a very proud trans ally and ally to non-binary people. I think UCL has got a little bit of catching up to do in making UCL a safe and friendly environment for trans and non-binary people, and I say this is somebody who is cis-gendered, so I can't presume what it's like to be a trans or non-binary person at UCL, but when you see comments from UCL academics in some gender critical pieces, you kind of think, oh UCL's got a little bit more to do to make this a safe environment. Do I also think that there's certain parts of UCL where people would struggle to come out and be open about their sexuality? Yes, but for the time being in my current environment, I would say it's okay." (Gay/Pan/Bisexual man, Professional Services)

> "I don't feel particularly safe speaking in my own institution [...] the university tries not to be political and so in its attempts at not being political it basically does nothing. So, I don't feel supported by them. And obviously that is a political stance, isn't it? (Queer trans non-binary, Postgraduate Teaching Assistant)

Staff who have worked at UCL for long periods of time believed that the university had become a more welcoming and inclusive place for lesbian and gay people over the past few decades. However, these same staff felt that that progress has recently stagnated and may even be reversing. For some, this was linked to the wider social and political context in the UK which was viewed by participants as becoming more hostile towards minoritised groups. For others, this was linked to the change in UCL leadership.

> "I think this is a period of history where we're kind of on a little bit of a knife edge as LGBT people. We've come a very long way in a relatively short amount of time as far as acceptance and tolerance and kind of legal protection is concerned

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but I think we're also potentially on the cusp of a reactionary period in British politics and that makes me very nervous. Being out from that perspective, it is also important to remind people who those LGBT people they are reacting against are and that actually they know those people and that they are individuals that exist in the real world in their life experience and aren't just some abstract other that exists there on Facebook or something you know. So, I think the other aspect of it is peddling against any kind of reactionary turn that I see coming which I'm sure others see as well." (Gay man, Professional Services)

"It sort of feels to me now as though things are beginning to head in the wrong direction, both societally and within UCL, I think you know we are a microcosm of the society in which we find ourselves. And it feels as though things are moving more to the right, both politically, institutionally and I'm quite uncomfortable with the direction of travel." (Gay man, Professional Services)

"I didn't know that we had stepped out of the Diversity Champions scheme last year for cost-cutting, I didn't know that until a couple of weeks ago which is absurd. But anyway leaving that aside because that whole issue of "Stonewall encouraging people to violate the law and indoctrinating people into being trans robots or whatever" and then suddenly UCL is backing away and I have heard said that now that Stonewall's become politicised we probably need to reconsider [our membership] [...] I think there's probably also some feeling that "don't we already do enough?". That we "don't need to pay to be in the scheme". Maybe that would be a legitimate argument but I feel like they can use this as an excuse to avoid confronting the so-called gender critical so-called feminists." (Queer non-binary, Professional Services)

Staff in this study reference how this shift in the social and political context was particularly affecting trans and non-binary people.

"When I was teenager like, you know like kind of 15 years ago it was a huge thing to come out as a gay person and it was a huge thing to have gay marriage and people accept gay people. But I feel like these days you know a lot of the battles are much more about trans people and non-binary people who struggle for acceptance than necessarily gay people." (Gay man, Research Fellow)

"[...] well it filters down from the government, the entire like, you know, free speech thing and the fact that for some reason it's now accepted that trans peoples exist, or trans people debate and not, you know. Like they're completely divorced from the fact that these are lived realities and actual real people." (Queer/Ace/Bisexual trans man, Lecturer)

There was a perceived lack of collective leadership, vision, and investment in creating an inclusive and welcoming university culture where staff and students in all their diversity can thrive.

"[...] higher up the hierarchy there actually isn't a commitment to LGBTQ+ issues. I feel like there's a strong commitment to some other EDI issues, but that actually the university as a whole does not really put that much genuine effort [...] they don't seem to put money behind it or put resources behind it in anyway." (Lesbian woman, Associate Professor)

"What is happening now at UCL in the LGBT space makes me want to leave UCL. It makes me want to go to an institution which is braver, more ballsy, more explicit, who will say what a rainbow flag means on an undergraduate prospectus, who will say that staff need to be called by their pronouns full stop, who will define what bullying is and harassment is. [...] UCL needs to do the work." (Lesbian woman, Professional Services)

UCL's central London location also shaped how the university was perceived by LGBTQ+ staff. London was viewed as a liberal, cosmopolitan and multiculturalist place to live and work and was frequently referred to as a reason why LGBTQ+ staff choose to work at UCL.

"I think UCL is a pretty liberal- it was founded on these principles. I was at the London School of Economics before, and that was equally liberal. So, I think it is partly a London university thing. It's partly a university thing. I think universities in general tend to be more liberal than the countries or the cities in which they are based" (Gay man, Professor)

That said, UCL does have different campuses around London, and while the central London location was viewed positively, there were some concerns about the safety of being an LGBTQ+ staff member while working elsewhere in the city.

"I've been to the new site at East Dagenham so I would say I have felt uncomfortable walking there

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at East Dagenham [...] so I think if I was a new employee going there and I was LGBTQ+ you know there could be stuff done around supporting and making sure staff are [...] I don't know if I would be able to walk there at night for example even if I was a woman or someone who identifies as a woman or whatever the case might be or vice versa of any gender really so I think there is more that could be done around considerations for LGBTQ+ people." (Gay man, Professional Services)

THE IMPORTANCE OF LOCAL UCL CONTEXTS

LGBTQ+ staff tended to compare their local work context (e.g., research centre, department) to both real experiences and imagined ideas of the wider university. In some cases, these comparisons positioned departments or teams as more inclusive and welcoming than other areas of UCL.

"the use of like, things like [individuals putting] pronouns in email signatures etc. indicates on some sense that it's a safe environment, but has UCL done anything? Yeah, I don't think so. I mean those things help, but lots of it's internal and about how comfortable you feel in the team that you work with, the people directly that you work with rather than an institutional model." (Gay Man, Professional Services)

"Certainly, [my] department does and certainly the Arts and Humanities faculty would, yes. So, I do think of [my] department as its own community and mainly the place where I work. Of course, I work at UCL, and I feel I belong to UCL, but I feel a great attachment I think to [my] department. And I feel most comfortable, I feel more comfortable being myself in [my] department than I do at UCL in general I'd say. I mean I know that at UCL if you're in other departments sometimes you're the only person who's out in a massive, big sort of engineering department or whatever. So, maybe I don't know, earth sciences or something, physical sciences so, there aren't that many out people in some hard sciences departments, I'm aware of that. So, maybe [my department] is just a lot better for that, it wouldn't surprise me" (Lesbian woman, Associate Professor)

The role of managers emerged as very important in setting the tone and feelings of inclusivity at these local levels.

"I think my view of UCL is more based on how my manager works. I know all managers are different and not everyone would be as welcoming and accepting as my manager, so it reflects my experience on UCL through his behaviour and I think I'm very happy being a lesbian working at UCL for that" (Lesbian woman, Professional Services)

"Not long after that I came out to the team and started asking them to use the Mx pronouns, and that was really wonderful. In fact, in my appraisal our outgoing director just did, like she used varied pronouns in my appraisal and it just felt really affirming and really nice." (Queer non-binary, Professional Services)

Similarly, organising by local and informal LGBTQ+ groups (e.g., departmental committees), and visible LGBTQ+ individuals at the local level were pointed to as vital for creating these inclusive, supportive, and welcoming enclaves. LGBTQ+ staff valued these local initiatives and individuals which seemed to have a direct impact on everyday experiences at work.

"[...] they started a kind of informal group, so there were meet ups, so we had a little like LGBT group. And occasionally we would get together and have tea and cake or they went for a trip to the Victoria and Albert Museum and did a tour, and you know, that kind of stuff. And I think that stuff is really nice. A lot of the young people that come don't, aren't doing queer research, they are queer people who want to connect, you know. So I think having those kind of departmental structures is really helpful. Because they are also hopefully a little bit less intimidating than the LGBT Society or the student union's stuff or the Out @ UCL stuff" (Queer trans non-binary, Postgraduate Teaching Assistant)

"Yes so, the Department of Political Science set up some staff/student networks for the purposes of diversity just a couple of months ago. And so, I joined the LGBTQ and Gender Diversity Network, which is cool...it felt like it was very exciting for me honestly to just to like to hit yes, like that applies to me, "yes, I'm going to join this."" (Queer woman, Lecturer)

Interestingly, LGBTQ+ staff who reported negative experiences of their research centres or departments tended to believe that these were anomalies within a broadly liberal institution. However, the number of

“I THINK PROBABLY THINGS ARE GETTING BETTER ON THE WHOLE FOR LGB PEOPLE. I BELIEVE THAT PEOPLE WHO IDENTIFY AS BISEXUAL STILL SORT OF STRUGGLE TO BE THEMSELVES AT WORK AND SO, I HOPE THAT THAT'S IMPROVING. MY SENSE IS THAT IT’S IMPROVING. BUT I DON'T THINK IT’S IMPROVING FOR TRANS PEOPLE, I THINK IT’S GOING IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE TRANS... I THINK MY BIGGEST CONCERN AT WORK IS THAT SOME PART OF MY COMMUNITY, THAT TRANS PEOPLE I FEEL ARE HAVING A TOUGH TIME AND I WOULD LIKE THEM TO BE REALLY SUPPORTED.”

Lesbian woman, Associate Professor

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people in this study who believed they were located within these anomalous locations brings the liberal imaginaries of UCL into question.

> "I think Economics is sort of the last, you know, to catch up with all of these things, at least within our faculty. [...] I think part of it is probably a bit of a selection of the kind of people that this discipline attracts. It's very heavily male dominated as well, and it's notoriously bad for women as well. So I think it's sort of part of that sort of somewhat aggressive culture [laughs], that there's a bit less of that in Economics, but I don't want to overstate it either, so I'm not 100% sure. I think otherwise, I think, within UCL, the Economics department has always sort of operated a little bit by itself. So now we have more interactions with the faculty and so on but I think in general, I think maybe that's another reason why we're sort of last at the party." (Gay man, Associate Professor)

There were particularly polarised views about what it was like to work at the IOE, UCL's Faculty of Education and Society as an LGBTQ+ member of staff. One gay professor explained that they felt the IOE had a strong tradition of inclusivity and inclusive practice.

> "I think that the IOE in general is a more open place than most other departments or faculties in UCL. There's a very, very, very strong ethos of inclusivity and inclusion that runs through everything at the IOE and – which might not be elsewhere. I don't know, I don't know the other places that well. It's the DNA, okay, it's really the DNA. This is an institute of education, there's a strong tradition of inclusion, and inclusivity, and it's something that's been – I think been there since the foundation of the institute, you know, nearly 120 years ago." (Gay man, Professor)

Another member of staff felt that it was particularly important that the IOE remained a safe and inclusive place because of its role working with children and educating teachers.

> "Now the IOE for me has a duty to be representative and to support work with children of all ages and children of all identities and of all experiences." (Gay man, Professor)

However, despite a history of social justice and inclusive approaches to education, one staff member explained that this did not automatically translate to positive experiences for all LGBTQ+ staff.

> "It's been my lived experience over the past few years that both lesbians and gay men who are not out come and talk to me. I've had three lesbians come to talk to me about how uncomfortable they feel at work at the IOE, not able to come out and because their anxiety, and this is a common theme across the three individuals who came to me separately, there would be bullying because they've experienced anti-lesbian conversations and they fear the way they would be treated. I've had- two gay men have come to speak to me about homophobic experiences from staff toward them, and in those incidents I've directed them towards the staff bullying policy but they feel that would be very exposing." (Gay man, Professor)

Furthermore, the IOE had recently developed a reputation for hosting gender critical views and enabling anti-trans activism. This was having a significant negative impact on LGBTQ+ staff at the IOE and across UCL more broadly.

> "Next door in the IOE, the staff are terrified that someone's going to invite a speaker to their workplace who's going to say that they don't have the right to exist in there, as they identify themselves and that's horribly upsetting to me the idea that the institution sees that and is okay with it" (Gay man, Professor)

LGBTQ+ staff in this study raised concerns about the impact of these views, particularly when claimed under the banner of IOE, on the external reputation of the faculty.

> "Last year I've come across a few anti-trans remarks on Twitter from a few professors from UCL. I've started really questioning a lot of things that are going on within the faculty within UCL, because I mean the remarks they were making were, like they were very transphobic. It quite shocked me because we have students that are trans and I actually have like a lot of them and I felt okay that is not normal we shouldn't have people making those remarks, basically using the UCL affiliation, you can say whatever you want but don't use your affiliation" (Gay man, Professional Services)"

> "So, the son of one of my best friends is trans and is identified as male, he's in his mid-teens and is very politically aware. He's in touch with other trans teenagers and I don't know if you're aware of the LGBTQ+ Poland Atlas of Hate. It's a group who organise and track and call out anti LGBTQ+ incidents and spaces and places. My friend's trans son says for him and his friends that the IOE is on

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their own Atlas of Hate. It's a location and a place of hatred towards trans teens. Now I don't want the IOE to be identified in that way." (Gay man, Professor)

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF DISCIPLINARY NORMS

Disciplinary norms and practices appeared to shape the experiences of LGBTQ+ staff at UCL. This was particularly pronounced in interviews with staff in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines who spoke about the challenges of being out within their local work contexts. Several STEM researchers suggested that their sexuality and/or gender was less significant than in other disciplines (e.g., humanities) because their positionality was not expected to affect their research. This in turn led to a split between their professional and personal identities.

"...there is a bond when you hang out with people in your area of research, you know, and you can never express your queerness or it's very hard to express your queerness when you are related to people professionally if you are in STEM." (Gay man, Lecturer)

However, the lack of attention to researcher positionality and reflexivity also appeared to close opportunities for LGBTQ+ staff to be 'out' at work.

"Well because you don't have queer peers [in STEM]... the absence of those small things really gets to you. You know like just; you know being flamboyant or you know doing a drag race quote while you're talking about science. Whatever, you know it's small things but you don't have anyone that is interested or would understand or so it just becomes pointless. You just don't express your queerness when you are at work because there's no one there that is remotely interested. But also, and there are lots of them who are not only are they not interested but they're not, they don't want to see it. So, it's hard I think and so I remember so one example, that was before we set up in our second meeting [of LGBTQ+ in STEM] again that I asked [a fellow member] why he contacted me, I noticed that he had nail varnish and I was like, "can I ask you a question?" And I said, "do you go to the lab with your painted nails?" He said, "no of course not". And I was like, "but you know because it's unprofessional?". So, it's like, you know that kind of thing you know so if you are in science and you are, you strip all your kind of queer expression when you go into work, into your lab, and maybe not all their queer expression, I'm not, maybe not but you watch yourself a little bit. So, you know everyone knows that he's gay, that's fine. But you know nail varnish is like one step too far." (Gay man, Lecturer)

When gender and sexuality go unmarked like this, it is not that they cease to exist within STEM fields. Rather, what remains, appears to be hegemonic masculinity and compulsory heterosexuality.

"In mathematics you have to present rigorous arguments, that's the whole practice of mathematics: dealing with truth and deducing new truths from previous truth in a very rigorous fashion. And if you don't present that in a confident or directed way, a lot of people might consider you not a good mathematician. You're not sure of your arguments." (Gay man, Postgraduate Teaching Assistant)

"If a queer person refers to their partner and that partner is of the same gender, that is a disclosure. [...] But it feels like it's more noticeable, I think, if you're in a STEM environment. You feel more self-conscious telling someone that you have a same sex partner, it is a disclosure and therefore if you have someone who is very private, you may not feel comfortable doing that". (Gay man, Lecturer)

Staff working in STEM disciplines describe deeply held concerns about the impact on their careers should they decide to come out. This was particularly true for early career staff and those who are precariously employed.

"Because I was conscious of the fact that we live in a world where there is peer review, for example, and so people can anonymously express their animus against you without any consequences. Or it can affect your hiring or whatever. I was careful not to put things on social media that were publicly facing." (Gay man, Research Fellow)

When fewer people are out or fear being out, this same member of staff described how these fears perpetuate a culture of self-censorship in STEM.

"[...] it seems like people in the arts and humanities have an easier time of [being out] than the STEM subjects. Experience would teach me that it is how it actually is; there are less people who are out in those positions. What I am doing is hard lab-based science [and] the reason why I didn't

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want to get involved with stuff, part of it was self-protection. The other bit was like I am just busy and have other stuff to be doing, like I don't want to make that part of my thing, I will do that separately. So I think that partly feeds into it. And then there is, "well if nobody else is doing it, maybe I shouldn't". (Gay man, Research Fellow)

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION PROCESSES AT UCL

When asked about Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) processes and activities at UCL, LGBTQ+ staff held complex and sometimes contradictory opinions. Who was viewed as responsible for EDI activities and how visible and accessible they were emerged as key themes.

Responsibility for all EDI at UCL is overseen by the Pro-Provost EDI. The Pro-Provost oversees a central EDI team which seeks to work in partnership with and to support equality groups and networks across the university. The LGBTQ+ Equality Steering Group[2](LESG) established in 2009 is the committee responsible for advising on LGBTQ+ policies and practices across the whole of UCL.

Many LGBTQ+ staff described UCL's overall approach to EDI as disjointed and lacking clear vision and leadership. The lack of support within the University Management Committee (UMC) for maintaining an institutional relationship with Stonewall was viewed with concern. Questions were also raised about the institutional commitment to LGBTQ+ workplace equality policies and practices.[3]

"I've noticed really just how White, pale, male and stale it is the higher up the institution that you get. [...] I think there's an element of tokenism, perhaps more so at the moment. You know you might want to put a flag up, but you don't want to pay to enter the Stonewall Equality Index, which for better or worse is the only thing out there that we can hold ourselves accountable to as an institution." (Gay man, Professional Services)

Commitment to EDI for LGBTQ+ staff was perceived to be reactive and tokenistic, with issues only being addressed when they are raised. For example, one person explained how they had to pursue Human Resources (HR) on their own behalf to be allowed to have Mx (rather than Miss or Ms) as their title on their email and in official documents.

"Lots of people in my team have put their pronouns in their email signatures. Randomly, I was the first person as far as I can tell at UCL to try and put Mx in the directory." (Queer non-binary, Professional Services)

Another LGBTQ+ staff gave the following example of how individuals must agitate for creating a more inclusive culture at UCL because of the lack of strategic leadership.

"I have got an email thread at the moment where someone has requested that we turn on the function on Zoom so you can put your pronouns on it. Why did that have to be requested by a random member of staff, why are we not just on it? And you would think that in 2021 we would be in a place now where ISD would just switch that function on, or they would have already thought of it in fact. Whereas everyone is doing that around race at the moment, but they are not doing that around gender and sexuality, I don't think at all." (Queer, non-binary, Professional Services)

UCL's commitment to EDI was also viewed by some as largely performative focussing on external symbols and statements and lacking any real commitment to developing a more inclusive culture. Others meanwhile pointed to UCL's EDI policies as evidence of the university's commitment to supporting LGBTQ+ staff and students. A common symbol of this ambivalence centred around UCL's decision to fly the Pride flag over the Portico, with some staff feeling that this was an important statement of UCL's solidarity with LGBTQ+ staff and students, while others felt that it was all too often used to deflect from commitments to structural transformation and investment.

"I remember when UCL first flew the Pride flag above the main building, and yes, I thought that made a guy's chest swell a bit with pride. I thought that was a sign of, we support you, you're welcome

2. See Appendix 2 for the LESG terms of reference. **3.** At the time of data collection, it had recently emerged that UCL had "paused" its relationship with Stonewall's Workplace Equality Index and Diversity Champions schemes in 2020. Citing a lack, and redirection of funds during the pandemic, it was a live debate within the LGBTQ+ community about whether this signalled a shift in commitments to LGBTQ+ equality at UCL, or was a temporary blip. In December 2021, after data collection had ended, UCL Academic Board and University Management Committee voted to not renew UCL's relationship with Stonewall's schemes. Having been one of the first HEI institutions to sign up to the schemes when they launched, UCL became the first to leave. This decision was made in direct opposition to the advice and views of the LGBTQ+ Equality Steering Group, the UCU and Unison Unions, the Student's Union.

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here, you are part of our community. And I found that very encouraging." (Gay man, Professor)

"You know probably in terms of institutional visibility of doing things like flying the trans flag and doing all this sort of, like corporate things, they know which boxes to tick, sure." (Gay man, Professional Services)

"[Senior leaders] are taking the political stance of pretending to be neutral and just like "fuck the trans people" in the institution. But we will wave a flag over the portico." (Queer trans non-binary, Postgraduate Teaching Assistant)

A sizable number of LGBTQ+ staff in this project did not know about the work of LESG or how to join university wide groups such as Out@UCL, qUCL and the UCL Trans Network[4].

"You know when you join a new workplace you look for lots of communities or groups to join and this was something I had to ask people, or I had to find out where if such a thing existed. So, I think I wish it was advertised a bit more or it was normalised if you like if that's a good word to say, it's just one of those things that you could be part of. When I initially joined there wasn't much of community that I could find that I could join. I wasn't aware of any such committee or a club." (Gay man, Professional Services)

"I know that there's these groups at UCL and all that kind of thing, but they're kind of siloed off. You have to be basically an LGBTQ person to look for these, and I just assume, because at my university we had it in 2004 then UCL definitely must have it in 2021. So, that's an assumption but there's no literature, there's no pointing anything out, I had to find out myself." (Gay East Asian man, Associate Lecturer)

This appeared to be particularly true, as discussed above, for new staff as well as for staff on temporary or fractional contracts. Staff induction processes were broadly viewed as unfit for purpose by LGBTQ+ staff. New staff who had been offered some form of induction believed that these processes and training activities fail to adequately communicate the university's commitment to EDI or signpost to appropriate networks and resources. It was left to individual staff to seek out this information for themselves or for individual line managers to direct new starters to these networks.

"...for the first years I was at UCL I didn't really know about the networks that were out there just because they weren't disseminated more widely either in the welcome pack or in emails that went around to the entire departments; I think the information was there on websites, but it did require a bit of digging. So, I think having UCL do that, making sure that those links are included with general staff inductions would be something that if it was there, I missed it back when I started, and it would be good to see that." (Gay man, Research Fellow)

For some staff members this lack of training and/or signposting to LGBTQ+ networks or support had made starting at UCL an uncomfortable experience. LGBTQ+ staff would like better signposting to these networks during induction, and as part of regular faculty/department communications.

"It took at least probably more than six months of me being in my role to start seeing LGBT things. It was definitely not in my induction, there was nothing at all like that. I think maybe in an induction it would be good to say things like, "if you would like some stickers, lanyard, let your manager know", because it's great because it's a way to be an ally, it's a good way to show your support or even your own identity and show support to students and it's a very good conversation with the manager then, say, "Oh, I've read this and I would love to have a lanyard actually because it helps me to show my identity", and that's when the conversations can start. Had that been in my induction it would have been very helpful and I think from day one I would feel more comfortable being myself and that helps a lot because it's hard, as the time goes on, even knowing someone for five years is it time to come after, it's harder." (Gay woman, Professional Services)

"I think if I'm completely honest it was just something that I wasn't told about. I think if, had I known about that in my induction time [...] and felt like I did have that kind of supporting factor at the beginning, then yes maybe it wouldn't feel

4. Out@UCL was established by staff as a networking group for UCL staff who identify as LGBTQ+ and at the time of this study, approximately 600 staff were members. qUCL is a staff-led research network that works to bring together UCL staff and students with research interests in LGBTQ+ studies, gender and sexuality studies, queer theory, and related fields. Most recently an informal UCL Trans Network has been established for staff and students who are trans, non-binary or genderqueer. It currently has more than 40 members and provides peer-support, a space for trans students to find trans mentors and for all trans people to connect, discuss, and find help with common issues.

“ACADEMIC FREEDOM ISN’T JUST A PASS TO SAY WHATEVER YOU WANT; IT COMES WITH A RESPONSIBILITY.

I THINK ESPECIALLY GIVEN THE FACT THAT UCL JUST DID THIS WHOLE SOUL-SEARCHING THING ABOUT EUGENICS, CORRECTLY I FEEL, I WAS IN SUPPORT OF THE BUILDINGS BEING RENAMED AND THINGS LIKE THAT BUT IF WE’VE ACCEPTED THAT ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND HONOURING ACADEMICS AND STUFF HAS A LIMIT IN THAT RESPECT, WHY ARE WE STILL TREATING TRANS PEOPLE’S LIVES LIKE THEY’RE SOMETHING TO BE DEBATED?”

Queer non-binary, Professional Services

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> as uncomfortable at work discussing my private life now because I would have had some form of backing." (Bisexual woman, Research Associate)

One staff member also discussed the importance of visible signposting to EDI networks as important for the recruitment of prospective staff, particularly from minoritized groups.

> "...there is no way for us to make sure that people feel a) confident that this is a place that they can apply to work at. And b) confident that this is a place that even if they are invited to work that they would feel safe to do so. I wouldn't know any of the things that I know now unless I had spent hours on the staff pages looking at things and going through the archives, looking at different blogs. Because no one knows. So another thing is making sure mandatorily that all management is aware of these things and they promote them. But also actually that perhaps there is an induction sheet for everyone from HR when you start, these are the networks, this is learning and development, this is what happens." (Pansexual non-binary, Professional Services)

LGBTQ+ staff believed that EDI focussed induction does need to happen, but online depersonalised training is ineffective. Good quality local induction can have a profoundly positive impact.

> "My line manager the first day we had our induction online, she openly said "my name is blah blah blah. I'm married, my wife's name is blah blah blah" [...] And then I realised that my line manager was a member of the LGBT community and then we went to a virtual coffee meeting with the rest of the administration team and some of them were talking about their own partners and I realised they were either lesbian or gay, other people were perfectly fine with that, no one was making silly comments like in my previous workplace for example" (Gay man, Professional Services)

LGBTQ+ staff gave examples of how they had directly and indirectly benefited from volunteer-led university-wide LGBTQ+ networks. Many felt that these networks, and the centralised funding of them by UCL, were important for establishing and promoting a supportive, inclusive, and welcoming workplace.

> "I'd be checking my email and I saw something to do with a LGBTQ staff network and at the time I was really trying to orientate myself and, as I became more settled into my identity as a lesbian. I just wanted very much to make connections and to be visible. Those are the two real things that I really wanted to do. So, I linked up with [Name and Name], and they invited me to Pride. So, I did my first Pride with UCL in 2019 and that was amazing, absolutely amazing. And I think later that year they asked me to do sort of like a profile, Out at UCL. I did that somewhere Out at UCL, some pages to do with Out at UCL and I think I'll be there, grinning and talking about how gay I am." (Lesbian woman, Professional Services)

Being part of these networks was an important part of feeling confident and valued at work and part of a UCL community.

> "[...] when I was more heavily involved in the network then I felt more comfortable, you know that gave me confidence to be who I am at work. That was a sea-change for me because I think, although I've never hidden the fact that I'm gay, I never felt, I never really spoke about it" (Gay man, Professional Services)

For some staff, the decision to be involved in LGBTQ+ networks at UCL was aligned with a desire for change and wanting to make the university a more inclusive and welcoming place for others.

> "[...] so for some time I was thinking of trying to get more involved in LGBTQ+ stuff because I felt that I wanted to collaborate in making a change. Because I have this idea that we are now where we are because of people before us did certain things. So I guess that is like the responsibility of keeping the ball rolling. So I wanted just to collaborate and to try to contribute to improve things, even though I might not get any benefit myself; but I think for future generations." (Gay man, Research Associate)

Staff who had been at UCL for a long time reported a recent renewed interest in being involved in EDI work because of concerns that the university is failing to offer adequate support and protection to LGBTQ+ staff and students.

> "I was really interested in getting involved [in LESG] as a result of my own experiences at UCL and also administrative issues that some of my students have been dealing with" (Gay man, Associate Professor)

An important minority of LGBTQ+ staff felt actively excluded from UCL's LGBTQ+ staff networks. One staff member reported feeling alienated by the tone of Out@UCL

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communications and believes that the network does not allow space for a wide range of political opinions to be explored.

> **"My perception is there is a slightly bullying tone about a group who have ... a series of political views and they've established a kind of unspoken rule that you don't sign up to all of them, you've no place in the staff group. I don't go to events because of that. I find the tone of the emails and the endless kind of sloganeering on the emails off-putting and bullying towards people who don't, bullying is too strong a term, but making people feel unwelcome if they don't sign up to every single one of them." (Gay man, Professor)**

One bisexual member of staff was uncertain whether LGBTQ+ networks at UCL would be welcoming to bisexual staff, especially those who are in relationships that appear heterosexual.

> **"The thing that stops me or the thing that worries me is that it would be just be a like, "why?", you know, "what's wrong with her? Is she-?", "What's this thing she's going through?" Or "Why is she even bothering if she's still in this relationship?"" (Bisexual woman, Research Associate)**

One member of staff described how, alongside being LGBTQ+, being an autistic member of staff had affected their experience working at UCL. He described having "a really hard time socialising". This is an important reminder that, whilst staff LGBTQ+ networks do exist, the existence of a network or support system does not mean it is inherently accessible to all. For some, those connections can be more difficult to access.

Where they do exist, LGBTQ+ staff talked about the importance of their local EDI networks within faculties and departments for providing support and creating positive workplace cultures.

> **"Yes, I do feel comfortable and confident that I could raise any issues with say the faculty and the EDI working group and people there. I do feel like I'm in quite a privileged position in the way that I am quite connected in with these different networks so I know how to tap into them and get what I feel needs to be done done, so, yes, other people might have a different experience I guess. I know which colleagues to speak to if I wanted to raise something with the faculty EDI team or I've got quite a close connection to the senior management of our department so I could raise something to my manager or the head of department very easily I know I can just go directly to them if I had an issue." (Lesbian, non-binary, Professional Services)**

Participants from across UCL expressed a desire for more faculty and departmental level LGBTQ+ equalities committees and networks, as well as informal places for LGBTQ+ staff to meet each other.

> **"So I think part of my joining LESG and the Athena Swan which is now the EDI group was I don't feel like I have a voice as somebody, so I need to up my game and join these much bigger groups so that I can say, actually this is what I see on a day-to-day and we need to tackle this." (Bisexual non-binary, Research Associate)**

However, staff involved in local LGBTQ+ networks and committees felt that this work needed to be better coordinated across the university so that skills, ideas and activities could be shared and so that work was not being duplicated unnecessarily.

> **"[...] when I took my role up I noticed there are small kind of spontaneous little LGBT groups in faculties and divisions and departments, one of the things that I think we're already very aware of is that a lot of these things can be going on but you shouldn't really have to go seeking to find them right, we need to sort of have a network of networks and one of the things that seems to be understandably an issue for UCL is just that the institution is so vast that it would be nice to be more joined up with some of the things we do share, expertise, join up on different events you know to make sure that they're nicely populated and things like that." (Lesbian woman, Professor)**

As this member of staff explains, a lot of work has been done to understand the issues affecting LGBTQ+ staff at UCL (e.g, via Athena Swan), but this has not led senior leaders to make the changes needed to policy, practice, and funding to address these issues.

> **"The [Athena Swan] action plan had particular issues to do with LGBTQ+ issues and representation. [...] There was a proposal that there should be – because of the absence of the EDI committee's engagement – a named individual with time allocated to that role to represent awareness and to feed into that. As well as serving for LGBTQ+ staff to go to someone because people didn't feel that the reps could be necessarily trusted with that. [...] There was a need for training for line managers and staff to support staff and students**

“I THINK UCL HAS GOT A LITTLE BIT OF CATCHING UP TO DO IN MAKING UCL A SAFE AND FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENT FOR TRANS AND NON-BINARY PEOPLE”

Gay/Pan/Bisexual man, Professional Services

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> in coming out and working with HR and student services to promote policies and practices because people didn't feel that was happening and also to work with HR and student services to create web presence – so, I don't think any of those things have happened." (Gay man, Professor)

Staff in this study reported that the lack of institutional support and leadership on LGBTQ+ issues at UCL contributes to the sense of precarity for individual staff when getting involved in EDI work. One professor described how doing LGBTQ+ focussed EDI work carries with it a degree of professional and personal risk and that they only felt able to engage in institutional EDI work once they had achieved a level of professional security and seniority.

> "I only joined [an LGBTQ+ committee] when I was promoted [to professor]. I was doing the Athena Swan for about six years yes but the whole time I was kind of wanting to do something more LGBT focused. It's something I wanted to do for a while. It's basically about putting my head above the parapet and not wanting to rock the boat in any way [...] The only potential really it had seemed to me that it could only potentially leave me open to any kind of covert prejudice. Clearly people couldn't be overtly prejudiced but it could potentially disadvantage me" (Gay man, Professor)

This lack of institutional support also placed a significant burden on LGBTQ+ staff. Many described volunteering their time by sitting on committees, starting up and running local staff and student networks and the everyday labour involved in supporting the social and emotional well-being of colleagues and students.

> "One of the challenges with any aspect of EDI is that it falls on us to do more. [...] it shouldn't always be on the really small groups or the under-represented groups who have had very genuine and difficult experiences to always be stepping up and take the initiative. And often not just emotional labour, but also they are very engaged in initiatives [...] they already have so much, they're already doing so much partially because it matters to them and it's important. But they take it on and therefore, it inevitably takes away from the time for other things." (Gay man, Lecturer)

The lack of central leadership and coordination of EDI also meant that access to support for LGBTQ+ staff was perceived to vary from department to department. Many of the positive EDI experiences discussed in this report appear to be the result of individual actions rather than driven by the institution. Staff, however, positioned this voluntary work as necessary in the absence of proactive leadership and the cultivation of a centralised EDI culture.

> "There is a blur at UCL into where volunteer work is filling a gap in the institution because it's not currently met by official or structural resources. But also, the essential role that volunteers play in, for example, UCL being identified as a Top 100 employer in the Stonewall Workplace Index. UCL gets to London Pride directly because of the work of volunteers. UCL is able to offer a friends and allyship three-hour face-to-face training session, which allows departments to meet their EDI strategy, and develop tactics, and bring in interventions for staff, because of the roles of volunteers. I think it very much boils down to, if we don't do this, who is going to?" (Lesbian woman, Professional Services)

UCL CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP

ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND GENDER CRITICAL VIEWS

Academic freedom arose as a contentious issue for participants, despite this not being a question in the interview schedule (see Appendix 3). At the time of this study, UCL's position on academic freedom and its connection to freedom of speech was the subject of intense internal and external discussion. The Provost, both as a role and as an individual, came up as a topic in connection with academic freedom in almost half of the interviews with LGBTQ+ staff. Dr Michael Spence had joined UCL as President and Provost in January 2021, taking over from Prof Sir Michael Arthur. Given the timing of the data collection phase of this research (June - September, 2021), it is perhaps unsurprising that comparisons between the incoming and outgoing Provosts were common.

While Prof Sir Michael Arthur was broadly viewed as an ally to the LGBTQ+ community at UCL, staff were less certain and, in some cases, concerned about the views and actions of Dr Michael Spence. LGBTQ+ staff were most concerned about the new Provost's stance on academic freedom following his comments in a radio interview about having a Holocaust denier on campus and his stated belief that universities 'ought not to be a

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participant in the big public conversations, but a host for the big public conversations' (UCL 2021).

> "[...] to imply that UCL is nothing more than an empty conference venue is to diminish centuries of intellectual activity and contribution to the betterment of society that's taken place at this institution." (Gay man, Professor)

> "The current Provost seems to want universities to be idealised spaces of intellectual debate, when that doesn't match the reality of many people working within these institutions. Because we're not perfect logicians, and we're not boxes devoid of emotion" (Bisexual trans woman, Lecturer)

One LGBTQ+ member of staff supported the Provost's position on academic freedom.

> "I was a philosophy student before, and I tend to maybe find debate a bit more fun than some of my friends do. But I feel like that is the academic spirit, that's the core of it for me is you know an acknowledgement that you can discuss ideas and perhaps disagree and be coming from different positions or disciplines or you know walks of life [...] I don't think that that needs to be or is necessarily a threat to either side who might feel differently about the issue but I was surprised at the ferocity with which people do seem to think that. I was quite taken aback [...] But no I don't fear for my job, I don't fear for my position anything like that. It would be about probably my relationships with other members of staff." (Lesbian woman, Postgraduate Teaching Assistant)

However, all other staff in this study who raised the topic of academic freedom were concerned about the Provost's interpretation. Pointing to specific examples where his approach to academic freedom was felt to be problematic, LGBTQ+ staff referred to his history of not allowing the University of Sydney to take a stance on the gay marriage referendum in Australia (Taylor 2017), his statements in the British press about inviting a Holocaust denier to speak at UCL (Telegraph 2021), and his comments on international conflicts.

> "I think this idea that we don't get involved in wider debates and yet we actually do. Like the new Provost has said we won't be lobbying government on particular issues and then puts out statements around Israel, Palestine, which are inherently political, you know, support for Afghan students and staff, like these- You can't pretend to be absent of big P politics in a university context." (Queer, non-binary, Professional Services)

> "[...]these are issues that have been settled by society and sure some people are unhappy with the way they've been settled but they are settled and society has essentially moved on from them you know. The Holocaust happened. That's a criminal offence to deny the Holocaust and yet the Provost briefly aligned himself with the concept of inviting Holocaust deniers because there's a kneejerk, I mean sure, fine, take that as your starting point yes you know free speech is good but you know we're smart people. I feel like we can get beyond that. Free speech is good but has consequences and it has consequences not just for the speaker but for the people that they're speaking about and for the person or institution hosting that speaker." (Gay man, Professor)

Perhaps most pressing for LGBTQ+ staff at UCL was how his interpretation of academic freedom had the potential to encourage discrimination against LGBTQ+ people within the university.

> "The Provost has this idea about "disagreeing well" but some things are discriminatory and you can't disagree on something where somebody is attacking your right to existence. That's not an intellectual issue." (Lesbian woman, Associate Professor)

> "[...] if you want to say you are trans inclusive then be, you don't have to offer a platform for people to be hateful. You know, they can have their free speech elsewhere, you don't have to offer that platform for people to be hateful." (Queer trans non-binary, Postgraduate Teaching Assistant)

LGBTQ+ staff in this study also questioned whether this stance on academic freedom and its conflation with freedom of speech was emboldening some colleagues to discriminate and express prejudicial views towards trans and non-binary people. Of most concern was the effect that this was having on trans and non-binary staff and students.

> "I suppose a fear, from my perspective would be that the new approach of freedom of speech is actually not about freedom of speech, it's about people saying offensive, rude, dangerous things to other people. That might lead to suicide in extreme instances, you know it's happened before. So that's, I suppose that's a danger I see, that this, I mean it's a general assault of the right isn't

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> it, this idea that freedom of speech and saying whatever you want to whoever you want whenever you want." (Gay man, Associate Professor)

Staff were particularly concerned about colleagues who use their UCL affiliation to lend weight to public letters, social media campaigns and events in support of gender critical views.

> "Academic freedom doesn't, I don't believe, extend into behaving how the hell you like when you're on campus and using your position as a senior academic at UCL to undermine and attack people in the national press. I think that's abhorrent and unforgiveable personally. And I think we cannot allow that to be a position that UCL takes in that that, by not challenging it and saying that that's okay. We wouldn't do it for our BAME colleagues. We wouldn't do it if it was about women. We can't do it because it's about trans people." (Gay man, Professional Services)

These concerned were heightened further when the colleagues expressing these views and using their UCL affiliation did not have a background in gender and sexuality research and teaching.

> "You know I think the people who bandy the term 'academic freedom' around aren't actually talking about any academic concept. Often, they don't even research in a relevant area. They don't know what they're talking about and there's no empirical base to the claims that they're making. It's nonsense frankly as far as I'm concerned, and I think that the institution should be taking a much stronger line on it. And it worries me that the language that is being used is really mirroring the Government's language, and I don't think that that is what we want to be aligning ourselves with at all." (Lesbian woman, Associate Professor)

This context in turn contributed to a widely shared belief among participants that UCL is becoming a less welcoming or safe and inclusive workplace for trans and non-binary people. However, as the example below demonstrates, for some trans and non-binary participants, as discussed in more detail in Section 2, encountering these views was already a problematic aspect of their everyday working lives at UCL.

> "There was a meeting when we're still meeting in person I walked out of because it was so combative and so stressful and I was like, you know what, I don't need to sit here for this, I don't need to be sitting here while my validity of my identity is being attacked. It's stressful, it makes me feel nervous about being at work. I [feel] nervous about confrontation, nervous about people not respecting my identity and being verbally abusive about it, just the stress of being in a place where it feels like institutionally they are not committed to protecting who I am." (Queer non-binary, Professional Services)

While trans and non-binary staff were feeling the ramifications of gender critical views from UCL colleagues most keenly, UCL's support of these views has had a negative effect on the whole LGBTQ+ community. One staff member took all of this activity as a sign that inclusion efforts for LGBTQ+ staff had stagnated.

> "I think maybe things are better than they were ten, fifteen years ago, but over the last three or four years it's been really difficult with the gender recognition act and the gender critical feminists really going heavy. Unfortunately, I think it has regressed a little bit and hosting things like the Women's Place conference has made a lot of queer staff very nervous" (Queer non-binary, Professional Services)

One staff member had the following to say about UCL's refusal to stand against transphobia in the university and how the current framing of 'academic freedom' had the potential to roll back progress on LGBTQ+ rights.

> "It makes me feel a very deep distrust of where, where this takes us and what that could mean for me who's now very out and gay like am I next against the wall when it comes to sides that UCL will take in a debate about you know whether gay people should continue to be allowed to get married or have equal rights (Gay man, Professor)

Many LGBTQ+ staff interviewed had not seen any evidence that UCL is proactively addressing the concerns of trans and non-binary people in relation to these policies on academic freedom and freedom of speech.

> "But then when you [...] brush everything under the carpet, because like with the transphobic conference, there wasn't a need for IOE to invest in that there's other ways you can generate money, of course, as an organization you don't have to support these beliefs. If it was a conference that was against any other kind of minority, things would have been taken more seriously. Why don't we do the same with LGBTQ stuff? If it's hurting

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your students and your staff, you shouldn't be doing it." (Gay man, Professional Services)

One participant noted that discussions of academic freedom or freedom of speech on campus often ignored the very real differences in power that pre-exist and frame such discussions to the detriment of those with less agency or who are already marginalised within the structures of academia and society.

"You can't fairly debate people's existence and you can't debate the existence of people who have significantly less power than you. Is that really true debate? Is that participatory debate? It's not, it's a really exclusive form of discussion that is archaic and has always been exclusive." (Queer non-binary, Professional Services)

LGBTQ+ staff also gave more specific examples of the ways in which academic freedom is an intersectional issue. LGBTQ+ staff and others who occupy more marginal positions within UCL (e.g., early career, people of colour) did not feel that they had the same 'freedoms' or support in debates about 'academic freedom' as heterosexual, White, professors.

"I had people coming up to me from the IOE, who are more junior queer members of staff, and they were like, thank you so much for speaking up in that meeting. They said it's really intimidating that some of our professors are so anti-trans. And I think ... the problem is there is so much power and influence amongst that circle of people, like they have got so much media savviness and platform; they could get an article in The Guardian at the drop of a hat. And they are people who have reached security in their careers." (Queer non-binary, Professional Services)

"I'm a White academic who's slightly senior. I'm not a professor but I'm slightly senior, I'm in a permanent position, I'm a woman, I'm gay; that's kind of ok. But if I was a trans person I'm not sure, in fact I'm sure that I wouldn't feel as comfortable as I do." (Lesbian woman, Associate Professor)

"A lot of them have professor status, or even higher. So, they are very high up in sort of the academic hierarchy, whereas a lot of trans people haven't got like, well I'm not even aware or any trans staff in senior positions." (Queer/Ace/Bisexual trans man, Lecturer)

"More recently I've had both males and females come to me saying that they worry about expressing opinions that are anti gender critical feminists because some of the individuals that propose and are supporting gender critical feminism are professors and are in powerful positions and they feel it would be detrimental to their career because of the atmosphere created." (Gay man, Professor)

"While academics are of course allowed to express views outside of the department, because the letter drew on those academics' expertise as academics to make the point that they were making which was very dangerous and wrong I think it is entirely justifiable that students would feel unsafe because of that, and it should have." (Queer trans non-binary, Research Associate)

Several LGBTQ+ staff questioned whether UCL would be as supportive of colleagues' right to debate race and racism and pointed to UCL's history of eugenics as an example of how academic freedom can be abused by those in positions of power. UCL's Eugenics Inquiry led by the previous Provost, had acknowledged this potential for abuse stating that "the right to freedom of expression is not unfettered" (UCL 2021) even within a climate of academic freedom. Parallels were drawn between this historical abuse of academic freedom and the continued failure of this approach for protecting minoritised identities.

"It really sits uncomfortably with me that people think that gender identity is an ideology, it's not a belief. It is its own rightful category of identity, and no one is saying that disability or race or any of these things are ideologies, even if they could be called into question. And there are people obviously critiquing Critical Race Theory and the social construction of disability, but legally nobody is questioning them as ideologies or beliefs in the same way." (Queer non-binary, Professional Services)

"Academic freedom isn't just a pass to say whatever you want; it comes with a responsibility. I think especially given the fact that UCL just did this whole soul-searching thing about eugenics, correctly I feel, I was in support of the buildings being renamed and things like that but if we've accepted that academic freedom and honouring academics and stuff has a limit in that respect, why are we still treating trans people's lives like they're something to be debated?" (Queer non-binary, Professional Services)

“I REMEMBER WHEN UCL FIRST FLEW THE PRIDE FLAG ABOVE THE MAIN BUILDING, AND YES, I THOUGHT THAT MADE A GUY’S CHEST SWELL A BIT WITH PRIDE. I THOUGHT THAT WAS A SIGN OF, WE SUPPORT YOU, YOU’RE WELCOME HERE, YOU ARE PART OF OUR COMMUNITY. AND I FOUND THAT VERY ENCOURAGING.”

Gay man, Professor

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> "If you want to be transphobic, if you want to invoke science to justify your bigotry that's fine. I mean be my guest, there's nothing I can do about that. I can't stop it. I can't convince you otherwise and you have all the right to think anything you want. But don't pretend that this is up for debate, it's not. No one is debating racism, no one is debating homophobia, right? They are debating trans lives and that's why I think it needs to stop." (Gay man, Lecturer)

> "...the atmosphere in society is very hostile now towards trans people and that, I take that quite personally. I'm not trans but I don't want to live in a society that is hostile to trans people per se because that's wrong in itself but it also indicates a general, a general sense that society will move backwards towards a time when all nonconventional identities are openly discriminated against. I mean goodness me a court decision, anyway, a court decision in which someone's belief that someone else doesn't deserve to be who they say they are, be seen as equal to a sexual identity absolutely ... or a gender identity ... absolutely breathtaking like where does that end? Like someone who says that Black people shouldn't exist or that gay people should be put in prison camps so that's, sorry that's a protected intellectual philosophical belief? Fuck you." (Gay man, Professor)

The LGBTQ+ staff at UCL who spoke about academic freedom in this study wanted colleagues and the institution to understand the profound negative impacts that expressing gender critical views has on the well-being of LGBTQ+ staff and students.

> "I think that there's an undue emphasis on freedom of speech as a virtue while ignoring the costs that inevitably come with it. I've heard laudable things said that we must encourage free speech while making sure we look after our people but I'm not seeing any evidence that that's being done. What I'm seeing is old wounds being reopened that are already causing harm and hurt to trans people and their allies which is me. Not enough steps are taken to make sure that our people are looked after and reopening those wounds as a way of crowing to the media about freedom of speech frankly twists the knife in a wound that is not fully healed. It sets the stage for future incidents where someone else's freedom of speech is prized above the psychological and physical wellbeing of our staff and students [...] no steps have been taken to make sure our people are looked after." (Gay man, Professor)

For trans and non-binary staff, these impacts were particularly acute.

> "The recent focus on the concept of free speech and academic freedom, whatever that is, comes inextricably linked to the threat of hate speech which is not only hurtful to trans people and other sexual minorities but also has by very virtue of its existence the potential to cause physical harm through psychological injury leading to self-harm and suicide, and also the increased risk of being physically attacked or otherwise attacked" (Gay man, Professor)

> "Our existence is treated as some sort of abstract debate with like, two sides and pro et contra. No. You either want this person to be alive or you don't, which is a big difference, rather than having an intellectual debate about a subject, you know? Unfortunately, the "it's a debate" and "if we want to preserve academic freedom then you need to listen to all sides of the debate", is the thing that's very prevalent, especially in the upper reaches of EDI and management at UCL." (Queer/Ace/Bisexual trans man, Lecturer)

Likewise, this lesbian member of staff describes how gender critical views seek to undermine their relationship with their trans partner and the additional labour that is required to defend their relationship from these attacks.

> "[...] so politically it might be good for me to say, I'm a lesbian with a transwoman partner and actually that is far from being a problem. That's absolutely no problem and all this media false dichotomy between the needs of lesbians and transwomen is just so toxic. It's absolutely hideously toxic. So, it feels important to stand up and say, here's a person with absolutely no problem. We're living our lives happily and what on earth are you talking about? You crazy, divisive, toxic, foul people." (Queer trans non-binary, Associate Professor)

During the research, several trans and non-binary staff spoke about their intention to resign from UCL because they felt unsafe and unsupported at work. Since the completion of project data collection, two trans study participants have resigned citing the impact of gender critical colleagues, and UCL's tacit support of them.

Staff wanted clearer guidelines and policies on the legal frameworks within which debates about academic freedom, freedom of speech and equality and dignity in the workplace sit. A question that LGBTQ+ staff in this

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study had is how UCL will ensure that LGBTQ+ staff and students will not be discriminated against within its current 'disagreeing well' agenda.

> "I think we need to start with a reassertion of the law and the protections afforded in the law to people with protected characteristics and specifically you know we must take on board recent court rulings but those also you know contain very clear direction that if a transphobe exposes a transgender person to bullying or harassment in the workplace including the misuse of pronouns for instance, that is prohibited under the Equalities Act and I think that there needs to be, there needs to be visible reminders of the minimum expectations of staff. So the staff and student trans and LGBT policies plus their underpinning by law but also I think you know I think we need a change of direction. I think that we need, that UCL needs to, that there's a form of encouraging free speech which draws a line on the correct side of hate speech. I think UCL risks becoming an accessory to hate speech and hate speech is a criminal offence. I don't know whether being an accessory to hate speech is a criminal offence but it isn't something that an academic institution that has any pride in itself should be aspiring towards." (Gay man, Professor)

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON LGBTQ+ STAFF

This research was conducted in the summer of 2021, at a time when staff were largely working at home due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, LGBTQ+ staff in this study were asked how the changes to their working practices and environments had affected the way they navigated their sexual and gender identities at UCL. For some the move to online working produced new opportunities for connections and networking, while for others it exacerbated feelings of vulnerability and isolation at work.

The loss of informal social spaces, in particular spaces where one might feel safer to come out to or be out with colleagues, was discussed by several participants. This sentiment was succinctly captured by the following participant.

> "I think the most useful way of disclosing one's queer identity is usually in informal set ups, it's when everybody is more relaxed about sharing, the other people are more relaxed about receiving it, processing it. And when it becomes relevant in a formal setting you don't have to do it in that more scary formal setting and unfortunately, informal moments have been completely like wiped out by the pandemic." (Queer man, Lecturer)

Feeling safe enough to disclose sexual and gender identities, as discussed in greater depth in Section 2, is something that LGBTQ+ staff described having to judge in each setting. This non-binary member of staff found the virtual platform a more difficult space to manage inclusive practices within meetings.

> "I don't know. I think in a way it's made it harder to even think about correcting people if they do misgender me just because it's so much more awkward to interrupt people in an online meeting anyway, whereas in an in person meeting if you're sitting with someone who you know is an ally or whatever you might exchange a glance and then they might be, "Hey, by the way just to correct you about the pronouns," obviously you can't really do that, who are you looking at on Teams, who's eyes are you trying to meet?" (Queer non-binary, Professional Services)

LGBTQ+ staff reported that they found it easier to navigate decisions about coming out and being out within in person settings than online.

> "I'd imagine it will be something that will come up in conversation when I am working face to face in the office again perhaps but it's not something that I feel comfortable or able to relay across Teams during any of the meetings we have that are strictly business. It doesn't quite feel appropriate or something that I am prepared to do at the moment... but that's just because it doesn't fit in the setting not that I'm not comfortable doing it I would have I would be comfortable doing it again if having a couple of beers after work or something, a social event or if someone asks me about anything about my life I'd be happy to do it again." (Bisexual man, Professional Services)

> "Because, you know if you are sensitive about your sexuality or sexual identity whatever, it's easier to build up you know bump into people in the corridor, chat over coffee, become friends and then you know be more open and things and those chance, that ability to develop relationships by chance encounters don't occur as much you know on Zoom obviously not." (Gay man, Professor)

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Online spaces appeared to reduce or interfere with reading social cues and body language, which LGBTQ+ staff described as vital tools for judging the safety of a working environment.

> "I guess because when you say when you come out in person you read non-verbal language and you can identify whether things continue to be okay, whether the other person starts feeling tense, it's very non-verbal and I think you don't have that reassurance on zoom so it is like, I mean there are people that are really expressive and you can really see their body language on Zoom and I guess maybe those would not be such a big problem but yes, I mean Zoom is weird, that is how I found it." (Bisexual woman, Postgraduate Teaching Assistant)

The shift to online working had also removed informal opportunities for LGBTQ+ staff to get to know their colleagues.

> "When I think about the people who I became friendly with that you feel kind of happy discussing things with, those were all just through, you know you go to some talk and afterwards you're eating the crisps and the Sodexo wine, and you have a chat, and you get on and you know people have been deprived of that opportunity. For someone in my position who's been in 10 years, you know I've built up friendships and networks. I think it's much harder for people earlier in their career, or most recently arrived to UCL." (Gay man, Associate Professor)

> "And in a way that you might have got more of those sorts of chats, very casually seeing each other in person or going for drinks after work or any of that sort of social time. Yes, I think that's probably been a big part of it for me. And I guess, yes, going through the personal journey at a time when I haven't been able to have those conversations with my colleagues feels like we don't know each other all that well" (Queer non-binary, Professional Services)

For another member of staff, having less opportunities for identifying or seeing other LGBTQ+ people in the office meant less opportunities for interactions based on shared experiences.

> "Because we haven't been able to see people, it has been difficult in some ways in the sense that other people that do identify as LGBTQ in the department, who I wouldn't interact with on a day-to-day work level, but I would interact because we feel like we've got common ground. I haven't interacted with them at all really except in meetings and things and it's been quite a stressful year as well. It felt a bit more like work conversations only with my peers, so, I've definitely missed that interaction of just being like, oh, another colleague is also gay, how are you doing, type of thing. It has definitely felt slightly more isolating in that sense, for sure I would say." (Queer woman, Professional Services)

The lack of opportunities for in-person activities also reduced opportunities for both social events and activism, decreasing feelings of, and opportunities for, solidarity between LGBTQ+ staff.

> "[...] it's very hard to achieve the things that LESG tries to achieve when nobody is going in. When you can't have a Pride march, LGBTQ+ History month is all remote, you can't have the network lunches. Just some of the main things that the group tries to facilitate can't happen so, I think that's sort of just been a shame. I miss that." (Lesbian woman, Associate Professor)

One participant also spoke about the lack of informal opportunities for LGBTQ+ students to engage with staff because online working during the pandemic tended to be more scheduled and compartmentalised.

> "I think I am aware that I am less able to connect with students because I am not in the room with them. Which is a shame for me but probably a bigger shame for those ones that need to have that special chat after or be in the space to like really, do you know what I mean? There are different kinds of encounters, so like the queer and trans students that I would usually be teaching, there is less possibility for them to be able to like feel connected I think. Because we are just not occupying the same space." (Queer trans non-binary, Postgraduate Teaching Assistant)

Another noted the loss of opportunities for some students to experience living and studying in a country that might allow them space and freedom to explore their sexual and gender identities.

> "I think for students it's really hard. We've loads of students who come from you know places where homosexuality is illegal or really taboo and they find it really liberating to be able to go to meetings and they've been stuck in their parents'

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> house on Zoom. I've felt really sorry for them like we've a student from Pakistan, a woman and you know it was so liberating for her, this was before COVID, sorry, the previous year to you know spend the year in London and you know her equivalent didn't get it last year. So, I think that's been really tough on them." (Gay man, Professor)

Most participants also talked about having to give a lot of extra support during the pandemic to other staff members, to their students, as well as to other people in their lives. This had been a strain for staff. Many had created specific digital practices to ensure that LGBTQ+ communities were kept intact and LGBTQ+ students and colleagues were checked in on.

> "I mean partly I set these networks up last summer because ... I was really conscious of the fact that I thought this year was going to be particularly challenging for LGBTQ staff and students and I wanted to have something in place that you know people who felt isolated would have something that they could, some way of reaching out to other people." (Lesbian woman, Associate Professor)

Several participants had started their jobs at UCL while remote working was in place. For these staff, loneliness was a recurring theme, and they were looking forward to meeting other LGBTQ+ people. These same staff described how it had been difficult to build trust and how feelings of isolation had led to them being closeted at work.

> "There's no solidarity, there's no person of my own sexuality that I can talk to kind of thing. In fact, you're the person I've had the longest conversation with that's from the LGBTQ+ community the whole time I've been here. That's saying something isn't it." (Gay East Asian man, Associate Lecturer)

> "And I have one person who, because ... we have this like buddy network, so like when you just start you get assigned a buddy, and you have like quick catch-ups with them. So that is the only social interaction that I have. But even with that person, I am not, I don't know them well enough yet to be able to make a judgement of whether I would trust them enough to share something so personal and whether it would be retaining confidence. Just because I share with one person doesn't mean that I would want everyone else to know." (Pansexual non-binary, Professional Services)

Alongside the challenges outlined above, many staff identified new affordances of working remotely. For example, one academic noted that holding LGBTQ+ focused events online was able to attract a larger audience.

> "But the [LGBTQ+] events conversely have been, I think much more successful doing them online than they would have been in person because we've reached a much wider audience than we would have done, and also we've been able to get speakers." (Lesbian woman, Associate Professor)

Other staff members found the ability to add a rainbow flag to their virtual background or put pronouns in their name an easier way to be open about their gender and sexuality.

> "I have my screen blurred, usually I have a background and I just had a flag in the background so if anybody wanted to notice they could do. Yes, so just kind of not flaunting it, not make a big thing of it and nobody else has, so." (Lesbian trans woman, Professional Services)

> "I'm looking forward to them coming offline now but it was certainly like a gateway for me to very easily participate and also like there are things about having your pronouns up immediately." (Queer transmasc, Research Associate)

The move to online working supported new LGBTQ+ activities, including the launch of LGBTQ+ in STEM. Several staff also talked about the individual benefits they experienced when working remotely, with less LGBTQ+ harassment and fewer stressful encounters when commuting to and from work. Many LGBTQ+ staff in this study were keen to keep some element of remote work.

> "Much easier. Wonderful. Love it. I have experience of working remotely before and I've sought out remote work and at times I have worked hard not to work in a workplace because it was hard, because of my presentation and sexuality. Not even necessarily homophobic, but more just you don't get invited to the staff party because you might bring your wife and then what would everyone do? Not having to go away for the day has enormous benefits for me. I am happy to be at home. I am happy to wear basic things and not have to think about it and not have to make so many choices about who I'm going to be today and where I'm going to go today and which train am I going to be on? Is there a football game, because that changes things. Who might be around to comment on me? I shall check Twitter for the protests that might happen around, because I

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> draw attention. Even if I wear a flipping hat, I am visible and that has been difficult sometimes." (Bisexual woman, Professional Services)

> "Yes, I've realised that a weight lifts when I don't have to navigate my way to and from university. I live with my wife and my cats and like I don't have to worry about being harassed or mis-gendered or using, you know, or any of that kind of stuff basically. Which doesn't happen to me very often but has happened frequently enough for it to be a thing that I carry with me and have to slightly anticipate as I move through the world [...] Lockdown has actually bought a reprieve because I do have a safe home to live in, an emotionally safe home." (Queer trans non-binary, Postgraduate Teaching Assistant)

For another member of staff, the ability to use the screen as a "buffer" made talking to people about LGBTQ+ issues or their own identity feel safer.

> "I think in some ways, as I mentioned, I think I mentioned earlier, in some ways I think you're probably more comfortable. You know I'm in my home now, I'm happy chatting with you. If I was in the office, would I be chatting to you the same way? I'd like to think I would be, but you don't know. So, I think the online setting, the screen provides a bit of a protection and a buffer." (Gay man, Lecturer)

Just working in their home environment felt safer to others.

> "As you can see, I have no problem talking and I feel that I can really do my job, I am at home. I am safe, I am here and if there are problems, I can step outside and take a breath of fresh air. I can open the window right next to me and take a breath of fresh air. I can just be, and it is home and it is as good as it can be, and I worry about losing that. I have really enjoyed the literal safest space I know." (Bisexual woman, Professional Services)

2

BEING ‘OUT’ AT UCL

2. BEING 'OUT' AT UCL

● This section of the report delves into experiences of coming out[5] and being out as a LGBTQ+ member of staff at UCL. Being "out" at UCL is not a static state, nor a binary (out or not out) but something that is constantly negotiated by staff as they move within and between different roles and spaces. These negotiations were made easier or constrained by the respective histories and intersecting social positions and identities of staff. One clear finding from this research is that there is no single "LGBTQ+ experience" for staff at UCL.

● Many of the LGBTQ+ staff in this study reported feeling supported and welcomed at UCL and felt comfortable to freely disclose their LGBTQ+ identities at work. However, this was not a universal experience. Gay men and lesbians found UCL an easier place to be out than bisexual, queer, trans and non-binary colleagues. These differences in experience appear to mirror the wider social context for LGBTQ+ people in the UK. Staff also pointed to the fact that coming out or being out was not always a choice. For example, some staff described being read as LGBTQ+ because of the way they express their gender. Meanwhile, some trans staff pointed to the impossibility of concealing their transition in the workplace. Staff with teaching focussed roles identified the specific challenges and opportunities of being out to students and how these varied by discipline. Whether students were undergraduates, postgraduates or doctoral candidates also affected whether staff decided to be out.

● Allyship from heterosexual and cisgender colleagues also affected whether and how LGBTQ+ felt able to be out at work. LGBTQ+ staff in this study spoke about the role of line managers and more senior leaders in fostering an environment where was possible to be out. However, a notable feature of participants' working lives at UCL was the additional labour involved in explaining LGBTQ+ lives to some colleagues and managers. LGBTQ+ staff also expressed fears that coming out would cause them to be labelled as "a problem", as "bringing sex" into the workplace or classroom, and that this in turn would lead to negative personal and professional repercussions. Trans, non-binary and queer members of staff believed that colleagues and managers had little understanding of their experiences and the specific challenges that they faced. These findings therefore mirror the study at University of Cambridge (2019)

5 Coming out is a metaphor that LGBTQ+ people use to describe the self-disclosure of their sexual orientation, gender identity and expression.

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◀ which found broad support for LGBTQ+ staff and students within higher education although this support was greater for gay men and lesbians, than queer, trans and non-binary staff. The more LGBTQ+ people fit into homonormative[6] expectations the easier their experiences appeared to be.

- Broadening the analysis out to an intersectional lens made visible a unique set of experiences. Within the large and heterogeneous group of LGBTQ+ staff at UCL, certain members benefit from forms of privilege (such as being White, middle class, cisgender, male). Privilege also appears to manifest with different job roles. Those LGBTQ+ staff with other intersecting privileges found UCL a less hostile and difficult space to work than others. LGBTQ+ staff who were on temporary contracts or on probation explained how this affected choices about how visible and out they wanted, or felt able, to be. It also affected how involved these felt they could be in LGBTQ+ issues in the workplace. New staff described waiting to see who else was out in their local setting before deciding whether they felt safe to do so. Others, meanwhile, pointed to the importance of knowing that there were other LGBTQ+ staff they could reach out to for support and advice. Early career staff also reported feeling less comfortable being out or speaking out on LGBTQ+ issues than their more established colleagues.

- Having visibly out LGBTQ+ members of staff, particularly in senior leadership, was viewed as important for fostering an inclusive culture for all LGBTQ+ staff. This visibility was also perceived as important for the recruitment and retention of students and staff. Overall, participants indicated that there were not enough LGBTQ+ role models in senior positions and that more work needed to be done to ensure that role models better represented the diversity of the LGBTQ+ community.

- A distinction was made between staff being visibly out and those who took on more formal LGBTQ+ role model positions in departments, faculties and senior leadership. While there were some staff who had chosen to take on formal LGBTQ+ roles (e.g., as LGBTQ+ chairs of EDI committees), many staff had taken on, or found themselves in mentoring roles for LGBTQ+ staff and students. All these roles come with additional labour that is often not recognised in

6 Homonormativity is the idea that LGBTQ+ people conform to heterosexual cultural ideals such as getting married or having children.

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◀ workload allocations. Staff also drew attention to the amount of emotional labour involved in these roles.

● LGBTQ+ staff at UCL reported several experiences of homophobia, transphobia, biphobia, sexism and racism from colleagues and students. These incidents ranged from everyday microaggressions to accounts of discrimination, prejudice and harassment. While many of these incidents were attributed to individual perpetrators, LGBTQ+ staff also felt UCL lacked a proactive EDI culture which might go some way to designing out these incidents.

● LGBTQ+ staff in this study explained that did not always report incidents, citing concerns that incidents would not be managed well by the institution or that by reporting a problem they, rather than the perpetrator, would become the focus of problem. LGBTQ+ staff who did not have firsthand experience of homophobia, transphobia, biphobia, sexism and racism reported how hearing about incidents affecting others contributed to a sense that UCL was an unsafe place to work. This in turn fed into many of the more general concerns about being out in the workplace documented in this section.

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COMING OUT AND BEING OUT AT UCL

Coming out and being out was described as a highly personal and contingent process, one that required careful navigation. LGBTQ+ staff described nuanced strategies for determining whether and when it was safe to be out at work.

> "I was a bit cagey about being open to some people. I was open to the initial group and then I expanded it later when I found out that the big scary guy, his PhD student is a lesbian who is off on maternity leave. And then the other guy, who I was uncertain about, his PhD student is gay as well. So that's how I found that there were actually no problems, it's just I hadn't interacted with them in any meaningful way." (Gay man, Research Fellow)

LGBTQ+ staff also spoke about how coming out was never a singular moment, but something that often involved a degree of vigilance and ongoing decision-making. Staff emphasised feelings of vulnerability and the emotional labour involved in this process.

> "[...] it does always cause a bit of anxiety. It's the same when I try to describe to my colleagues, I said people think coming out only happens once, I am like, it's every fucking damn day. And it's like especially when you are in an academic setting, like you go to a conference, you meet a new collaborator, you shake hands, you have to decide like, is this person going to be somebody this could be an issue with?" (Gay man, Research Fellow)

> "[...] of course we often have to come out regularly and I think [...] because of that extra effort that I need to make to really engage with people I needed to be sometimes courageous and you know, especially when I am speaking to directors and executive directors, I felt nervous I was like, "well I want to be myself and really authentic but I don't want to come across as too camp" and actually I managed to just breathe and remind myself to be myself." (Gay man, Professional Services)

> "Like if I say this then people are going to think this about the heterosexual community, and they don't have to say "by the way, I'm heterosexual" - they just never have to go through that, and I don't feel resentful towards them for not having to. I envy their experience, but I don't really like how I have to do that, and I feel the pressure to make these decisions, and I'm sure any LGBTQ+ person has to feel that way in a group, and they have to think "how do I say it?". "Do I feel safe saying it?" "What potential consequences are there?", and I wish we could get to a place where we wouldn't have to think about." (East Asian Gay man, Associate Lecturer)

Almost all participants in this study agreed that being out at work was an important part of their working life, although they attributed different reasons to its importance. For some, being out at UCL was aligned with being part of a community and was significant for their sense of belonging at UCL.

> "[...] there are many things that I think when I think about being out at UCL. The first that comes to my mind would be the social bit, but also the other aspects, as well of being heard and being protected and being part of a community. It makes you feel like you belong to that organisation in a way, which is nice." (Lesbian woman, Professional Services)

Other members of staff spoke about the importance of being out in connection with being a role model at UCL.

> "I am absolutely committed to the fact that I think it is important to be out. I think the more that people come out the more normalised everything becomes and I know that as I was growing up when I was 14-15 my life might have been quite a bit different if I'd had more positive role models that were simply in my life and out whether that was the teachers or anyone through a professional capacity it would have been helpful. The reward from it is that someone who is not out might see me being out and be more comforted by that and more able to do that themselves, or indeed not, or it might educate some straight people into not being particularly questioning or weird about it in the future; that's a positive. There are all of net benefits to doing this and it helps sort of put you in contact I think with people who may be more similar to you, which I think is helpful you know." (Bisexual man, Professional Services)

> "[...] given everything I have experienced to this date it's really, really important to role model and I think role modelling is part of why I am here today I think I would want for anybody to live an authentic life" (Gay man, Professional Services)

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For LGBTQ+ staff who research or teach about gender and sexuality, being out was seen as an important and sometimes necessary part of their work.

> "Well I think it is important for me to be out at work because I make sexuality and the experience of sexuality a central part of my research and teaching practice, and on that basis I think it is really important that you know my work has political resonance, my teaching is designed specifically to make people, whatever their own sexual or gender identity and self-identification, feel welcome and included in the community that I am teaching in. And I think that requires a certain amount of openness to make people however they want to express themselves in a classroom environment feel comfortable in doing so." (Gay man, Professor)

For others, the importance of being out was viewed as politically necessary for emphasising diversity within the LGBTQ+ community.

> "I think it's important to be out at work as well if you feel comfortable being so because I think visibility is really important. [...] I think it's actually really useful for LGBT allies to see that we come in all shapes and sizes and are just as boring or interesting as everyone else and that you know there isn't a kind of identikit gay man or lesbian woman that everyone kind of conforms to, but actually we're just as broad a spectrum of people as everyone else and I think it's really important for that because I don't like using the word normalises but you know it kind of demystifies LGBT and kind of helps to remove that othering to a certain extent I think." (Gay man, Professional Services)

A central theme in experiences of being out at the workplace for LGBTQ+ staff were the challenges associated with discussing their families and personal relationships with colleagues.

> "[...] there's always an assumption that as queer people we don't have families, whatever they might be. So no recognition that we might have families of our own, and I mean by families in its full proper sense not a children-based definition. And that sometimes plays out in really interesting ways around allocation of work, and you know things like, all of the summer, "Well you can do that you haven't got kids have you?" I was like, "Well I haven't but you're assuming that I haven't, and just because I don't have kids doesn't mean that I can't have a summer holiday." It's those kind of things. And actually, just as an aside, quite a large number of the queer people in the school do have kids. So it's kind of, the stereotype and the assumptions actually work negatively on both sets of people, which is really interesting." (Gay man, Associate Professor)

One polyamorous participant described a reluctance to discuss their family and personal relationships, which involved more than one significant partner, because they were concerned they would meet a lack of understanding, or their relationship would be viewed as invalid or inauthentic.

> "And during the pandemic I broke up with a significant partner and fell in love with another person. And, to try and explain that I was like involved with both of those people at the same time to colleagues, like pick and choose who you say that to and how you think those conversations will land. [...] And you want to be able to talk about your partners in this way that it doesn't sound like I was just like, bye, hello. I had an emotional investment with both of them at the same time and that's valid." (Queer non-binary, Professional Services)

Similar concerns were held by interviewees who identified as bisexual or pansexual. Participants who came out as bisexual and pansexual also described feeling as though their relationships were devalued by being sexualised or invalidated by their colleagues. For more on discrimination towards bisexual and pansexual staff at UCL, see Section 2: 'Being bisexual and pansexual at UCL'.

One member of staff felt that discussing their relationships when dating was viewed as a less legitimate topic in the workplace and compared this with the ease that staff in long-term relationships appeared to feel when referring to their partners and families.

> "There's something about speaking about your home life with your partner, you know, and then speaking about my dating life which is different actually. One of them's almost more like an authorised forum of personal discourse. [...] I think looking back on it that almost is more of a dominating factor than anything else that's part of my identity. It's the age and a need to, I think, almost represent myself more formally and professionally to make up for that." (Gay man, Lecturer)

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This same member of staff went on to explain that they were subsequently treated differently to their colleagues who had established families and relationships.

> "I mean they all know that I'm not in a relationship and the reason I learned this is because we had like a dinner party, and everyone else got a plus one and I didn't." (Gay man, Lecturer)

Normative expectations of relationships (i.e. heterosexual, cisgender, monogamous parents with or expecting children) were also a common theme amongst LGBTQ+ staff who were parents or prospective parents. Being an LGBTQ+ parent was seen as an important component of their identity.

> "I think having that space to be understood as a parent is really important" (Queer trans non-binary, Postgraduate Teaching Assistant)

> "I do have an identity as a lesbian mother which is, yes also I suppose important to my sense of myself as a lesbian." (Lesbian woman, Associate Professor)

However, for this person, being a parent meant they felt less likely to be recognised as queer because the intersection of parenthood and sexuality created a dissonance that occluded their LGBTQ+ identity.

> "To most other queer people it would be obvious that I'm queer but especially as you get older and you're a woman, and especially actually even if you do- when you're younger and you have kids people don't necessarily compute – including other queer people – that you might be queer, so there's moments of dissonance, you know, but less so now I think because so many queer people have got kids, which is great." (Lesbian woman, Professor)

Lesbian staff who were parents reported negative encounters with colleagues who: assumed that they wouldn't have children; asked intrusive and inappropriate questions such as whether her or her partner gave birth to their child, and how their child was conceived; treated their families as different from families with heterosexual parents.

> "And other people would see them but now I think people just presume because I am a lesbian that I haven't got family, so no-one would ask me about my family. [...] your life becomes invisible in a way that I think heterosexual people would always ask each other- like I know the relationship status of everyone I work with... it's this homogenisation of experience which I think is very problematic." [...] But I might say "Oh, I've got- me and my partner have got a daughter, but we've also got three step-children via her daddy" and they'll go "Oh, that's really complicated isn't it". And I'll say, [...] I think it's completely ordinary. Haven't you got anyone in your family who's divorced or changed, reconstituted in anyway?" There's this idea that you're odd as well." (Lesbian woman, Professor)

As an older queer academic with children who are now adults, this same staff member described how their parenthood became invisible at work and felt erased in comparison to their straight colleagues.

> "I think people just presume because I am a lesbian that I haven't got family, so no-one would ask me about my family. So, it's kind of very invisible whereas before I would be like I've got to leave because I've got to pick her up from school, or I've got to do this, that and the other. [...] Your life becomes invisible" (Lesbian woman, Professor)

One interviewee explained that the reactions from others when they find out that one of her parents is trans were often awkward or uncomfortable, however some younger people react more positively this.

> "It's not my identity, but having a parent that's transgender is something that people treat quite oddly. Like either they'll be very interested and ask completely inappropriate questions, or they'll just be quite awkward about it and you know, some of the younger people are just like, "Yeah, cool, I know transgender people, that's great." But some of them are clearly less comfortable with the idea." (Bisexual woman, Research Associate)

Despite feeling that being out was important and describing the diverse challenges that LGBTQ+ people face in being out, others, meanwhile, spoke about the reasons why they chose to purposefully conceal their LGBTQ+ identity at work. For some, this was because they feared how knowledge of their identity would be received by colleagues or students.

> "[...] there's a component of fear of discrimination: so, I am fully aware of all my privileges as a White man, so I guess that at some place in my mind it's like be careful if you are out, they're going to be discriminating because of "your condition", or you're going to have less opportunities. I don't know, I mean probably it's

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more the fear rather than the reality, but I don't know." (Gay man, Research Associate)

Sometimes, however, this fear was not just related to their perceptions or experiences of UCL but was also shaped by personal histories and wider social contexts. LGBTQ+ staff who had experienced discrimination, prejudice or bullying in the past described how this had a lasting effect on whether they felt able to be out at UCL.

"[...] I think that the fact of growing up in Italy as a gay man made me very self-conscious and fearful about being myself, so when I started working in the UK I had this baggage, you know cultural baggage about don't share too much." (Gay man, Professional Services)

"If you've opened up and you›ve been stung, you›re not really going to want to do it again. So yeah, I think it›s definitely the result of previous experience that keeps people in. But it's always the what if? What if? [...] if it does create a negative reaction, is it worth kicking up a fuss about it? Do you want to create a toxic work environment?" (Gay/Pan/Bisexual man, Professional Services)

"I think that any experience where as a young person you're internalising a substantial amount of trauma and any experience where as a young person you spend a significant period of your life uncomfortable with sharing who you really, like uncomfortable with talking about who you really are, feeling like you're lying to people, feeling guilty about lying to people, like I think any experience like that you're bound to have [...] multiple and complex mental health and just emotional health issues for a considerable amount of time afterwards. [...] I think it's unrealistic to expect that you would come out the other end of that process without some trust issues, emotional issues, anxiety" (Gay man, Professional Services)

One gay member of staff reflected on the longer-term impact of being gay on his mental health, noting that it often affected how he felt at work.

"I sometimes feel guilty for, because I can go through bouts of depression and I'm one of those people who I'm visibly depressed, usually, but a lot of that has to do with my past experiences of being LGBTQ and my identity and sense in the world, and I think it would probably help if I felt, "oh, it's okay to be a little bit mental and that's associated with being LGBTQ."" (Gay man, Research Fellow)

Others concealed aspects of their identity because they feared that coming out may require educating and explaining to others. This was particularly true for those members of the trans, non-binary, and/or pansexual members of the LGBTQ+ community at UCL.

"I wouldn't actively bring it up either because that's, it's like a floodgate will open for other questions. And frankly I don't want people to be asking me those questions because I don't want to answer them, because I don't want to deal. And I know it's irresponsible of me and I should deal with it in some way, but simultaneously I don't have the mental space to face the judgement and the prejudice and the raised eyebrows, you know, I don't have the energy for this." (Pansexual non-binary, Professional Services)

Coming out is not always a choice. Some LGBTQ+ staff described how colleagues and students have simply assumed that they are part of the LGBTQ+ community because they express their gender in non-normative ways.

"I don't think there was a particular declaration. I think when I started, I think people might have definitely made assumptions about me, through the way that I look. People love a stereotype, don't they? Because of the way I dress and my hair and all that kind of stuff." (Queer woman, Professional services)

Some trans and non-binary staff also spoke about the impossibility of concealing their gender identity if they were transitioning and how this shaped their feelings of safety at work.

"I don't feel joyous when I come to work. I feel like I have to really put barriers up to protect myself because where I am in my transition at the moment is so fragile, it's so, so fragile so it can be cracked very, very easily and that's, that's frightening for me. I feel like within IOE, it's not like at home or with other trans people I can stay in my little "all right let's just focus on joy", here I feel very vulnerable and very spotlighted within my team." (Queer transmasc, Research Associate)

"So, yes it's like there's not really a choice. Like, I think that's probably the biggest difference between trans people and other LGB people because like, whilst staying in the closet is always absolutely shitty, you don't necessarily have to, you know. It's not your choice whether you want to come out but as a trans person, especially like mid-transitioning as a guy

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> with boobs and a beard, it's like people will know. [...] I have trepidation when I walk into my students in a lecture and the first time I walk in is always the scariest one because, you know, a lot of those people have probably never seen a trans person before. So, I'm probably the first openly out trans person they meet so, obviously there's immediately the scrutiny of like, are they transitioning, are they not transitioning? "Oh, my god, it's an actual living trans person." "Oh, my god, can I touch it?"" (Queer/Ace/Bisexual trans man, Lecturer)

LGBTQ+ staff described being in a state of hypervigilance in their everyday lives in the hope that this could help them avoid negative reactions, comments or behaviours from colleagues and students.

> "[...] there are some people where I can feel I'm actively, I don't want them to know yet, because I don't trust them enough. Because it's quite a personal thing and it's something that people could hurt you with." (Bisexual woman, Research Assistant)

> "It is a part of who I am and if I can't [...] "bring my whole self to work" then I think that is quite [...] a strain on my mentality I think, and sort of just that kind of underlying fear of anticipation of people not knowing and saying the wrong thing around you or asking you questions you don't want to answer. [...] danger scanning, as my wife calls it." (Queer woman, Professional Services)

Staff who described working to conceal their LGBTQ+ identities also spoke about the subsequent impact of this hypervigilance on their mental health and wellbeing.

> "[...] not being out makes you tense all of the time. I think it has huge effects on your mental health" (Bisexual woman, Postgraduate Teaching Assistant)

> "I think living my authentic self is really, really critical for my anxieties, but also my sense of being and I think that for me has really springboarded me to have so far a really good experience, but I do know that I am quite lucky in that way because it's not always, well it's unfortunately not always the same for everybody." (Gay man, Professional Services)

> "[...] I have experienced not being out in my work place previously and it is like constant tension when normal and random conversations come up and like you are just planning in your head how you are going to deal with any questions that come up so I think it's like, triple tension and it doesn't allow you to relax or even make close friends so definitely I think it's crucial... this is a nuance but I guess it has more to do with me than to do with UCL is that I do tend to say talk about my partner with the word partner in neutral. I don't tend to say she and I think that is because of the assumption and how people ask [...]. If nothing LGBQIA related comes up or there is no signal that it's a safe space I tend to be cautious and say partner especially if there are, it's like, if I am, if the power is imbalanced" (Bisexual woman, Postgraduate Teaching Assistant)

Some staff shared concerns that LGBTQ+ identities have the potential to disrupt university settings. As one participant described, LGBTQ+ staff in the workplace may be received and treated differently to colleagues who are heterosexual and cisgender.

> "Like the assumption of sexuality is always there but for queer people there is something sexualising and scandalising about you [...]. Heterosexuality is a public culture of sexuality, it's always there. The difference is it's just not read as sexuality, it's not read as sex. Again, those assumptions are being made, heterosexual or homosexual, queer or bisexual, whatever. The difference is that for heterosexual people their sexuality is not interpreted as a sexuality at all. You know, if a straight man comes in wearing a wedding ring or they're presumed to be straight. Because let's say having a wedding ring on your finger is a heterosexual signifier even as gay marriage exists now. It's not a sexual signifier, it's just a wedding ring. But if I come in as a let's say, a single gay man and something signifies that I am gay suddenly I have a sexuality. [...] At the same time there's a kind of precarity that accompanies it because yes, sex is scandalising, it can make people feel uncomfortable." (Gay non-binary, Postgraduate Teaching Assistant)

There was also a perception that being part of the LGBTQ+ community could undermine one's professional identity.

> "I think my choices have very much been dictated by where I think I might run into trouble with sexuality and just to define sort of who I am a bit more. So, [I use the word] lesbian but gender and sexuality queer so, I don't really want to be rigid. [...] I want people to see <name> and think, oh okay, she's a careful thorough researcher and a good

“I DON’T FEEL JOYOUS WHEN I COME TO WORK. I FEEL LIKE I HAVE TO REALLY PUT BARRIERS UP TO PROTECT MYSELF BECAUSE WHERE I AM IN MY TRANSITION AT THE MOMENT IS SO FRAGILE, IT’S SO, SO FRAGILE SO IT CAN BE CRACKED VERY, VERY EASILY AND THAT’S, THAT’S FRIGHTENING FOR ME... HERE I FEEL VERY VULNERABLE AND VERY SPOTLIGHTED WITHIN MY TEAM.”

Queer transmasc, Research Associate

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> teacher. I don't want them to think, oh a lesbian, goodness, what does she do at the weekend? I suppose we can't help people thinking that but that yes, I mean I think it's incredibly important. So, that I think is incredibly important to be out and proud. Yes, I do but with the provisos that there's this kind of a professionalism thing isn't there, that I'm always a bit cagey about how much I share about myself and maybe it's a bit of defensiveness that's learnt over the decades of thinking of this metaphor of lesbians know exactly how far to put our heads above the parapet. Not just lesbians of course but that actually, you get very used to judging a social situation and thinking, is it safe?" (Queer trans non-binary, Associate Professor)

Several LGBTQ+ staff in this study reported that their gender and/or sexuality was a private matter unrelated to their work and were not concerned about being out at UCL.

> "I am to some people, but then I don't talk to loads of people about my personal life because they don't talk about theirs either. And if we were to sort of talk about you know, at home or whatever then I would say you know, "Well, my boyfriend does this or whatever." I have no problem in doing that whatsoever... I don't think it's important to be out. [...] So, I think it just should be if you want to, I think it should be easy and available and you know, you can do it, which I think you can here. So yes, so the people I work with now not everyone knows, they don't need to know, because we're here to work." (Gay man, Professional services)

Others, meanwhile, were frustrated by the need to come out and be out and wished for a world that didn't require this of them.

> "It shouldn't be every time someone comes out we have to do a little LGBT+ parade and fight for our recognition identity. We should just be part of the cultural landscape." (Gay East Asian man, Associate Lecturer)

VISIBILITY OF LGBTQ+ STAFF IN THE WORKPLACE

In addition to LGBTQ+ staff speaking about their own experience of being out at UCL, staff also spoke about the importance of seeing other visibly out colleagues.

> "Having spent most of my life hiding from myself, I know that the more people that are visible and that speak about their experiences and their realities as a member of the LGBT+ community, the more people who are afraid, or who are hiding, or who are unsure, the more they will be able to see that, actually, they are not on their own." (Lesbian woman, Professional Services)

LGBTQ+ staff make themselves visible in different ways and these efforts were recognised by others. Some staff spoke about the importance of hearing colleagues talk about their lives in the workplace. For others it was seeing evidence of diverse gender and sexual orientations in online UCL spaces such as IRIS (now called UCL Profiles) or seeing who might be affiliated to the Out@UCL network.

> "I think sometimes the staff on the UCL page I've read, like the bios, when people do those- when they talk about themselves, those are quite nice to see the LGBT people in all different roles in UCL. All sorts of levels of management as well. Visibility I think is a good thing." (Gay man, Professional services)

> "I think it's made visible in the fact that there are so many staff who are on our Out@UCL staff network who do self-identify happily with their sexuality and gender identity. And that is a good example to show that you know it isn't sort of discriminated or niche issue in the university, that you can see visible people and the hierarchy of the university [...] The allies programme as well for instance and trying to get from the top right through departments to have a clear sense that sexuality is not some sort of fringe issue but it's something that is really important." (Gay man, Professor)

Similarly, just seeing visibly out staff helped another member of staff feel less isolated and more able to find others for support and help:

> "You know if you are having a problem and you want to talk to someone in your department, you don't know anyone if you need to disclose some personal

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details you are more likely to go to someone that you feel safe to talk to. I don't know but also I think that mostly it's just the visibility of a large number that makes you, cause you know if there's five people in the whole of UCL that are out then you're like, oh my God oh wow I better just stay here, but it's so many more than that. It would be good to know not necessarily know who they are, but know that they exist basically that they are there." (Bisexual person, Research Associate)

New staff described waiting to see who else was out in their teams or departments. This scanning for visibly "out" colleagues was used to assess the culture of the local setting and helped LGBTQ+ staff decide whether it was safe to come out.

"I suppose I wanted to suss out if any other people were out and what the kind of reactions were and how people are. And I was reassured because someone within the wider project team who yes, I mean she kind of, I liked how she did it in one of the senior investigators meetings. And I thought okay, that's interesting, she'd done it quite clearly, was kind of, it was in talking about holidays and all the rest of it. But I was like okay, that means clearly my project group are fine." (Lesbian woman, Research Fellow)

"When I first started at UCL obviously I wasn't sure what type of environment it would be exactly, so you just test the waters a little bit but quite quickly I saw that like other people were open about it as well, when you started to get to know them better. I do have to say there is no trans person in the whole corner of the university where I am, and I know from interacting with other people across the university that there are some issues around that." (Gay man, Professional Services)

LGBTQ+ staff also described how the lack of visibly "out" staff can make it harder for other staff to come out and this can contribute to feelings of isolation.

"If I look at UCL now, I can't really think of many people who are prominent, who are visible, particularly if I look at the division I am in or the department. I don't see anybody who is like badging themselves like that or talking about that. Not that they have to, but there is no one who is doing anything like that or it's incidentally mentioned or it's like a little thing on their profile or a little kind of badge or something. There's nobody really I can think of like that. And I think that, well the only difference it would make to me is that it's kind of more meaningful and it's nice to see. But the other part of me is like thinking about the others it could impact on, about whether they are comfortable to come out, whether they are comfortable to even apply for the university as a staff member or as a student. [...] Like every once in a while, I will be like, yes, I am the only one, how am I like that stereotype of the only gay in the village, like that can't be the case." (Gay man, Research Fellow)

"Until very recently, [...] I didn't know any queer people in UCL leading research, or being [...] a prominent figure in the university, and obviously because of your social constructs you tend to assume sometimes that everyone is straight. So I think we will need more role models, more mentors: someone to look at and think, okay, it's okay to be different, it's going to be okay: "I will progress in my career, I shouldn't be afraid of missing opportunities because of being LGBTQ+."" (Gay man, Research Associate)

Despite this, there was also felt to be a pressure to be visible and with that visibility comes an expectation to be exemplary role models.

"[...] there's a lot of pressure I think for LGBTQ+ people to make that visibility happen, to sort of make ourselves visible. To kind of hold us up as role models kind of thing and to a certain extent that we are part of the equation." (Gay East Asian man, Associate Lecturer)

LGBTQ+ staff looked to senior leaders to be LGBTQ+ role models or allies and expected them to provide leadership on all aspects of equality, diversity, and inclusion. To see LGBTQ+ staff in senior management roles was especially important for both new and existing staff. Some saw this as evidence that there were routes for LGBTQ+ staff to succeed at UCL.

"In terms of sort of role models within the promotion sky above me, they're either not gay or they are privately gay [...] What it means is that there isn't a visible, like if you think of it looking up, there's no, there's no rope above." (Gay man, Professor)

"I do appreciate there's this professor who has like he has an Out@UCL sticker on his door and he talks about his male partner like relatively openly sometimes and that's nice. It's good to know that there is like a professor in the department who's out and happy." (Bisexual woman, Research Associate)

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Having an openly gay Dean, was viewed by one participant in helping to "set the tone across the whole area of the university." (Gay man, Professional Services). And this view was shared by many others.

> "I guess, yes one thing that came to mind early on that I forgot to say was that it mattered to me when I got here to see [an openly gay dean] as my boss or as the person that I worked for or worked with. It made a huge like representative difference to me more than I might have thought it would and when I started was when her book came out about the couple norm and that was really influential actually to read and yes you know you don't always realise or I think we undervalue descriptive representation and sometimes we get too much of it without any actual substantive change but like it does matter to be able to look at the person in charge and see who you see. Yes." (Queer woman, Lecturer)

While the contribution of these individuals was welcomed, the lack of diverse LGBTQ+ representation within leadership positions was a cause for concern. Staff felt there were not enough LGBTQ+ role models at all levels of the university and that role models needed to be more diverse and encompass staff from across the LGBTQ+ spectrum.

> "[...] we need to be doing more for members of staff who are trans, for queer people of colour. Just in terms of representation, all of the LGBT figures higher up that I know are gay men. I don't know any lesbians. So perhaps the level of upper management, there's less representation of all strands of the LGBT community. And so, I think that might be something that could be better addressed. Although I think that's true of people of colour in general, not just queer people of colour." (Gay man, Professor)

> "[...] it's so important to have BAME people in managerial posts, because it's good to see someone that feels or resembles, reminds you of yourself there. Do you know what I mean? I think that's the importance of it. And that's very important to have this diversity." (Gay man, Professional Services)

Staff in some disciplines, especially STEM, felt that there were fewer visible role models. Though, more recently, staff in these disciplines have recognised this issue and have taken it upon themselves to promote LGBTQ+ visibility in STEM departments and act as role models.

ROLE MODELS

> "We are a very, very, very small minority compared to maybe humanities and social sciences. But I don't feel I'm the only gay in the village basically. I do have colleagues that are LGBTQ+, PhD students, you know we're not many I can think of one, two, three, four including me, actually five, I don't know, let's say seven people in the department out of how many? It's a big department, maybe 200 people including the PhD students and maybe seven of us. But it's fine, we meet, we chat, we you know we have allies as well, so I don't feel that isolated. But I know it's a problem and that was what we were trying to address with that work to get people who feel isolated who are feel like they are the only gay in the village, in their department, or their research group and have other people in STEM maybe you know facing the same circumstances." (Gay man, Lecturer)

For some, role modelling was aligned with the everyday, rather than leadership, and there was some crossover between role modelling and simply having colleagues who are visibly out.

> "I'm not someone who goes around waiving the rainbow flag, but I just talk about my life. I think something with that kind of normalises it. But that's one thing I've realised as I've got older, and particularly this year sort of reflecting on all the online activism and what have you, that I do feel that I've got a place where I can use that stance that I've got and my experience to start raising the flag a bit more clearly in my own practice, and my personal life probably as well." (Gay man, Lecturer)

For other LGBTQ+ staff role modelling was a more active choice in the hope that this might contribute to a more inclusive community.

> "Given everything I have experienced to this date it's really, really important to role model and I think role modelling is part of why I am here today. I think I would want for anybody to live an authentic life because I know how much better the quality of life that brings." (Gay man, Professional Services)

Role modelling also involved symbolic gestures such as adding the Out@UCL sticker to their door or wearing a rainbow lanyard.

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> "I think the situation I've created with my team is one where we are able to be ourselves, and that is strongly visibly supported by, for example, the Out@UCL sticker or the way that I'm open about myself, I think this creates a situation where other people can be out." (Lesbian woman, Professional Services)

> "I'm really looking for a lanyard at the moment, a rainbow lanyard... so yes, loud and proud with good intention to role model" (Gay man, Professional Services)

Despite doing similar work, not all of these staff, however, aligned themselves with the term "role model".

> "You asked me before about am I a role model, I don't think I am a role model, but I think that- like on my team there's two queer people on my team and I think they- well I know that they definitely appreciate that that's a space that- that the project is a space where they can just be out and there's no question about anything. I really love where I work and I love my job, and... I've got a great team, but I think just that sense of comfort or feeling known, [...] or feeling like you belong...I'm lucky now that I can create my teams how I want them to be, [...] a safe but critical space." (Lesbian woman, Professor)

Role modelling was also seen by some staff as being important for students. Staff gave examples of how being a visible LGBTQ+ role model appeared to help students feel comfortable to come out themselves.

> "We had a PhD student who recently came out. He came to me and to other people later on and said, you know, "The fact that you're so open about your marriage," and I don't know him very closely. I mean, we've seen each other weekly in meetings and stuff but he just said, "That visibility made it so much easier for me. It made it so much easier for me to come out."" (Gay man, Research Fellow)

> "I think for me I think it's important, because it's like you create a platform for our students that they can see that, regardless of who you are, you can achieve things and if you have an identity as an LGBTQ staff or member like of that group, you can still achieve things. [...] I think there's nothing more disheartening than hiding your identity and who you are and then having students who aspire to be like you and they don›t know that you›re gay, for instance. [...] It's like taking steps backwards because you don't allow for like a group of people to be formed like or a network [...]" (Gay man, Professional Services)

> "You can't be what you can't see [...] If students are looking at the kind of makeup of our staff, on the academic side, then a lot of them probably feel like they don't have as many role models as maybe some other students who feel more aligned characteristic-wise." (Queer woman, Professional Services)

Having LGBTQ+ staff as role models also enabled LGBTQ+ students to see a future career for themselves in academia.

> "When I was a student, there was a professional, teaching administrator. He was gay. I think it was quite nice to know that there was someone at UCL because the department didn't really have many, really any, actual academics who were out, so it was nice from that perspective. Just to know that [...] there was someone else like you who had a job." (Gay man, Professional Services)

Being positioned as a role model was recognised as something positive by LGBTQ+ staff in this study, but staff also described how this role often could come with hidden costs. Many LGBTQ+ staff have taken on informal mentoring roles for junior LGBTQ+ colleagues and students and discussed the extra labour (practical and emotional) that this requires.

> "I went through all of my education really not having any queer role models in terms of teaching staff [...] And so I understand what it is to not have that and where that can, what that shuts down [...] so it's nice to be able to be that, I know that I am that for students... they want to explore stuff through their work as well so they might do my essays, come and talk to me about their essays and also coming out to their parents, you know. So there is like additional layers of pastoral support that you end up giving in terms of labour as well [...] So you end up being on the receiving end of students seeking out what I was also looking for when I was in a situation. And it's nice to be able to provide that. It's an entirely unpaid labour, it's nice to be able to provide it, but it is labour. So I do see the positives of that. And, you know, I have like trans or non-binary students as well and they get to have an out trans non-binary person teaching. So, I think that's really important actually." (Queer non-binary Postgraduate teaching assistant)

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THE DIVERSE EXPERIENCES OF BEING LGBTQ+ AT UCL

While there were many shared experiences within the LGBTQ+ community at UCL there were also some significant differences. This section of the report begins with a focus on intersectional experiences, and an analysis of how one's sexuality cannot be separated from other aspects of identity. It then goes on to look at different sexual orientations in turn before offering an overview of some of the other aspects of identity that staff felt were significant to their experience of working at UCL.

INTERSECTIONAL EXPERIENCES

LGBTQ+ staff shared reflections and stories of how being LGBTQ+ was connected with other aspects of identity and shaped experiences at UCL. An intersectional approach was used to help interrogate the differences within the large and heterogeneous group of LGBTQ+ staff at UCL.

> "I also think, like I've experienced a more positive kind of culture at UCL, because I'm gay and White. I don't think if I was like Asian or Black, I would have the same experience." (Gay Man Professional Services)

> "I think there's a particular narrative from a set of White gay men who have a view of the world and that is the world that's promoted. So, I think I can say with some confidence that this idea that, "Isn't UCL amazing, look at everything that we've done", comes from that particular perspective. There's no nuance, there's no understanding of the experiences of women or non-binary, or trans people or anyone other than White gay men." (Gay man, Associate Professor)

Being both LGBTQ+ and from a minoritized racial or ethnic background was described as a compounding effect, as if it "adds a layer on top" (Gay woman, White European, Professional Services) of the challenges of belonging to a minoritized group.

> "So, you know, I am quite middle class, medically trained and older so, I come with a lot of institutional confidence really and I've got a colleague who is Black and queer, also medically trained but his experience is completely different. So, as a gay man from an ethnic minority, completely different and he feels very unsafe at UCL. So, that's really important to flag up that who we are in all of those different ways matters massively." (Queer trans non-binary, Associate Professor)

> "First of all, I don't think it's safe necessarily for queers who are of colour because of the endemic racism at UCL and in academia." (Queer non-binary, Professional Services)

This intersection of experience was connected to feelings of isolation, but also frustration with a lack of diverse visibility and representation.

> "Sometimes I feel a little bit of an outsider and I think if I then add that LGBT aspect I feel even more of an outsider [...] which makes me think, where is the diversity. They talk about it but then where is it?" (Gay woman, White European, Professional Services)

One gay member of staff described how their lived experience of growing up in another country during the 1980s had significantly shaped how they express themselves in their everyday life, including their work life at UCL.

> "I lived in [another country] and my formative years were the 80s because of my age and so that had a huge impact on how I perceive myself and how I express myself as a queer person. [...] It is a very specific experience that obviously I think I mean definitely I still carry it." (Gay man Lecturer)

Class was highlighted by several members of staff as imbricated with their experiences as and LGBTQ+ person. Growing up as working class was described as a barrier by some staff.

> "It was definitely something that I struggled with having to leave yes like the working class background, not really feeling comfortable with my bisexuality, things like that" (Bisexual woman, Research Fellow)

Describing past experiences of being from a single parent family, struggling with poverty and having dropped out of school, one staff member explained that this continued to be a source of insecurity.

> "I think another reason why I didn't come out as trans is my background is shitty, well that's a bit harsh, but I come from a single parent family and, I was, we were poor so I don't have any GCSEs so I dropped out of school so I feel like I've

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already got like lots of insecurities that arrived from like class. Here I never felt like I belong in the Academy because of that [...] Walking into the bright elite lights of UCL sometimes I feel like I'm living in two completely different worlds and that I cannot speak about my experiences in this world and then with my transness or my queerness, so well maybe the same thing, but originally people thought I was a gay woman [...] so I think it is my Whiteness saved me on so many levels." (Queer transmasc, Research Associate).

One non-binary staff member also described their working class background as an important intersectional feature that shaped their experience of working at UCL.

"My parents both didn't go to university and I haven't got a doctorate and so working in a very elite institution and someone from a more working class background is weird. And it also like layers on right, like being perceived to be a woman, being perceived to be like younger, and especially because I dress like a toddler, and then being from a working class background it can be really intimidating to navigate the space" (Queer non-binary, Professional Services)

As this next member of staff highlights, there can be a dual challenge of moving into academia from a working class background, whilst also coming to terms with sexuality. Although, the institution can also play a significant role in supporting and educating young LGBTQ+ people.

"it has been through higher education [that I have been] able to access learning about these topics, which has really helped me to like make sense of my experience" (Bisexual woman, Research Fellow).

At the time of interviewing, another member of staff was in the process of seeking an ADHD diagnosis. For him, it was a challenging time, involving a reconfiguration or reinterpretation of his experiences in the workplace. From classism, accentism, to a new understanding of ableism, this member of staff explained how notions of a "textbook professional" create barriers that exclude and disadvantage a vast range of identities and have very real consequences for individuals.

"But I would say that I've definitely had issues with people having preconceptions about me in my professional life and it's basically been around the fact that people can't get their head around somebody that's loud. Somebody that's northern and doesn't talk the "Queen's English", or you know, somebody that talks about their personal life at work, or says 'I can't wait to go to the pub or go out'. It's like people have thought that I can't do my job properly because of these things and that causes a lot of hurt. [...] People should be aware that not everyone can be the textbook professional we feel like we should be all the time. I may be laughing and carrying on at work and stuff like that, but that doesn't mean I can't do my job to the best of my ability or even better than you can." (Gay/Pan/Bisexual man, Professional Services)

Many participants in this study recognised and reflected upon their own privilege and called for the need for there to be a greater attention to the intersectional experiences within the LGBTQ+ community at UCL. One lecturer described how his privilege as a White male allowed him to feel "welcome" in some UCL spaces, but also acknowledged that the more components of your identity that diverge from the norms around you, "the less welcome you feel" (Queer man, Lecturer)

"I walk past meetings where the entire panel is men of a certain age and of a certain race and of a certain presentation. I think the more you divert from that branch, from that like trunk the less welcome you feel. So, I think I can feel quite welcome I say quiescent because I'm male, because I'm White" (Queer man, Lecturer).

While the following quote is not directly about experiences of UCL, it is useful for considering how fears of experiencing racism within LGBTQ+ spaces have made some LGBTQ+ people of colour concerned about coming to LGBTQ+ events.

"But for many Asian people, gay Asian people who are in the weird position where like their parents would kind of reject them because they were gay but then when they were in LGBT circles it was kind often rejected by LGBT people because they were perceived as sort of like not desirable you know so. So I think often when you ask, often people you know, even if you don't ask them they just come out you know on their own with sort of like, you know, of the hierarchy of who's attractive among gay men. It's like, you have White people on the top and then you have Black people in the middle and then you have Asian men on the bottom you know so. So, so there is often that kind of like you know Asian men who try to find a community among LGBT people then find it and then it's sort [claps hands] butt against a kind of wall" (Asian gay man, Research fellow)

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Taking an intersectional approach also provided a lens for understanding how LGBTQ+ staff may perpetuate other forms of discrimination such as racism, sexism or ablism within the community.

> "But in the past I mean being a South Asian gay man is more difficult that I thought. I can give you an example of an incident, not in my current work in my previous work, where there was meeting LGBTQI+ meeting that I went to. When I walked in most people actually were quite shocked to see a South Asian man walking into a gay meeting, an LGBTQI+ meeting. And unfortunately the place that I worked in was not very diverse and I was the only person of colour in that team so I guess nobody expected that I'd be a gay man so that was quite interesting. So I guess it also I means when I interact with people in life generally the last thing on their mind is that I could be gay, I mean had I been a White person and I would tell people that I'm gay they would be kind of okay with that. But as a South Asian person telling people that I was gay a lot of times I've felt people are surprised or shocked yes. So I think that does have a huge effect within the gay community. When I was single when I was dating when I was meeting people a lot of people the same people of the same community, of the gay community, acted differently, they didn't believe that I was gay. Or they thought that I had a wife and child at home and I was gay when I'm not at home or gay on weekends. So I've had that many times in Soho, in pubs and bars where people have actually asked me are you really single are you sure you're not married to a women. So yes that does come up a lot, that used to come up a lot or even now when I tell people that I'm married the first thing they assume that I'm even gay people they assume that I'm married to a women and I have a kind of an arrangement with my wife." (South Asian gay man, Professional Services)

LGBTQ+ staff believed there is a need for solidarity with other minoritised identities to ensure that EDI is approached holistically and with an intersectional sensibility.

> "It's almost like being gay gives them a ticket out of having to think about other forms of discrimination. And that's really been playing out publicly, visually, and verbally at work. Yes. Which I think is something that, I mean it's much bigger than something that could be resolved by LESG or Out@UCL, but certainly something I think all groups should be involved with. (Gay man, Associate Professor)

> "I have my White privilege, my male privilege. I think this is a question that is best answered by those who do not have that, which I suppose would lead me to the answer that we need to be doing more for members of staff who are trans, for queer people of colour. Just in terms of representation, all of the LGBT figures higher up that I know are gay men. I don't know any lesbians." (Gay man, Professor)

When acts of solidarity did happen, this was viewed as particularly meaningful for LGBTQ+ staff.

> "LESG actually wrote this letter publicly in support of Jewish staff and colleagues, and I presented that to the [Jewish] caucus. I was literally crying I was, "Look what they've done, isn't it amazing". I think the intersectional element is really important. I think those intersections in our community are exactly what gives us strength as queer people, yes. And I know that, just because a couple of friends sit on it, the Black caucus is having the same conversations about how the Black caucus might be publicly supportive around LESG and vice versa." (Gay man, Associate Professor)

One member of staff felt that colleagues at UCL might be becoming more aware of the potential for discrimination and prejudice towards certain minoritized groups but that this didn't necessarily extend to a sensitivity towards intersectional power and privilege.

> "I think, I think we're a bit slow on the intersectionality thing. Like a colleague the other day who's like a totally straight man said to me, "We've just got an interview panel and they are no, there's no BAME member." I think a lot of people are becoming more aware of things. But there's a long way to go and I think with regard to queerness, you know, queer intersectionality is something that we do need to think about. Because it's not- It's one thing being White and middle class and well educated and queer and that, and it's another thing being poor and Black or whatever you know. So, we need to be aware of these things." (Queer man, Professor)

LGBTQ+ staff felt that work needed to take place within the LGBTQ+ community at UCL to address the needs of more marginalised members.

> "There's kind of work to be done amongst us as a set of communities, and another set of work to be done institutionally and by people who aren't part of our communities" (Gay man, Associate Professor).

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As mentioned elsewhere in this report, being a visible LGBTQ+ member of staff at UCL can come with the burden of additional responsibly, labour, and pressure. As one member of staff explains, being an out academic and coming from a minoritized ethnic background can feel like having responsibility to more than one community.

> "...because a lot of the time it just feels like you're the one person who, you know, I feel like I'm in a department, I'm standing up for gay men's rights kind of thing, and I think LGBTQ+ people, plus any marginalised group within a larger group, but in our specific context you always feel like you're the person who kind of has to represent the community, and you have to make these choices whereas, you know, like a heterosexual person would rarely have to think [...] Then as a gay Asian man I would also to think about my Asian community and what- my Chinese community, what they would say. What my parents have to think about it. It's quite a different world for them because it's kind of very old world for them. And so it feels even like more work [...] I feel that that all plays a part in it as well and it all goes towards that feeling that you're the only one who represents and you have to decide for the context you're in if you're going to represent or not, and it does feel unfair to have that pressure." (Gay East Asian man, Associate Lecturer)

Many of the intersectional descriptions provided by LGBTQ+ staff in this study referred to multiple forms of discrimination and marginalisation. It was however notable just how many members of LGBTQ+ staff appeared to recognise their relative privilege. These staff referenced how their Whiteness, being cisgender, able-bodied, or middle class can confer a degree of privilege on some LGBTQ+ staff.

> "Certainly, from my experience, I have to say, in LGBTQ and all the plusses, I think gay man is probably one of the least difficult ones now. So, maybe someone else would have a different experience." (Gay man, Associate Professor)

> "I appreciate that my own experience is based on cis, male, White, privileged, man who is also presenting in a kind of typical masculine- you know... So I think, going back to LGBTQ people are treated at UCL. I have always been treated well. But I can see that I come from some privilege or that I have an easier time than someone who might have other intersectional identities an ethnic minority for example, or perhaps particularly gender minority people would, I can imagine, having a tougher time." (Queer man, Postgraduate Teaching Assistant)

Some staff felt that certain intersecting privileges such as being cis gender or being 'straight acting' protected them from the marginalisation and discrimination faced by other LGBTQ+ staff.

> "I come from a position of privilege where I can sort of act as a straight heterosexual cis man who's White, able bodied like, the pressure on me, like it's very much for me, it's not only my decision to come out and feel comfortable in this situation, but for others, that's not a possibility". (Gay man, Professional Services)

> "I am incredibly privileged in that I am cis gendered, I am White and I am only, I pass as straight so most interactions that people have with me will never notice or come up with the fact that I am bisexual so that is a significant amount of privilege that allows me to operate in pretty much any environment I want to without fear. I don't know if that's necessarily true for someone that's perhaps Trans it's difficult to know." (Bisexual man, Professional Services)

Others foregrounded their Whiteness or Britishness as a privileged identity that could make their lives as LGBTQ+ people easier than for colleagues who are immigrants or from minoritized racial and ethnic backgrounds.

> "I mean I certainly have White privilege you know, and that certainly smooths the way in ways that I am both aware of and will never be perceptible to me." (Queer trans non-binary, Postgraduate Teaching Assistant)

> "I certainly feel safe. I think being an indigenously British, White, middle class professor, male. I think that's the easier type of LGBTQ individual to be, I think. The intersectional relationship with race, and class, and immigrant status, I think that does make it more difficult. I know some of my colleagues who are not British, they have had trouble with individuals from their own countries of origin, who these students feel more emboldened to be critical or quite threatening in some cases. Whereas, I've not had that. You get the odd student sniggering in the back if you talk about homosexuality, but I have never had any issues in the UK with regard to that." (Gay man, Professor)

In addition to these intersectional experiences, there were clear differences between gay, lesbian, bisexual/pansexual, and trans and non-binary staff. These will be considered in the next section.

“IT IS A PART OF WHO I AM AND IF I CAN’T [...] “BRING MY WHOLE SELF TO WORK” THEN I THINK THAT IS QUITE [...] A STRAIN ON MY MENTALITY I THINK, AND SORT OF JUST THAT KIND OF UNDERLYING FEAR OF ANTICIPATION OF PEOPLE NOT KNOWING AND SAYING THE WRONG THING AROUND YOU OR ASKING YOU QUESTIONS YOU DON’T WANT TO ANSWER. [...] DANGER SCANNING, AS MY WIFE CALLS IT.”

Queer woman, Professional Services

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BEING A GAY MAN AT UCL

As discussed in Section 1 of this report, most gay members of staff, particularly if they were men from White British and European backgrounds, had not faced any overt or direct homophobia at UCL. In some cases, their careers had been successfully built around issues related to gender and sexuality within their respective disciplines or professional services role (See Section 3). Despite this broadly positive framing, several gay participants in this study still reported instances of homophobia.

One staff member described how a colleague made inappropriate remarks about their relationship, seemingly drawing on stereotypes that gay men are promiscuous.

> "They didn't even know me that well. [...] Within the first three months there were comments like, "Oh, you're in a relationship, so are you monogamous or?" I was like, "Well, yes, why?" and they were like, "Oh usually like LGBTQ stuff there like people are not like that" and I was like, "I don't know what kind of idea you have"." (Gay man, Professional Services)

Another staff member was concerned that indirect discrimination had been involved in recruitment processes. In this case, all applicants for a position had been rejected without filling the role, all of whom were gay. The staff member had been left waiting on a pay progression they had been promised and were concerned that homophobia was affecting this decision.

> "It's basically White straight males. So, yeah, I had this kind of like indirect discrimination like in kind of like trying to progress. Even now I'm still chasing to get the progression" (Gay man, Professional Services)

They went on to explain how difficult it is to prove indirect discrimination.

> "Even the HR business partners said something to me because we were having this discussion and they were like, do you feel like you're being discriminated? I said, I feel that something is going on, but they're not clear about it. I said like, if I don't get it again then I'm 100% sure that this is because of my identity and it's not nice." (Gay man, Professional Services)

For the most part, gay staff found that students were welcoming and supportive. However, some still feared student reactions if they came out and there was a constant vigilance and fear of coming out or being outed. One gay member of staff had recently experienced a student being verbally homophobic in a class, calling the staff member "another fucking bender" (Gay man, Associate Professor). Another member of staff described a large-scale incident involving a student being homophobic on a WhatsApp group with other students. This incident was reported by other students and this member of staff felt that the incident was well handled by the faculty dean.

> "I think it went via the dean, directly up to that department, so they reprimanded the student and that was all great. But I thought it was particularly nice to see that the other students, you know, they flagged the issue and this was all dealt with in a very orderly way, I thought." (Gay man, Associate Professor)

In addition to explicit experiences of homophobia, some gay men at UCL were wary of how they expressed their gender and sexuality in an environment many identified as hyper-masculine and alpha male.

> "I do feel that there's a lot of alpha male voices still at the top of the pile at UCL and they dominate things, and I don't think that's good. And I don't think there's even an awareness that they're doing it mostly. And it can be really frustrating, and you know when you're in meetings and you know that other senior men in that meeting are constantly writing banter in the chat box. [...] And I think there's an issue for me, you know how many meetings have I been to over the last few days where everyone has started the meeting chatting about football? And I know that might sound like a ridiculous example, but for me that's, that's the patriarchy at work that you feel it's okay as a straight White man to assume that everyone's going to want to have a conversation about football. You know I don't go into meetings and start my conversations about RuPaul's Drag Race." (Gay man, Professional Services)

One academic on a course was told by a colleague not to ask for help during an activity, because "real men don't ask for help". This was interpreted as a comment about the way they performed their masculinity.

> "I was recently on a kind of very respected course in genetics and part of this course was us breaking up into little groups, and it's very international, and

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> in one of the little groups, I think it was a practical group, one of the guys there was kind of struggling, and I said, well why don't we just call one of the tutors who are there to help us with these exercises, and he said something to the effect of, "real men don't ask for help", and I reacted a little bit like that. I was a bit like erm, I don't know if that's just you saying something or if that's directed at me. Obviously, I'm, you know, very obviously a little bit less masculine in my presentation, but I reacted quite badly to that." (Gay man, Research Fellow)

Performances of masculinity were also discussed in connection with certain disciplinary contexts. As this participant explains, mathematics was perceived as a particularly hostile context for women and more feminine presenting men.

> "So I think a lot of feminine presentation can be read as insecure or an unsure presentation and that's definitely something that I've felt. A lot of people would question me more often than my more like masculine counterparts, and I've seen it a lot more in- even with senior colleagues, there's a lot more questioning when there's a woman presenting than when a man presents a similar talk, and like it's hard for me to imagine that that's not based in some bias. So, that's definitely something I've experienced, but it's also, a bit like "did I experience that or was it just me being bad at this thing?", stuff like that. I definitely felt less confident, and then on top of that my feminine presentation definitely didn't help." (Gay man, Postgraduate Teaching Assistant)

Another participant also discussed the ways in which their more feminine gender expression could be associated with being gay, and how this subsequently made it harder for them to have agency over whether and when they came out at work.

> "So, am I out to students? Well, I think [laughs] there's that question of like whether you're clockable to students I think particularly people who present as men who are gay men. I think we're very conscious of we're read as feminine, and we're read as gay [laughs]." (Gay non-binary, Postgraduate Teaching Assistant)

BEING A LESBIAN AT UCL

Many of the broader themes about being LGBTQ+ at UCL were echoed by lesbian staff. However, lesbian's also expressed some unique experiences. Some of these differences clearly and perhaps primarily stemmed from their gender and these have been covered in the section 'being a woman at UCL'. Other differences, meanwhile, arise more clearly in relation to sexuality and it is these experiences which are discussed in this section.

On the whole, lesbian staff reported feeling safe and supported at UCL and did not feel they were discriminated against on the basis of their sexuality.

> "If I take where I work as an example it is safe being a lesbian yes. It will be a safe place for LGBTQ+ people to work, I would say that based on my experience. And just thinking about like conversations I have with people at work I don't feel like excluded, I don't feel like I cannot talk about my life. That aspect of my life is not discriminated let's say." (Lesbian woman, Professional services)

> "[...] it's never something that I hide, it's not, I don't really say, "Hi, I'm a lesbian" but it will come out pretty quickly, pretty naturally. If I talk about what I've been doing on the weekend, I talk about my partner. Yes, so it does, it comes out straight away pretty much in the end. And that's, you know I work in the arts and humanities, [...] so my colleagues are almost all liberal minded, I mean all my colleagues here are fabulous." (Lesbian woman, Associate Professor)

Perhaps the most overt example of lesbophobia at UCL was described by a gay male member of staff. This Associate Professor describes how a senior member of staff who was a gay man had made sexist comments about lesbians but was able to avoid consequences due to his seniority.

> "I was at a staff meeting and it was my first day, a member of staff made a beeline for me and was like, "Oh you're [name] aren't you?" And I was like, yes, yes. And he's like, "Oh I must bring you to" - this leather club, right. And I'm like, "excuse me"? And I was like, "Okay, sorry I don't know who you are". "I'm a bit uncomfortable that I don't know you enough, the first thing you say to me, you don't know anything about me, don't you want to hear about my job or anything?" He was like, "Oh I just thought it would be really cool for the boys

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to go to a male only place because you know what it's like, women ruin gay spaces these days". And I was just stood there with my mouth hanging open. [...] I've given it a lot of thought over time because this person's said things like that to, for example other colleagues who identify as lesbians, and been really inappropriate on a number of occasions, but you kind of, he's allowed to get away with it because of his seniority. But I think in a sense it's kind of insidious from a number of perspectives. It's that kind of, that particular type of White gay men experience is seen as being, I don't know what the right word is, gold standard by those people that, you know just because I might identify in that way there's an assumption that we can be implicit in misogyny or whatever it might be that, and that I find really, I don't know it's gobsmacking to be honest. So I think, you know there are far more issues and problems going on around than the university formally would be aware of." (– Gay man, Associate Professor)

As this lesbian member of staff suggests being cisgender and White might also serve to protect them from discrimination in some circumstances.

"As a relatively feminine, cis, White woman who happens to be gay UCL is very accepting. But I think my experience is not going to be the same as other colleagues who maybe you know don't sort of meet that stereotype [...] or just don't fit kind of neatly into a box that other people find acceptable. I think there are always pockets of amazing acceptance and my team is probably one of them, which is great. But I definitely I encounter people every day who have very outdated views and it sort of it makes me sad that to think about somebody who is perhaps more vulnerable for any reason." (Queer woman, Professional Services)

That said, several lesbian staff described microaggressions, everyday slights and comments that were directly related to their lesbian identity.

"Starting at UCL 15 years ago as quite a junior member of staff, I'd just come from an FE college where I used to work, and my boss at that time told me when I said I was a lesbian at drinks after work with colleagues, that her husband wasn't comfortable with lesbians. At the time, as a junior member of staff I could really have been impacted by that, that very much off the cuff remark. I don't know why it was made, really. I certainly don't think it would be made now. But I really have just always been motivated by that level of confidence and positivity that I have to overcome those sorts of things and put them down to ignorance, stupidity, a silly remark." (Lesbian woman, Professional Services)

"[...] we'd be talking about education and sex education, or something and [this colleague] would say, oh no, he wouldn't want his daughters to know about "Oh, no. I wouldn't want my daughters to know about lesbianism. I wouldn't want them to know about that." To me, that is like erasure and that is like you know, it's kind of triggering, really, because that's like a description of my childhood. But, you know, I don't know if I can call that "homophobic", but it feels that way, you know. It really does feel that way." (Lesbian woman, Professional Services)

As these members of staff describe, everyday microaggressions are so common that they are perhaps expected and even minimised.

"I don't really have any hugely negative experiences there other than the kind of day to day things that I guess all of us experience sometimes that we are labelled and we are seen in certain ways. I mean you know, I might not be aware of some things that go on, I'm sure that's true for every one of us..." (Lesbian woman, Lecturer)

"I don't know, somebody gets engaged for example you'd usually send a card and they do a card around but then we didn't get a card around when we got engaged because, yes, I guess there is that extra element of sensitivity, maybe, whereas it's also not something I have an issue with either in particular." (Lesbian non-binary, Professional Services)

One lesbian reported how when male colleagues learned about their sexuality these men began to act as if she were "one of the boys". This led to deep discomfort for this participant because when she subsequently presented as more feminine, she found that her gender was closely policed.

"But just in terms of the weirdness: I think that's just kind of a day to day experience that I have had, and it is weirdness its nothing that is necessarily negative but it's just that you kind of notice a shift in some peoples' responses to you or kind of the way that they generally behave towards you when they kind of suddenly go, "Oh well actually you know, you're different from what I thought." And

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it's things like male colleagues suddenly talking to you in a different way? Where they suddenly talk to you as if you are one of the boys and say things where you are like, you would never have said that to me just two or three weeks ago, but now that you know you, you've kind of realised and this is not my language it's theirs, you know I bat for the other team, you kind of go, well first of all what teams and also you know, suddenly I'm "mate" I'm not [name] anymore and I get clapped on the back and they talk about their wives in ways they never would have before and you go, I find that weird not necessarily because I'm suddenly part of that, but you see into a whole world, the conversation and conduct that you were kind of excluded from, and not all of it is bad but it's just strange that something like this with colleagues that you've known for years, they kind of, they suddenly treat you differently. [...] And then I kind of get strange looks when I wear a dress to work and they're like, "Oh you are wearing a dress like, we've never seen you wearing a dress" and like, "You've seen me wear a dress like tonnes of times." It's just suddenly I'm no longer a dress wearer; and you know the fact that I might you know, do my nails in a certain colour it's just like..." (Lesbian woman, Lecturer)

Several other lesbian staff in this study referred to awkward experiences with colleagues, particularly male or older colleagues who assumed they were heterosexual.

"When I arrived at UCL it wasn't long before I got married so, I decided I'd start the job being quite open which I haven't done in the past. I was in an office, everyone was under 30, I don't know the younger generation all seem completely relaxed, don't bat an eyelid, it was a completely different environment. It tends to be the older academics at UCL who again, I mean you know, and it's nothing problematic. But there's a like, "Oh, right oh you're marrying a woman okay" and then they're fine [laughs] but there's that initial shock of, "Oh yes, you're not quite what I thought". Then there was the pause, you know. But you know it was different, it was kind of mild awkwardness [laughs] rather than anyone being like, "Yes, I don't believe people like you should adopt" [laughs]. There was quite a chasm there." (Lesbian woman, Research Fellow)

"[...] but there are a few people who you can kind of sense, once they hear that I am not batting for their team, the attitude, the vibe, becomes slightly hostile. Well, I like my homophobia like I like my racism. I want it clear. I want to know. You understand what I am saying? My daughter is also a lesbian. She has always said, "Mum, you know, it's good for them to show us who they are," and she is 100 per cent right. So, it's that little bit of disappointment, you know, but it's fine. And I think, as people get to know me more, that kind of fades out. I have seen that in at least one person, you know, that they began to warm to me as a human being and not to be so miffed that I am not in the possible dating pool, you know, of women of a certain age. Do you understand what I am saying? It's so disgusting the way that straight men act sometimes. It's just like, ugh." (Lesbian woman, Professional Services)

Lesbian staff in this study described the importance of meeting other lesbian colleagues and the solidarity that can be found in these encounters.

[...] it was a relief to find other staff members yes, other lesbian staff members, it was helpful. It feels supportive you know, you can roll your eyes at general nonsense that people go on about. (Lesbian woman, Research Fellow)

"I think it can be really refreshing to find other queer people at work, not in like- like in a massive way but just to kind of have a sense that you are not, yeah, I mean obviously we all know we're not the only gay in the village, but it's ... it's just a different kind of conversation because I guess, you know, the same for colleagues who are talking across difference a lot of time, be that race or religion, or whatever. You start from- you've got a slight sense, wrongly or rightly, that you've got some kind of shared understanding of the space, or some kind of shared history, or at least a kind of collective history of that sort of thing. I know that doesn't always play out." (Lesbian woman, Professor)

The rejection of gender critical views by lesbian staff was also notable, with all lesbian staff interviewed in this project expressing solidarity with trans colleagues at UCL.

"[...] it's really important to me to be a lesbian in the context of a wider umbrella of identities, so it makes me very angry and upset to see trans people being attacked. But I also feel, personally as a lesbian more threatened in various ways. Partly because it does feel, perhaps less - well no I think on an institutional level it feels like, you know that it's part of a broader de-valuing of LGBTQ people generally. But also on a wider, you

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> know on a national level, I frankly feel like we're next in line. You know that it's just a, trans people are the kind of minority, which is easiest to pick on right now, but I think it's masking a much wider homophobia which is, you know threatening to come out. So I feel quite exposed about that, also because you know I am very out. And then also as an academic I've found it really challenging in the last few years, that I do feel like literally everywhere I go that I have to preface, literally right at the beginning I have to say, "I am not transphobic", because I fit the profile of somebody who would be. You know that it has become, being a lesbian and being cisgendered and being a feminist and being an academic has become the profile of somebody who is transphobic. And that really upsets me because, you know I feel like my identity has been taken away from me by people who do not represent me or the community that I come from at all. So that makes me really angry as well because I just think, you know I don't want to be placed in the position of somebody who is trying to take somebody else's rights away." (Lesbian woman, Associate Professor)

BEING BISEXUAL OR PANSEXUAL AT UCL

Bisexual and pansexual staff at UCL used these terms in different ways, and some used them interchangeably.

> "Sometimes I'll say bisexual, like I have had relationships with men. If it was a percentage, I'd say like 95% of my relationships have been with women. Then also, maybe I technically identify as pansexual but then don't really use that terminology." (Queer/Pan/Bisexual woman, Professional Services)

The bisexual and pansexual staff interviewed in this study believed there was a lack of understanding among colleagues about their identities and lived experiences. Staff described how they were frequently experienced as either gay/lesbian or heterosexual/homosexual depending on their current relationship status.

> "As soon as you're married to one person, if they identify and you both identify as a particular gender, [...] therefore we're assuming your entire sexuality. I know people who are married to someone of the opposite sex and that kind of queerness of them is totally derailed, where at least for me I get to retain that kind of part of my identity. [...] Sometimes it feels awkward, especially with work [...] I do kind of shy away from it, but then the more I shy away from it, the less involved people get, [...] it becomes a self-completing cycle. [...] I need to not be pigeon-holed into being one or the other." (Bisexual woman, Research assistant)

Being out as a bisexual or pansexual member of staff often felt impossible. Staff described how coming out as bisexual required them to not only disclose a current relationship status, but to qualify this status with additional information about their sexuality.

> "I'm not queer-identified [by other people] at UCL. I have been in a relationship ... with a man since before I started my MA. [...] the conversations are just too exhausting I suppose." (Bisexual woman, Research Associate)

> "I feel like it's one of those things where I sometimes shy away from specifying, "Oh, I'm bi," because if I say I'm married to a woman, people kind of go, "Oh, okay, you're somewhere on the spectrum," and that's kind of, I don't know, sometimes it feels like I'm giving too much information to say, "Oh, and I'm also attracted to men," because no one says that." (Bisexual woman, Research Assistant)

Fear of claiming a more marginalised identity while in a straight-seeming relationship was also a barrier to being out as bisexual or pansexual at UCL. One bisexual member of staff was concerned that coming out as bisexual would be viewed negatively by colleagues.

> "[...] what's the point in coming out actually if I'm in this "straight relationship" in any case, straight seeming? [...] On the one hand if I say something there's the sort of fear that that comes across as like attention seeking or it's not really relevant or that it's kind of laying claim to an identity when I don't really have to deal with the fallout of it from other people's perspective." (Bisexual woman, Research Associate).

However, this same member of staff also explained that not claiming this identity meant that their authentic sexual identity was invisible.

Even within LGBTQ+ spaces at UCL, bisexual and pansexual staff reported that there was still a lack of acceptance and visibility. One bisexual member of staff in a straight-passing relationship described how they were often assumed to simply be an ally to the LGBTQ+

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community rather than being part of the community at UCL. Another bisexual member of staff who expressed a similar concern wondered if they "should just be more vocal" (Bisexual woman, Research Associate) about being bisexual.

However, for many, coming out as bisexual or pansexual was also fraught with the potential for experiencing homophobia or biphobia.

> "So, I then went through a breakup [with a man] and then started dating a girl and it's so interesting that then I'd be a lot less vocal about that, which is interesting because like I said within my private life it was a really exciting time and I was seeing new people. I don't know why but it's like this aspect of professionalism for me that might hold it back just in terms that I know some people still do unfortunately have negative connotations or negative opinions regarding that." (Bisexual woman, Research Associate)

> "It was just like, "Oh you wouldn't have been able to tell that you were bisexual". And I think I always think back to that point of time and wished that I'd said, "Well what do you think that looks like? What does a bisexual person look like? I don't know that's a compliment what you said there?" Because I'm quite happy, I love my girlfriend, it's not something I'm trying to hide, but I do feel that since that occasion I've been less forthcoming with information about my private life." (Bisexual woman, Research Associate)

One member of staff described colleagues expressing biphobic views about their extended family. Whilst this incident was not directed at the bisexual member of staff themself, expressing biphobic and panphobic views in the workplace contributed to feelings of unsafety and uncertainty of spaces at UCL.

> "[A previous colleague] said that, his cousin told him that they were I think it was either bi or pan, and he was like, "but I don't think she is because, you know, it's just like cool to say that now and I think she just wants attention."" (Bisexual woman, Research Associate)

Bisexual and pansexual staff at UCL described how disclosing their sexuality was overtly sexualised in discussions by colleagues. Some staff reported that colleagues would see the disclosure of their sexual orientation as an invitation to ask inappropriate questions.

> "I am in an outwardly straight relationship, my partner is also bisexual but she is a cis identifying woman and then that starts another set of conversations around are you still bisexual if you are in a straight relationship? The answer is of course, "Yes" but I don't want to have this conversation and I don't want to have to sit and discuss the particulars of my relationship with my partner. "Do you both sleep with other people?", "No we are monogamous." but again this boundary overstepping that I think is, they think to a degree think is invited because you have given a piece of information about yourself that is ostensibly sexual right? You've given up a piece of your information that is your sexual preference and it's like it opens this door for some people: that they think now all of a sudden they can have conversations that are explicitly or overtly more sexual than they would have ever had before. [...] I think it's quite a common experience for bisexual people specifically. I think if you are gay or a lesbian that makes more sense to some straight people because it's very much like a, "Well I'm only attracted to one gender so I can understand that perspective." and I think that there's a degree of exoticism and otherness about bisexuality that some people place on it that opens you up to this kind of additional questioning which makes things very awkward sometimes". (Bisexual man, Professional Services)

> "[...] People's opinions regarding lesbian relationships are often so sexualised. I don't know, and I just feel like people have a very different opinion to female-female relationships as opposed to male-male and that's interesting as well, at both teams I've worked with I have had colleagues who have been openly gay men and very proud and open with that and it's interesting to me that I don't know what that part of it is that's holding me back in being quite so open about it but I think like I said it would be more that I didn't want that part of my identity to become my whole identity and how people refer to me or anything like that initially as it's just...It is a part of who I am but it's in no way the most interesting part I hope." (Bisexual woman, Research Associate)

Another member of staff described disclosing to a colleague that they had been on a date with someone of the same gender, which was met with intrusive questions.

> "I'm sure they think that they're being really lovely and they're asking a lot of questions, but it just sometimes feels like you're being probed a little

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> bit. Asking where you met, how did you know them? How did you know that they were gay? Did you just know when you saw them? And it's like, okay, it suddenly becomes a very different situation." (Bisexual woman, Research Associate)

BEING TRANS AND/OR NON-BINARY AT UCL

Thirteen out of the fourteen trans and non-binary staff interviewed in this study described UCL as a difficult or outright hostile place to work. This sentiment was expressed by trans and non-binary staff across different faculties and both academic and professional services roles.

> "Prior to lockdown I just like actively avoided research events. [...] Because I am transitioning there is going to be a point where I'm going to become more obviously trans I guess and maybe that's going to maybe shift how it is that I'm treated in here but I don't go to those because I couldn't stand, I worry about it happening, I worry about it being talked about, I worry about a question being asked which is particularly aggressive and I want to concentrate on trans joy." (Queer transmasc, Research Associate)

This hostile environment for trans and non-binary people at UCL also negatively affected the experiences of trans and non-binary students.

> "I've had students, transgender and queer students say they don't feel safe on campus, they avoid coming to campus because of the views held by, expressed by, rather than held by, the staff in the departments which they study. One colleague witnessed other members of staff sharing and discussing the gender identities of students." (Queer trans non-binary, Research Associate)

These feelings were so acute that one member of staff remarked on a conversation with a trans colleague in which they discussed dissuading trans students from applying to UCL.

> "I know one trans member of staff who said that they don't feel safe going to- being at work, they've had to take time off because they couldn't deal with this. They said ... If anyone talks to them, they would recommend to trans students that they don't go to UCL." (Queer non-binary, Professional Services)

Trans and non-binary staff, as well as their colleagues, reported a broad range of experiences of discrimination, prejudice, harassment and bullying from within and outside of UCL. In one case, a member of staff attempted to prevent the recruitment of trans applicants for a PhD studentship.

> "When they were writing the job description, this person wanted to take out the queer literature in the advert and take out all the things to do with the queer stuff because she didn't want a trans person applying for the PhD." (Lesbian woman, Professor)

One person recalled how racist and transphobic abuse by UCL staff had led to the cancellation of an academic event with a trans speaker.

> "A visiting speaker withdrew from an event I convened due to the racist and transphobic abuse they received by UCL staff." (Queer trans non-binary, Research Associate)

In another example, a trans non-binary colleague recounted an experience in a union meeting where colleagues labelled trans people as a "threat to humanity".

> "So I've sat in union meetings where trans people have been compared to climate change in terms of a threat to humanity, so like that's nice. And, you know, it got a big laugh and it's clearly a preposterous claim but it's also hurtful and that the union entertains that is really distressing." (Queer trans non-binary, Postgraduate teaching assistant)

Another trans non-binary member recalled the following experience of harassment and intimidation while at UCL.

> "[...] so one of the other early incidents was my office door was vandalised, all the LGBT materials were destroyed which at the time this was my first proper staff position" (Queer trans non-binary, Research Associate)

One EDI committee member was overheard leaving an EDI meeting saying loudly "Don't get me started on those trans women." (Gay man, Professor)

Many trans and non-binary staff at UCL reported experiencing intentional misgendering by UCL colleagues.

> "I have gone to conferences where staff from UCL are there and they have refused to use my pronouns" (Queer transmasc, Research Associate)

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> "one of my closest PhD colleagues [...] they identify as non-binary. And they have their pronouns on emails and so forth, but that often gets ignored. And often, even though- And they point it out several times. [...] even when they are communicating, for example, or email with people that also have their pronouns in their email signature, they still misgender them. So, it's a little bit like there is an element of performativity but actually, not thinking about it in your everyday life still." (Queer man, Postgraduate Teaching Assistant)

Even when misgendering is not deliberate, this trans member of staff felt that the onus was on them to be forgiving and understanding of the error, rather than on the staff member who made the mistake to learn and change their behaviour.

> "So I think that like these are kind of and I've had lots of, and I've had [a colleague] email me – also which I don't reply to – like when he has like accidentally messed up or whatever on pronouns and to send me emails that are really long and apologetic without really recognising that I just do not have the energy to like say that your like act of whatever fuck up or violence. Like I'm not going to say that's okay." (Queer transmasc, Research Associate)

As well as direct discrimination and harassment of trans and non-binary staff, there were several instances of indirect harassment where LGBTQ+ staff reported overhearing inappropriate comments and discussions about non-binary and trans colleagues.

> "I've heard one or two people saying like, oh I just don't get that nonbinary thing. And just kind of like, well that's fine but nobody asked you. Why don't you keep that inside?" (Queer woman, Professional Services)

> "I was in the office, and they were say there saying, "Oh and so-and-so, do you think they've had an operation, do you think they've had the snip? " And this person, I've known this person for over 20 years, and they've always been this person to me. But these two were sat there, I thought, you're so, this is so, you know inappropriate on every single level. And I remember that just made me really uncomfortable, and I think I mentioned it to somebody, and they thought I was being really, just too, what's the word, not pedantic but kind of like overly sensitive." (Bisexual woman, Research Associate)

Trans and non-binary staff consistently pointed to the rise of gender critical views within the university as driving increased levels of transphobia and creating an environment where they feel less safe at work.

> "One of the things I worried about coming to the department for example today, or IOE really specifically, is the potential to come across these individuals, to have them in my space that I think like it's that kind of existential threat that really grinds you down. I feel it at the IOE [...] It's everywhere, but IOE is specifically a place where I don't feel particularly safe. [...] because I've always had this like drive for change and this drive for activism and I just I'm so ground down that I don't have that anymore and that's quite scary." (Queer transmasc, Research Associate)

> "I know people who don't feel safe coming to UCL. Particularly trans colleagues don't feel safe on campus, and so I would say, no I don't either. But I think that's probably partly because I don't tell people about being non-binary because I don't want to, and that's not because I think people are going to throw stones at me or anything, but I just don't want any, yes, I don't want anyone to say anything. So I think no, UCL isn't as safe as it probably once felt." (Bisexual non-binary, Research Associate)

As these gay staff explain, the rise of gender critical views and their impact on trans and non-binary staff was also a source of concern for the wider LGBTQ+ community at UCL.

> "We had like Women's Place UK conference which is like, transphobic, like it was very transphobic and there were like even strikes from the students outside the IOE saying, how can the organization support that? So, I can instantly understand like, trans colleagues wanting to hide their identity or like not wanting to share like their sexual identity or like be open about themselves." (Gay man, Professional Services)

> "I don't think that trans people are safe at UCL. [...] the fact that you know several UCL members of staff write public letters you know about trans rights and the existence of trans people and you know gender critical people that are very public and very powerful at UCL." (Gay man, Lecturer)

> "I mean, I don't know trans people who've been physically victimised but I certainly know trans people who now feel less safe and I don't think

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> that that's an imagined feeling right I think that's a, there's very good reasons for them feeling unsafe and uncomfortable and if they're feeling that then, then that's going to deter people from coming to UCL and it's going to make them, make them less productive employees right." (Gay man, Professor)

As well as problems experienced by individual members of staff, LGBTQ+ staff in this study also pointed to structural issues that made the lives of trans and non-binary staff harder. HR equalities forms not recording trans, nonbinary or intersex people correctly, were pointed to as particularly problematic.

> "When I was changing my name, you can't just change your name on a single system, you have to do it over and over again. You know, there is so much additional, like that admin stuff, admin can be really violent and that doesn't often get attended to. It's often those like little institutional things that can really just help to tip you over the edge or just make additional barriers so loathsome, if that makes sense?" (Queer trans non-binary, Postgraduate Teaching Assistant)

One staff member described the following experience of enrolment for an international trans student at UCL.

> "[...] over and over again in lines of people having to explain "trans women". This is this, and here's my, yes I don't look like my photo and this is a different name. And, you know, and they begin lessons and it might be the wrong name on the register so they have to go before every lesson and get there early and speak to the teacher." (Queer trans non-binary, Postgraduate Teaching Assistant)

Another trans member of staff described how they have been sought out by colleagues to be part of LGBTQ+ EDI committees and other formal structures at UCL. However, they felt that their presence as a trans person was tokenised and at times used as cover for the subsequent exclusion and marginalisation of trans people.

> "EDI spaces are the kinds of spaces where we should feel safer doing that, but apparently not. But I think that's one of the first things that we learn as LGBT people, that "LGBT friendly space" doesn't always mean trans friendly, unfortunately but it's true." (Queer/Ace/Bisexual trans man, Lecturer)

This same colleague described several micro moments during an LGBTQ+ EDI meeting where committee members avoided introducing themselves with their pronouns after they had performed the same courtesy. In the same meeting, a committee member proposed that someone be appointed to be the chair who can "listen to all sides of the "trans debate"", in opposition to their proposal that someone be appointed with lived experience of being trans. This member of staff described the cumulative impact of navigating these moments in the following way.

> "And I've had that happening more than once in EDI. So, that's like, I wouldn't say that I'm reluctant to be out in these spaces but I know that I'm uncomfortable in these spaces. [...] I've had several meetings, and these are all EDI focused, funnily enough where I have very distinctly have not felt comfortable whatsoever as a trans person in that space." (Queer/Ace/Bisexual trans man, Lecturer)

When transphobic incidents have been identified and raised with senior leaders, HR or central EDI, several LGBTQ+ staff described how little, or no action was taken. One staff member described raising their concerns around the inappropriate comments of colleagues about another trans person, only to be disregarded as being "overly sensitive" (Bisexual non-binary, Research Associate). Where other incidents had been raised, no follow-up communication contributed to a sense that the university is not supportive or safe.

> "Following [an incident with a transphobic security employee], we met with members of UCL HR and the EDI team, to talk about what could be done. And it was acknowledged that there is a difficulty created because UCL outsources for staff like its security. And that means that we have quite limited control over what kind of training they receive, for example. And I think EDI were going to do some work following those conversations. But I don't really know what was ever done. We did follow up a couple of months later, but I think I didn't get a definitive answer." (Bisexual trans woman, Lecturer)

Another member of staff recalled inconsistent levels of support from senior leaders when reporting a transphobic incident to their line managers.

> "I raised [the issue of vandalism] with my then head of department who was very sympathetic and I think treated the matter appropriately because I didn't want to pursue it in any kind of, I didn't want to have any formal proceedings. I just wanted it recorded. That person was simply the acting

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> head of department and later my current head of department when I mentioned this said absolutely nothing in response and just kind of shrugged and shook his head and that was the end of the situation." (Queer trans non-binary, Research Associate)

Even when colleagues are allies, one member of trans staff described how precarious allyship can feel and the amount of individual labour involved in educating them.

> "So it's really weird to be like feeling like in a hostile environment like IOE. So you've got that threat but then also you've got the threat of like allyship which sounds such a fucked up thing to say but it also is extra, extra pressure for me but I shouldn't, I feel like I shouldn't shade them because like they're really trying I guess but they're doing it in, I spend a lot of time like educating I guess and also in many ways I feel a lot of the time that I'm overreacting." (Queer transmasc, Research Associate)

This education included not learning about trans lives and the everyday challenges of being trans in the UK and at UCL.

> "So I think at the beginning I wasn't taken entirely seriously [...] Although my pronouns were respected it felt a little bit like "they're not trans proper they're just using they/them pronouns [...] because no one meets any trans people but I feel like they would really benefit from having some active like training and I think also for them they kind of see it as like I'm only going on about pronouns or like I'm only going on about like gender recognition or whatever, I don't think they also understand that like I'm having to wait or have had to wait like fucking five years for like health care. They don't understand that like actually like dysphoria is like crippling and sometimes I come to the office and I can barely breathe [...] I tried to talk to [my PI] about the hostility towards transness at the IOE at the moment and [...] They don't know the absolute diabolical state of how queer people are being treated at UCL. They're ignorant to it. So, it's also about getting them that news. So they were shocked about Stonewall." (Queer transmasc, Research Associate)

Staff in this study also raised a significant number of experiences which appeared to arise exclusively or at least primarily because of an aspect of their identity not related to being LGBTQ+. Although it is not always easy to disentangle these experiences from an intersectional reading, those that focus on a non-LGBTQ+ identity will be discussed in the following sub-sections of this report.

BEING A WOMAN AT UCL

Almost all lesbian, bi/pansexual, queer, and trans women in this study reported experiences of sexism, and in some cases misogyny at UCL. Sexism isn't limited to women who are part of the LGBTQ+ community at UCL, but these experiences are included in this report because they emerged as such a strong theme in the interviews.

LGBTQ+ staff in this study made it clear that sexism at UCL is pervasive and embedded within the university's culture and senior leadership.

> "It's just the amount of misogyny that I experience on a near daily basis, it's just shocking. [...] I mean, you just have to look at all of the White guys in senior management and you know that this is the perspective of the organisation." (Queer woman, Professional Services)

> "I've had conversations with various senior women at UCL who also report a culture of, well I've heard more than one person refer to it as "willy-waving", in that you get lots of very dominant voices in meetings, particularly on Zoom who take up a lot of the airwaves who are all very much of a similar type". (Gay man, Professional Services)

Women's claims of a sexist culture at UCL were supported by this member of Professional Services staff with experience of central HR.

> "I am dealing with quite a number of bullying cases so you could argue that that relates potentially to gender. Although it has improved there is a lot of work around a bit of a boys' club in a particular area which has been of common theme across the board..." (Gay man, Professional Services)

Lesbian, bi/pan and trans women, as well as male interviewees, observed that men were more likely to occupy senior academic positions at UCL. This held true even in faculties and departments where there are more women overall.

> "[My department is] a really traditional discipline. You know we've got that classic X on the gender graph from junior to senior, where it's basically all women in junior posts and very few senior women. And all of the men are, all of the seniors are men and most of the Professors and Heads of Department are men and that's changing but you know we're so far behind..." (Gay man, Professor)

“HAVING SPENT MOST OF MY LIFE HIDING FROM MYSELF, I KNOW THAT THE MORE PEOPLE THAT ARE VISIBLE AND THAT SPEAK ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCES AND THEIR REALITIES AS A MEMBER OF THE LGBT+ COMMUNITY, THE MORE PEOPLE WHO ARE AFRAID, OR WHO ARE HIDING, OR WHO ARE UNSURE, THE MORE THEY WILL BE ABLE TO SEE THAT, ACTUALLY, THEY ARE NOT ON THEIR OWN.”

Lesbian woman, Professional Services

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It was observed, however, that this may not necessarily hold true for Professional Services.

> "In Professional Services I feel like there are lots of female role models in very senior positions. I think but then you look at the academic side, which is hugely important part of the university obviously and you know it's very, very male" (Queer woman, Professional Services)

However, one interviewee believed that in recent years there had been a decrease in the number of women occupying senior positions within Professional Services.

> "I've noticed really just how White, pale male and stale it is the higher up the institution that you get. I sit on [a UCL] leadership team and that's becoming progressively more White, more straight, more male.[...] sort of alpha male, alpha White male, heterosexual types that are rapidly populating all of the senior leadership positions within Professional Services." (Gay man, Professional Services)

Some areas of the university were described as more prone to sexism than others. For example, it was suggested that in more hierarchical settings - such as clinical and medical settings - sexism proliferates more readily as the careers of junior medics are more directly in the hands of senior consultants. This creates barriers to junior medics reporting sexism, even as bystanders.

> "I think also because they're medics, there is a very much kind of hierarchical structure versus say science, where you are kind of promoted to challenge these things. If you are a junior medic you don't challenge the consultant because they can make your life a living hell or stop your career progression." (Gay man, Research Fellow)

There were many incidents of sexism reported by women. However, it was notable that several men in this study also brought up sexist encounters they had witnessed or overheard at UCL.

One staff member reported multiple experiences of discrimination on the basis of their maternity leave and need for childcare during their PhD.

> "I would say in many ways being a woman doing a PhD, being pregnant, visibly you know, I mean I had so many nasty comments, I can't even [...] Things like quite senior members of staff coming up to me and saying, "I would recommend you don't make a big thing about it because many women who are here have chosen not to have children." People telling me not to get too attached to my children because it would stop me working. [...] This is sadly very much from women I guess, a very senior member of staff sort of pointedly telling me about another person who'd had a baby who had continued to go off and work weeks after their baby was born. I mean relentless honestly. [...] I was marched into [department area] and had a dressing down in front of the whole of the [room] because I'd made an appointment with my supervisory team during a fortnightly forum event because I couldn't afford the childcare times and that's when my supervisors were free. (Bisexual woman, Research Associate)

This same staff member went on to describe how these incidents were part of a wider sexist culture within the department.

> Like I won an award at the end of my MA and it was an award that was only for women. Like I won a prize. And the guy came up, the guy, the professor who was the head of my discipline came up and said, "Doesn't it bother you that you only got this because you're a woman?" Or something like that. The same person made frequent and very dismissive remarks about women who do their MA and then go off and pregnant and then come back with their babies to- Like having babies seems to be such a problem for this, you know, exercising the use of your womb is like a real issue for a lot of- So that was actually from a guy as well not a woman." (Bisexual woman, Research Associate)

The perceived sexist academic culture at UCL prevented one member of staff from disclosing a menstrual health condition because they were concerned about the repercussions.

> "[A health condition] affects how much work I can do when I have my period, but I haven't told anybody at work and I never put it on the forms when they when they ask if you have a disability. And I'm not sure, like part of me feels like, because I'm a woman in a male dominated field, that to admit that I have this physical problem would be seen as weak." (Bisexual woman, Research associate)

Experiences of students harassing female members of staff were also raised, and this seemed to be a particular issue for younger members of staff.

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> "I had a very awkward experience with a Master's student who I taught only for a term and only in groups and then I didn't teach him the next term, but he was kind of showing up to the lectures and always walking with me, and you know you just get this sense... and at the end of the year he asked me out and I was very uncomfortable. [...] I feel like that experience really happened to me because I was a woman of course, a young woman... (Lesbian woman, Postgraduate Teaching Assistant)

Women in this study described numerous experiences of microaggressions, such as being spoken across and interrupted in meetings.

> "There has been a couple of negative things which I think is more kind of gender based if you like. Older men where I have just been spoken over. It's like, "excuse me you are being rude", it's like "yes, shut up I am talking". [...] It's just something that I noticed when I was looking more and more fem before I came out. It was very interesting that more and more men were just quite happy to just cut over me just based on how I looked, even though I hadn't come out or anything." (Lesbian trans woman, Professional Services)

One person explained how they also felt like being a woman at UCL was a barrier to being heard. They described how this had manifested with their ideas being co-opted and repackaged by male colleagues as their own.

> "It's like lots of little microaggressions all the time. Lots of repeating my ideas, as their own awful thoughts and yes, I think I am supported by my direct line manager incredibly well and, but I do think that UCL is not set up to confer, as an inclusive place and definitely being a woman is a barrier to getting your voice heard at UCL." (Queer woman, Professional Services)

Women also described being taken less seriously than male colleagues and infantilised by men in more senior positions. As this lesbian lecturer explains, they also felt that sexism at UCL has contributed to them not being promoted alongside their male peers despite having the same teaching and research profile.

> "I have observed across UCL that a lot of people get to places, and it is because they are taken seriously in a way, and when I say "people" I mean men. They are taken seriously in a way that we aren't. It takes a lot more to be taken seriously as an academic and this is going to sound incredibly strange but also as an adult if you are a woman. It's kind of being infantilised all the time, and you know being the same age as some of your male colleagues, and having a similar research and teaching track record, and you're still kind of one level below them or then you get told things like: "When you are that senior-", "You've still got a few years." It's like, "Listen in actual years I'm a month older than you and we've been doing this the same amount of time, it's just that I haven't been offered the same opportunities." (Lesbian woman, Lecturer)

Women also felt they were held back from progressing in their careers because they were tacitly expected to undertake unequal or additional labour, such as providing pastoral support for staff and students who are reluctant to approach their male colleagues for support. Women in academic positions at UCL felt that this additional labour was not considered in workload or cases for promotion.

> "We take on an awful lot of work that isn't credited in any way, a lot of the care work that is necessary, the pastoral work that is necessary and that is not just in an official capacity like a departmental tutor. [...] students don't even come to them or colleagues don't ever come to them and so we are held back and so I just think a fair distribution of this and recognition of different forms of work and labour" (Lesbian woman, Lecturer)

One interviewee questioned the straightforward notion that all women experience sexism in the same ways at UCL. As a more feminine presenting woman they framed their experience of sexism and "fem phobia" and as being heightened by the masculine competitiveness of academia.

> "I think after all of this time and even in a relatively progressive context there's still a lot of fem phobia and I think academia doesn't necessarily feel like a safe place for all women, for feminine women. For women who don't, you know there's plenty of women floating around but they have chosen often to engage with academia on its own terms and to you know ask me what I mean by this and then I'll have to think of the nuance that you kind of act like men. Well I guess maybe you know like the competitiveness for example of academia feels like a very masculine quality of a particular historical point as well that I just don't want to engage with but I see a lot of women who look and seem like me and who I interact with and who I'm friends with outside of academia you

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> know performing that kind of masculinity and that competitiveness in the moment at work and that I think not just for feminine women but for all feminine people can be kind of stressful and make you feel like you don't really have a place there or don't really belong." (Queer woman, Lecturer)

In terms of positive experiences, one participant said they had received good support from UCL regarding a case of sexism, and therefore felt that if some other discrimination occurred, they could report it. This positive experience led to the member of staff feeling heard and even feeling safe being out as a lesbian at UCL too, as she felt the university would support and protect her.

> "Unfortunately, I have had some comments, but it's not because of my being a lesbian it's because of being a woman, which is, you know difficult but then I used the support from UCL to protect me from that, and that was excellent. And I think, yes being heard in that instance it was good, so I think in a way that makes me feel safe being a lesbian at work and then talking about it and not feeling like I have to hide anything." (Lesbian woman, Professional Services)

One staff member on a hiring committee also said they felt able to speak out against sexist behaviour from the Chair of the committee, but only because another woman was present on the panel.

> "I felt empowered to speak up about because there was another woman on the committee but definitely would not have either otherwise." (Queer woman, Lecturer)

BEING A PERSON OF COLOUR AT UCL

Almost all LGBTQ+ people of colour interviewed in this study discussed racism as a significant feature of their experiences of working at UCL. For many, racism was felt to be more prevalent or more significant than other forms of discrimination, including LGBTQ+ discrimination.

Some staff believed they experience more racism than homophobia because their sexuality may be easier to conceal, and this affords them more options about when and how to disclose their sexuality. Unlike participants' descriptions of experiencing homophobia or biphobia, racism based on physical appearance contributed to feelings of vulnerability which stemmed from being visibly part of a minoritized community, with little or no control over being able to mask or conceal this difference to avoid harm.

> "You can't really hide that you know. It's not like with being gay, you can hide the fact you're gay and nobody will then do something about it, you know. When you're Chinese you can't really hide the fact you're Chinese. Everyone can see you're Chinese you know so [laughter]." (Asian gay man, Research Fellow)

For many, structural racism was viewed as a greater professional threat than LGBTQ+ based discrimination.

> "I think I've seen a lot more overt racism in the workplace and I think I've seen people more explicitly and obviously excluded because of their skin colour rather than their sexuality. It's more serious than kind of you know, hearing your colleague say they don't think you should adopt. Which is unpleasant, uncomfortable but doesn't affect my promotion opportunities or whether I'm included or things like that." (Lesbian woman, Research Fellow)

When asked about experiences of racism, one staff member described how a professor and editor of a prominent journal at UCL had been using desk rejections to exclude scholars they perceived to be of a certain races or nationalities.

> "A professor from UCL who was editor of [a leading science journal], and he basically decided, any submission he would get in his journal from a Chinese academic he would desk-reject. And I was a little bit sort of like, I mean this is exactly what I've been worrying about you know that, you know like after 9/11 it was like all Muslims are terrorists you know. [...] Then I'm sort of thinking sort of like you know, is there anybody who has desk-rejected my journal articles [laughter] because I was a Chinese person or something like that you know." (Asian gay man, Research Fellow)

One Black LGBTQ+ staff member had received what they described as "casual racism" in the form of a pointed remark about their hair.

> "I mean, I have only had one incident of what could be described as casual racism, as far as I can see. I very much tend to try not to view everything through the lens of race. So, maybe I am being too generous, but really there was one incident. It wasn't related to my sexuality

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at all, where I was wearing my hair – I'd cut my hair about a year ago. I was wearing an afro and somebody made a comment about my afro. It wasn't a very complimentary one." (Black lesbian woman, Professional Services)

Some staff felt more able to confront racism at UCL than others. A particular challenge emerged for this participant who described the difficulties of pointing out racism to colleagues they work with closely.

"It's quite a difficult thing to say to a colleague that are actually quite close to you and their heart is in the right place. And sort of, sometimes I do find myself not fully equipped to sort of to say actually you are racist. Dear colleague, dear lovely colleague, who has all the right intentions; you're really racist. Like, please stop saying "I don't see colour" (Gay Man Lecturer)

One staff member described feeling more comfortable challenging homophobia in the workplace than racism.

"So, I would say that my experiences of being brown is very different to my experience of being a gay man and my shield or my tools for homophobia are a lot better sharpened than my racial, so, it's I guess something that I need to work more on." (Gay Man Lecturer)

One member of staff described the emotional significance and struggle of being the first staff member of colour to have a permanent role in their faculty, and the responsibility that came with this realisation.

"I met a post doc of colour in [department name] who told me that she had done all her previous degrees at UCL and I was the first faculty member of colour she had ever met [...] that's when I almost cried in my office" (Bisexual Asian woman, Lecturer)

One interviewee suggested that UCL should have made an explicit and accessible statement in support of Asian academics, particularly following the outbreak of the COVID pandemic.

"Yes, I mean we got the UCL union to say something about [racism towards Asian academics during the outbreak of the COVID pandemic] but I think maybe the university has you know put it somewhere, somewhere deeply buried in their website but yes. It's been, you know, really hard." (Asian gay man, Research Fellow)

NATIONALITY

Several LGBTQ+ staff interviewed in this study were not born in the UK and/or were not UK citizens. Their national identity and working in a different cultural context was significant for many of these staff and some experienced discrimination because of their nationality. Some colleagues, including LGBTQ+ colleagues, are described as behaving differently towards international colleagues based on stereotypes or assumptions about the competence, expertise or work ethic.

"Being queer can make you feel a bit uncomfortable, but it makes me feel very uncomfortable when your national identity is conflated with like not working very much or being lazy or partying. It feels very violent to me I feel like when it comes from British people. But at the same time, I reflect and think like this is just like an appetiser for the way a person of colour is treated 24/7, every minute of their lives in their own country." (Queer Man, Lecturer)

"I would say that probably at the hospital I could, feel that the way some colleagues treat me wasn't the same as among them [...] like, "yeah you're here because we have needed volunteers, but you are one of these European doctors that are not as qualified as we are". (Gay man, Research Associate)

One member of staff who was a foreign national emphasised the additional challenges faced by UCL staff seeking permanent employment in the UK as part of gaining UK citizenship.

"Everybody has their individual story about immigration and for almost nobody has it been completely smooth, everybody's had difficulties at some point and just the cost of people trying to bring families over; it's so expensive, it's a big problem." (Gay Man Research Fellow)

RELIGION

Religions that have historically promoted homophobic, biphobic, transphobic or queerphobic ideas inform the lives of some LGBTQ+ staff at UCL.

"I guess that national identity is very important, and the cultural identity – where you come from. I'm from [...] a country with a very strong religious national Orthodox Church identity. That minimises, let's say, the feeling of any other identity. [...]

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> where you come from an oppressed country or culture, it takes more than a sticker to increase awareness" (Gay Man, Professional Services)

Religious identity or experiences of religion were also felt by some interviewees to be an important component of their identity and work at UCL. However, as one LGBTQ+ Christian member of staff working in a sciences faculty described, it might be easier to be out as an LGBTQ+ person than a person of faith in some UCL contexts.

> "It is easier to come out as a gay man in science than it is as a Christian in science, but I've never really had any pushback on either side, just some questioning." (Gay man, Research Fellow)

One LGBTQ+ Jewish member of staff described how exhausting it can be to be constantly engaged in the labour and activism that comes with combating antisemitism.

> "We've got quite a few Jewish colleagues who don't want to be involved in the caucus because they're just like, "it's just exhausting". It's almost easier to ignore it all and just get on with it. [...] Imagine being in a culture where you feel that you, it's the same as many queer people, you hide this kind of part of yourself as a way to protect yourself." (Gay Man, Associate Professor)

CLASS

Class was described by some LGBTQ+ staff in this study as a significant part of their experience of working at UCL and more generally.

> "I suppose the one thing that I do think impacts my outlook on work in general, is actually a class based thing. I come from a quite poorer working class upbringing. And sometimes, I think that affects my outlook on work and how I present myself. [...] I now live a middle class life, but I come from a working class background. It just colours much of how I view certain things. How I react in certain situations. My ethos around work, and my thoughts around hierarchies and things like that." (Gay man, Professional Services)

Some LGBTQ+ staff in this study described how class discrimination or socioeconomic disadvantage had been a barrier in their career, whilst for others the effects were still ongoing.

Accentism, or accent-based discrimination, also provided a proxy for classism. According to some interviewees, accents were either a source of judgement or insecurity at UCL.

> "In terms of the direct comments that I'd get about who I am, it would normally be about my voice or people saying, "You're very estuary"" (Lesbian woman, Professor).

This staff member described others correcting their pronunciation to a "standard" Southern British English during meetings, which serves to reassert classist notions that only certain people from certain places, who speak a certain way, belong in academic spaces.

> "I used to have a really strong [regional] dialect like really strong so like on the way to school [Mum would] put on Radio Four and she would have me repeat it so I got rid of my dialect because she believed that that would mean I was more respected and probably she's right." (Queer transmasc, Research Associate)

BEING LGBTQ+ & EARLY CAREER AT UCL

Early career LGBTQ+ staff described how their occupational insecurity contributed to their insecurity of being out at UCL.

> "Knowing that I'm spinning all these plates, trying to keep this plate of my sexuality and sex and desire from falling and shattering everywhere, in a way that would be sort of irrevocably damaging to my career." (Gay non-binary, Postgraduate Teaching Assistant)

One early career member of staff also described how colleagues have tried to conceal their LGBTQ+ identities until they gained permanent positions out of fear that they might be discriminated against in recruitment processes.

> "I have heard from other colleagues of similar levels to me that they have decided not to come out to people in leadership roles because of perceptions that it could impact their prospective for promotion or certainly at the level of getting a permanent position, how there is some fear that you can't really be yourself until you're granted that permanent position" (Gay man, Research Fellow)

Another interviewee in an early career research position described how they didn't want their sexuality to detract from the way their work is perceived.

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> "I'd like people to know me for my research, for what I'm focusing on, rather than, "Oh, she's another one of the young, queer kids." (Bisexual woman, Research Assistant)

Alongside the concern that being openly LGBTQ+ could impact on job security or professional respect at work, some early career staff also worried that talking out against LGBTQ+ discrimination could be seen as rocking the boat and therefore detrimental to their career.

> "I think it does but no more uncertainty than I currently feel as an early career academic [laughs]. So I am in the fortunate position that I am a fellow funded individual, but with that amazing benefit and security comes a lot of insecurity. Because I have never had to go through a hiring process, I've never had to negotiate a contract and my contract whilst it's open, is funding dependent. And so, if I don't secure another fellowship, what's the likelihood I am going to get hired? I have that ability because my salary is attached to myself, but I can like shit-stir if I want or cause a ruckus and they can't do anything about me, because I can take my money and walk and go elsewhere. But at the same time it's like, that stuff sticks to you and so would any of those things be held against me at any point in terms of that, it always does play in the back of my head. Well how much do you kind of like push or rock the boat on certain things?" (Gay man, Research Fellow)

3

NAVIGATING DIFFERENT AREAS OF PRACTICE AND DIFFERENT ROLES AT UCL

3. NAVIGATING DIFFERENT AREAS OF PRACTICE & DIFFERENT ROLES AT UCL

● This section reports on the different roles that LGBTQ+ staff inhabit at UCL. This research has found that each role comes with a distinct set of experiences, concerns, and difficulties. While this section of the report divides up these staff experiences according to professional roles and considers each in turn, it is important to acknowledge that many staff are inhabiting two or more roles simultaneously (e.g. an academic member of staff might be expected to do teaching, research and EDI work).

● Staff with teaching responsibilities discussed the complexities involved in whether and how to come out to students. Fears of negative reactions are balanced by many against the desire to be visible and identifiable LGBTQ+ role models for students. While very few incidents of hostility from students were reported, and indeed most staff who took part in this project felt that students would be very accepting of their LGBTQ+ identities, it is clear that a few negative experiences can create a "chilling affect" and make LGBTQ+ teaching staff feel less safe and willing to be out to students. For some, however, there was fear of coming out to students, particularly undergraduate students, because they judged that such discussions with students might be seen to "sexualise the classroom" in ways that are inappropriate. Early career staff, including PGTAs, reported feeling particularly vulnerable and underprepared for how to approach teaching as an LGBTQ+ person at UCL. There appear to be three distinct yet overlapping strands for this group: whether to be out to students; concerns with gaps in their pedagogical training and how to develop inclusive classrooms for all students; and the wider precarity of being on insecure contracts or in more junior positions.

● LGBTQ+ staff who teach gender studies or address issues related to gender and sexuality in their teaching were almost always open to students about their own identities and lived experiences. Conversely, there were also many staff working in other fields who felt that their gender and sexuality was of no relevance to their areas of teaching and so chose not to discuss anything related to their gender or sexuality with students. What emerges from interviews with LGBTQ+ staff is their constant vigilance and management of boundaries between their personal lives and professional lives in the classroom. More support and guidance for LGBTQ+ staff to help them negotiate this terrain is clearly needed.

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- Many LGBTQ+ teaching staff were also heavily involved in efforts to diversify, decolonise and queer their curricula, but noted the difficulties in getting this work embedded in meaningful ways. Some LGBTQ+ staff felt that the labour involved in these initiatives fell disproportionately on LGBTQ+ staff (and staff from other minoritized backgrounds) in informal and often invisible ways. Staff highlighted the need for more widespread training on critical, queer and feminist pedagogies so that all teaching staff take active steps to create inclusive learning spaces.

- Experiences of LGBTQ+ staff in research roles varied widely between academic disciplines, and there was a clear divide in terms of levels of comfort to be out between those staff in the social sciences and humanities and those in STEM subjects. Generally, staff within the social sciences and humanities felt their disciplines were easier spaces in which to be out. They put this down to the fact that they and colleagues were often more familiar with research that foregrounds the social construction of gender and sexuality and the need for reflexivity in research practice. These disciplinary epistemologies appear to make it easier and, in some cases, necessary for a researcher to express their social position. In contrast those working in STEM areas often described feeling less able or willing to be out. This divide needs further exploration but data from this study suggests that longstanding disciplinary norms continue to play a part. For example, within STEM subjects, notions of objectivity and a researcher who is outside the object of research do not typically attend to the identity of a researcher. There were, of course, exceptions within STEM. For example, research spaces that focused on sexual health services often had higher numbers of LGBTQ+ staff and as a result were identified as more welcoming and open than other STEM spaces. The recent establishing of the LGBTQ+ STEM network was highlighted as one positive space within which discussions about these experiences could be held.

- The LGBTQ+ academic staff in this study who were involved in empirical gender and sexuality research or drew on related conceptual ideas (e.g., queer theory, feminist standpoint theory) felt that they were working in siloes and there appeared to be little collaboration across faculties and disciplines. As a result, some staff felt isolated, particularly

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◀ those doing gender and sexuality research in faculties that have not traditionally prioritised research in these areas. Staff involved with cross faculty research networks such as qUCL or who contributed research-led teaching on the MA in Gender, Society and Representation expressed how important these spaces were for feeling part of a supportive and nurturing research community. Many staff working on issues of sexual and/or gender diversity felt vulnerable researching topics and issues that were tied to aspects of their identities and lived experiences. Such research work appears to involve a different kind of emotional labour than researching something that is of less direct personal relevance.

- LGBTQ+ staff teaching about and researching gender and sexuality felt increasingly policed, more vulnerable, and in some cases felt directly targeted by colleagues who sought to advance gender critical views.

- An important theme emerged around the lack of support and varied experiences of LGBTQ+ staff who research abroad or in international contexts. International travel is both a concern and a barrier for LGBTQ+ staff researching international contexts, attending conferences, or meeting colleagues for international collaborations in countries which are hostile to LGBTQ+ people. Concerns about being out in an international context loom large, particularly in or with those countries where it is illegal to be LGBTQ+ or where there is a lack of legal protection for LGBTQ+ people. In some cases, staff choose not to travel, or a local ethics committee decided that they should not travel. These decisions have negatively affected the careers of LGBTQ+ staff. LGBTQ+ staff appear to be unaware that UCL has a duty of care to ensure their safety and security while on university business abroad and instead feel that decision-making is something they must navigate alone. More work is needed in collaboration with LGBTQ+ staff to develop appropriate risk management processes and ensure that these are appropriately enacted across the university.

- LGBTQ+ staff in clinical settings discussed the complexities and challenges of being out in their relationships with patients. On the one hand displaying visible signs of being a member of the LGBTQ+ community, for example with a rainbow lanyard or badge, helped create a sense of safety

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◀ for LGBTQ+ patients. On the other hand, some staff felt they were being judged as less professional because of being openly LGBTQ+. The arrangement of faculties and departments at UCL seems to isolate clinical professionals from LGBTQ+ activities of the university at large as the clinics are somewhat separate to the 'academic' university. More work must be done to ensure that LGBTQ+ clinical staff feel able to access and be part of the wider community.

● Many of the LGBTQ+ staff working in a professional services capacity reported that they had chosen to work in the higher education sector because they believed it would be a more accepting space for LGBTQ+ people than other sectors of employment. However, despite an overall faith in UCL being a socially liberal workplace, professional services staff still experience, and fear experiencing, homophobia, misogyny, and transphobia. As with long serving academics at UCL, there was a belief among some more established professional services staff that UCL has 'stagnated' and may even be sliding back on its commitment to LGBTQ+ equalities. Many of the professional services staff interviewed in this project also described an entrenched hierarchy between academic and professional services staff, though central LGBTQ+ EDI spaces appear to be able to disrupt these hierarchies. Some professional services spaces (e.g., Estates) were felt to be less comfortable spaces to be LGBTQ+ than others. Again, the importance of local leadership to set the tone and encourage workplace cultures that value diversity and inclusion were seen as key drivers of positive experiences.

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TEACHING

TEACHING AND NEGOTIATING BEING 'OUT' AT UCL

The decision whether to come out or not to students is an ongoing negotiation. LGBTQ+ staff described how they chose to come out in some circumstances and not others. For others, realising that coming out might be a significant pedagogic act was also part of becoming a critically reflective educator.

> **"Last year I had three queer students, I had no idea were queer, [...] I felt like I should've represented them more. I felt like in a way I had failed them. So, this year when I got the course, I set myself to be the gayest [STEM] lecturer ever. [...] And then we start talking about drag race and which queen is your favourite queen, which you know in a [STEM] lecture is not very common I can tell you that" (Gay man, Lecturer)**

> **"I guess the most common kind of teaching scenario is that there's someone sat in clinic with me. And so, you know, that's kind of clinical teaching. And so, although I'm kind of, it's okay, I don't mind giving some of myself away, and that. And I think that is important. On the other hand, I think, well, actually, the focus is on the clinical teaching. And I guess, yes- I don't know the student in the same way that I know other people. So, I guess, there's still that kind of- you're never really sure." (Gay man, Clinical Academic)**

Another LGBTQ+ staff member described feeling a sense of responsibility to be out and visible to students but described struggling with questions of when and how they might do this in a way they felt comfortable.

> **"I have been a personal tutor of students and I have found myself avoiding the topic and I can't explain why it has happened. I guess I have to get more comfortable, and I think it's more of a decision, like if I make a decision I will do it but it hasn't come naturally." (Gay man, Professional Services)**

While coming out (or not) to students can be an active political move made by LGBTQ+ staff, it is often a more complex process that exceeds individual agency. LGBTQ+ staff who teach about and research gender and sexuality do not feel they necessarily take active steps to be out to students. Some expect to be read by students as LGBTQ+ because their research or teaching focus (e.g. researching queer theory) signals something about their identity. Some staff also anticipate that students will read them as LGBTQ+ because they transgress cultural norms around gender and sexually.

> **"People are going to make assumptions about me both in the sense of how I present and also, the topics I choose to discuss. Because yes, I'm the kind of person like whenever I would introduce myself to the students, I say what my research is." (Gay non-binary, Postgraduate Teaching Assistant)**

> **"Everybody knows anyway because if you look at my profile and it'll say, you know, interested in gender and sexuality, you know linked [a queer research project] and things like that. So, you know, yes, it would be very, it wouldn't be hard to know." (Queer man, Professor)**

One member of staff described the process of coming out to students, or being interpreted as LGBTQ+, as somehow 'bringing sex' into the room in ways that heterosexual staff are perhaps less likely to experience.

> **"When you are interpreted as queer, what happens is you are sexualised and that's the difference. Like the assumption of sexuality is always there but for queer people there is something sexualising and scandalising." (Gay non-binary, Postgraduate Teaching Assistant).**

Citing work by Michael Warner and Lauren Berlant (1998), they go on to explain this phenomenon.

> **"[...] heterosexuality is a public culture of sexuality, it's always there. The difference is it's just not read as sexuality, it's not read as sex. Again, those assumptions are being made, heterosexual or homosexual, queer or bisexual, whatever. The difference is that for heterosexual people their sexuality is not interpreted as a sexuality at all. You know, if a straight man comes in wearing a wedding ring or they're presumed to be straight [...] It's not a sexual signifier, it's just a wedding ring. But if I come in as a let's say, a single gay man and something signifies that I am gay suddenly I have a sexuality." (Gay non-binary, Postgraduate Teaching Assistant)**

One staff member described how, in the few cases where being LGBTQ+ was relevant to their teaching, raising this felt like a significant announcement.

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> "[...] like I've pressed pause on the meeting and like you know got all my flags out and made an announcement, you know that's how it feels, it feels like that little bit of a burden." (Lesbian woman, Professor).

While many staff spoke about the importance of being out to students, or the impossibility of not being out to students, this view was by no means shared by all. Some LGBTQ+ staff simply did not view their gender or sexuality as relevant to their work at UCL, including their work with students, preferring to keep their professional and private lives separate.

> "I don't find myself talking about my life outside of work to undergraduates. In the course of teaching or personal tutorials or anything, it's just not really relevant. So, I suppose there are limited situations in work where one does talk about one's life outside of work." (Lesbian woman, Associate Professor)

Like this member of staff, several other LGBTQ+ staff in this project made distinctions between undergraduate and postgraduate or doctoral teaching, suggesting that they would be less inclined to discuss their gender or sexuality, or any other aspect of their personal lives, with undergraduate students. For some, this was put down to having relatively distant relationships to undergraduate students. For others, however, undergraduate students were positioned as "too young" to be having conversations with about gender and sexuality. One person described how their personal life was a 'boundary' that they draw with undergraduate and master's students unless it was relevant to the curriculum.

> "I will use neutral terminology or abstract the situation that I'm describing. It's only because it doesn't need to be involved, I think. But I think in some scenarios where it makes sense I have absolutely no issue with discussing it. And I think I often find it quite rewarding when I do." (Gay man, Lecturer)

For another member of staff, discussing their partner openly in supervision tutorials is something they might do, but they "don't find that very easy" to do (Gay non-binary, Postgraduate Teaching Assistant)

As well as making distinctions between undergraduate students and postgraduate students, LGBTQ+ staff also described how coming out is sometimes shaped by the international student profile of their classrooms.

> "If I know that I'm going to be teaching [international students from the Middle East or China], there's a high professional onus put on me, then I'm going to feel immediately uncomfortable talking about anything to do with my sexuality" (Gay East Asian man, Associate Lecturer)

What is clear from the stories of staff in this study is that negotiating being out for LGBTQ+ staff in teaching roles involves complex and sometimes difficult decision-making. Individual staff are left to deal with these negotiations and the emotional labour these negotiations entail. Early career staff, including PGTAs, reported feeling particularly vulnerable and underprepared for how to approach teaching as an LGBTQ+ person at UCL. There appear to be three distinct yet overlapping strands for this group: whether to be out to students; concerns with gaps in their pedagogical training and how to develop inclusive classrooms for all students; the wider precarity of being on insecure contracts or in more junior positions.

> "There was no opportunity to talk about it. I mean, I could have brought it up but that has never been training as a PGTA to talk around people's identity and user pronouns [...] And also in terms of my own identity, because I've dealt with like, social psychology and social justice, where people are quite open minded so it's not a big deal. But I guess, as a teacher, you still have to somehow- or I find myself coming out at some point. At some point, you talk about your partner or your own experiences. And I guess, there is no- I don't know if there should be one, but I guess, there is no like, formal way of how we start interacting with students." (Queer man, Postgraduate Teaching Assistant)

LGBTQ+ staff who are out to students described being sought out to provide additional pastoral and wellbeing support. As one member of staff explained, students seek them out for additional conversations and personal advice on personal issues.

> "So there is like additional layers of pastoral support that you end up giving in terms of labour as well [...] it's an entirely unpaid labour, it's nice to be able to provide it, but it is labour." (Queer trans non-binary, Postgraduate Teaching Assistant)

A small number of LGBTQ+ staff described explicit experiences of homophobia, biphobia and transphobia while teaching at UCL. Although these experiences appear to be relatively infrequent their impact and 'chilling affect' was notable on the individuals involved and on the wider LGBTQ+ community. As noted earlier in this report, one gay member of staff described correcting a student who had made an erroneous assumption that

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he was married to a woman. On finding out that he was gay, the student replied, "not another fucking bender", then threatened to make a formal complaint against the member of staff. (Gay man, Associate Professor)

The threat of complaint when one's own gender or sexuality are implicated can be deeply disconcerting and destabilising, irrespective of whether the complaint is ever formalised, or what the institutional response might be. For some of the participants in this study, these feelings of vulnerability are linked to questions of who has power and in what circumstances.

> **"I'm assumed to be the one in power, I'm the administrator of the course, I'm the leader of the lecture. But actually, you realise you have so little power because the direct line to the institution, which is the carceral force that governs whether I'm allowed in the classroom, whether I'm allowed to be paid for my work is between student and institution and I have very, very little say [...]" (Gay non-binary, Postgraduate Teaching Assistant)**

There was enormous variation in LGBTQ+ staff decision-making about coming out to students. Some LGBTQ+ staff view coming out as an important pedagogic and political act and want to be LGBTQ+ role models for students. One member of staff described how coming out seemed to shift what students felt able to research or express interest in.

> **"I have seen a big shift in conversations and the theory and literature that the students are interested in and it's one of these things where I am like, are they interested in it suddenly now because I've taken this over and they didn't beforehand or has this been there all along and they just actually dare go, "Yes we want to read Sarah Ahmed please can we discuss this?", or you know, "Can we please go back to Haraway?" and you know, "What about X,Y and Z?" and, "Oh here is Glitch Feminism." and this kind of stuff." (Lesbian woman, Lecturer)**

Another LGBTQ+ staff member recalled how a queer student from a similar minority ethnic background had approached him and explained that she "didn't really see a place for herself in medicine" (Gay man, Clinical Academic). She had confided in him because he was visibly out, and in turn, this staff member went the extra mile to support her to develop her research and present it at a conference.

There were other examples where staff felt that disclosing their LGBTQ+ identity was important and perhaps even necessary for modelling reflexivity when discussing their research with students.

> **"I did a session on queer identity and I managed to get in some work that I'd done trans stuff there as well. Usually in the course of delivering of content of that kind I would out myself as a queer person. Or maybe when I'm talking about trans issues say you know, as a gay man or as queer man, I realise that maybe I'm speaking here about something that's unfamiliar to me." (Queer man, Professor)**

TEACHING ABOUT GENDER AND SEXUALITY AT UCL

In some departments, LGBTQ+ staff have found strong institutional support for teaching about gender and sexuality to undergraduates, postgraduates and taking on PhD students who are interested in these themes.

> **"I think I have more PhD students than the vast majority of my colleagues. And again, it's the sexuality angle that draws them in, because there are few places where you can [work in my area]. Yes, so I've always had considerable support from my colleagues and typically my bosses. [...] It was actually at UCL that a colleague of mine was asked to run the MA in Gender Studies for a year, while the normal director was on sabbatical. And she had a few slots to fill and asked if I would write something on gender, sexuality and nationalism. And I said, "Well, I've never really taught that before." But I did some reading, and I just got hooked. And from then on, really, that became the prime focus of my research." (Gay man, Professor)**

> **"It became part of compulsory medical school training to talk about gender-based violence about four or five years ago, and the piece on forced marriage, the BBC did a report on us at UCL saying how there's very few medical schools who were looking at forced marriage at the time. And now it's much wider, gender-based violence." (Bisexual non-binary, Research Associate)**

One staff member described making a pre-recorded lecture for LGBTQ+ History Month for all students in the department and how this led to the design of a new module that hadn't been offered before. However, this same person was also concerned about the way in which teaching and research on sexuality and politics can be treated as a fad.

> **"I don't know if I can blame my current department or [the field] more broadly that sexuality is treated kind of like a fad in terms of things that people would do rigorous research on" (Queer woman, Lecturer)**

“WHEN YOU ARE INTERPRETED AS QUEER, WHAT HAPPENS IS YOU ARE SEXUALISED AND THAT'S THE DIFFERENCE. LIKE THE ASSUMPTION OF SEXUALITY IS ALWAYS THERE BUT FOR QUEER PEOPLE THERE IS SOMETHING SEXUALISING AND SCANDALISING.”

Gay non-binary, Postgraduate Teaching Assistant

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LGBTQ+ staff who teach about gender and sexuality described how teaching these topics is vital but can be difficult to manage. These staff are at the front line of balancing the creation of inclusive classroom spaces where students feel able to share personal experiences with the possibility of challenging prejudice and opening oneself up to new ideas.

> "The students would spend what seemed like hours discussing the term queer and whether or not this was a positive way of speaking about our community. Students who self-identify as gay would be absolutely opposed to this term, and others would completely embrace it. They actually got quite volatile with each other, and all of this obviously coming from a place of trauma and of hurt and speaking to their own experiences in the past of either having found solace and refuge in being able to call themselves queer" (- Lesbian woman, Lecturer)

> "And it's very different from teaching kind of an 18 year old doing psychology, it's much more enjoyable. And you know, we do have a section on gay parenting and again, I mean that has brought up some interesting debates again which I've had to kind of learn how to manage. [...] So, yes I mean I suppose I've had to deal with things there but that's quite different. Because I'm the teacher and I can you know, it's a bit easier to manage in same ways when it's not your colleagues." (Lesbian woman, Research Fellow)

Staff who teach about gender and sexuality also draw upon feminist and queer pedagogies, which bring into focus the politics of the classroom and the politics of education more broadly.

> "Often I find it empowering and disruptive, and I like that, I like that very much. Though there are, there is sometimes a feeling of an air of precarity that can enter into and be accompanied by that at the same time as it's sort of disruptive." (Gay non-binary, Postgraduate Teaching Assistant)

LGBTQ+ staff described how the rise of gender critical views, and the blurring of boundaries between classrooms and online spaces, have heightened tensions involved in teaching about gender and sexuality.

> "The students felt that one of the lecturers who was leading a seminar session had said some inappropriate things in relation to debates around gender, and the students were basically sort of accusing her of having been transphobic. And I've not experienced this before where I've felt in some ways sort of not necessarily unsafe but anxious about how when I present something it might be perceived, in a way that is sort of, you know, I guess- in a way that you can't necessarily control. Your ideas go out in the universe and then there's going to be some kind of Twitter backlash or something. That's an anxiety which I didn't have when I first started out." (Gay man, Professor)

However, as this member of staff noted, students typically come to their studies with nuanced lived experiences of gender and sexuality and were open to having critical and sensitive discussions.

> "I've always been able to have respectful conversations with students from lots of different perspectives. And yes, most students also are kind of trans-positive in the way that they approach these issues and don't feel that their own gender identity is – yes I've never had a student tell me that they felt that their gender identity was threatened by acknowledging the existence of trans people or the right of trans people to define their own gender identity." (Lesbian woman, Associate Professor)

LGTBQ+ STAFF WORKING TO LIBERATE THE CURRICULUM

Many LGBTQ+ staff across UCL are involved in projects to queer, liberate and decolonise the curriculum. One member of staff described this process in their department as "thinking about queer approaches to curriculum review, to kind of support the decolonising agenda from the queer perspective." This goes beyond a one-off lecture on issues of race or issues of gender, but ensuring that engagement is "embedded in the very fabric of the curriculum" (Gay man, Associate Professor)

> "I'm trying to carve out a niche for getting in inclusive teaching, not just LGBTQ+ but also disabilities, sex and all [protected characteristics]" (Gay man, Lecturer)

> "Questions around decolonising the curriculum which UCL have been putting a lot of time and effort in I think need to be applied also to questions of sex and gender that we need to start looking at our practices in terms of teaching, how we actually deal with individuals as student or as colleagues and strip back the heteronormative assumptions that often lie at the heart of those." (Gay man, Professor)

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One member of staff highlighted the importance of crafting curricula consciously with diversity and inclusion in mind, so that course content and readings go beyond the "male pale stale canon" and engage in a range of scholarly work, which contributes in part to staff teaching in an inclusive manner. "challenging the canon is an important aspect of the job" (Gay man, Professional Services)

In some subjects, this work can be as small as including queer case studies.

> **"[...] for example, looking at different models of social justice. We've used examples of like, gay marriage in the UK and actually how transformative that is." (Gay man, Associate Professor)**

> **"[...] in that same part of my module we talked about voice assistants [...] Alexa, Cortana, these kinds of things. So, I think that was kind of a deliberate step on my part to try and get people thinking about how the science of voice perception and you know AI and voice tech could actually be relevant to understanding these inclusivity issues" (Lesbian woman, Professor)**

In other modules, gender and sexuality are allocated a discrete week in the curriculum, as opposed to being themes that are embedded throughout.

> **"It was exhausting doing all the pre-recorded lectures. Each [module] had an element on gender and sexuality, but it was just one week out of ten in each case." (Gay man, Professor)**

Developing critical perspectives on the curriculum, whether via queering or decolonising the curriculum presents different opportunities and challenges depending on the topic being studied.

> **"So, if I give my students reading materials, or show them pictures of [STEM researchers], I try to make sure that there are some trans [STEM researchers] and there are lots of people of colour [...] As I say, it's not as big of a thing like in teaching language or gender studies or social studies because in [STEM], you know, the [object] doesn't really care how you gender it. We try to be as inclusive in our language as we can but there's not as much of a need because there is just very little that touches on people's lived experiences." (Queer/Ace/Bisexual trans man, Lecturer)**

As well as focusing on the content of the curriculum, LGBTQ+ staff working to decolonise or queer the curriculum also drew attention to the importance of inclusive pedagogies and broader institutional support mechanisms.

> **"I have a particular set of points, which are about respect for people, who they are, their identity, how they define themselves, etc. [...] I mean this is a minimum level of respect for everybody in the room. It's not just a queer issue, but extends to [everyone], it's the same concept but applied across the spectrum." (Gay man, Associate Professor)**

While there were several examples of how queer and feminist approaches could be used as critical classroom pedagogies, one participant described how these same approaches had been viewed as inappropriately political by their colleagues.

> **"Interestingly, when I tried to get the people in another centre involved [...] they didn't want to be involved at all. I was kind of shocked. They said, the feedback from them was, "Oh this will be politicising our teaching." Despite the fact that you know heteronormativity 24/7 is politicising teaching, which they didn't seem to recognise." (Queer man, Professor)**

Staff emphasised the importance of wider institutional support for enacting inclusive pedagogies, such as ensuring the trans students at UCL can change or correct their name on university systems.

> **"One thing I have experienced is that I have students who are trans now and they're comfortable being trans. [...] I don't know if they're able to change their name at UCL anymore, that seems to not have been possible maybe still isn't possible." (Lesbian woman, Associate Professor)**

For subjects that require risk assessments, and the planning and running of field trips, additional consideration is needed for LGBTQ+ students when the field site presents potential emotional or physical danger.

> **"There was a student who was Mexican American, and was gay, and then we were going to Kenya, and he was very worried because he thought it was a homophobic environment." (Gay man, Associate Professor)**

> **"I've dealt with cases where a student for example, had to change their study abroad placement because they were going to a country where it was deemed to be not quite so safe to travel as an LGBT student" (Gay man, Professional Services)**

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One department with relationships to Russian universities included LGBTQ+ identities in risk assessments for travel. Based on the risk assessment and informed by the expertise of LGBTQ+ staff with experience working in Russia, the department decided it would still send and support LGBTQ+ students to study at these universities, whilst also providing alternative partnerships with universities in Estonia or Finland, where the risk of harm is potentially lower. (Gay man, Professional Services)

It is clear in accounts from several LGBTQ+ staff in this study, that individuals and in some cases, departments make decisions about risks to LGBTQ+ students. More needs to be done to develop institutional processes that address this issue and meet the duty of care the university has for ensuring the safety and security of students travelling overseas on university assignments.

LGBTQ+ STAFF EXPERIENCES OF ONLINE TEACHING

The move to online teaching and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic was not unique to LGBTQ+ staff and students, although it did appear to raise some distinctive issues and affects.

Academic staff were notably concerned about how to be visible LGBTQ+ role models in online spaces and how to create inclusive online classroom environments. The loss of embodied spaces both in the classroom and at the periphery of the classroom (e.g. in the corridor waiting for the class to begin) were viewed as an obstacle to overcome.

Some staff began wearing LGBTQ+ flag badges or UCL pride lanyards when teaching online.

> **"And I had mine on like the whole of the first term. And there's actually a couple of people came out in my Masters programme this year. [...] I was really happy that we were able to show visibility" (Gay man, Associate Professor)**

Others made sure to include their pronouns in their screen names on Zoom or adapted their online background.

LGBTQ+ staff in this study had different and sometimes contradictory views about online teaching and learning. Several people mentioned the difficulty of not being able to see students' faces.

> **"[...] it was like performing for ghosts [...] You don't know whether they're listening to you. It's not satisfying in the same way as doing a seminar." (- Gay man, Clinical Academic)**

However, another member of staff felt that choosing not to appear on camera gave some students the agency they needed to speak up on issues that they may have felt too nervous to discuss in classroom.

> **"[...] there would be groups of students who are quite shy and reserved, whereas I think Zoom can help them to some degree [...] I think that maybe gives them a bit more confidence to discuss these issues, without being judged by others." (Gay man, Professor)**

Despite a feeling that anonymity might create opportunities for some students to speak who might otherwise remain silent, most staff did not feel that online spaces were conducive to engaging in discussions about personal issues or sensitive topics. For some this was framed as an effect of the virtual space, others put this down to them not having the necessary pedagogic skills for developing inclusive online pedagogies.

Teaching and learning about gender and sexuality was one area where staff were grappling with the creation of safe and inclusive online pedagogies. One member of staff felt that the social distance created by being online may have enabled the expression of more polarised views on gender and sexuality, which were then difficult to mediate (Lesbian woman, Lecturer). Another concern was for LGBTQ+ students who were based in countries outside of the UK.

> **"How do we, in an online world, [...] how do we both protect those students, but how else do we support them? And how, if at all can we help them be themselves, [...] But if you were a young trans man from Saudi Arabia, we get a lot of Saudi students, how on earth in an online world do you present yourself?" (Gay man, Associate Professor)**

Despite these concerns, one member of staff who taught a gender module online during the pandemic maintained that providing international students with access to online modules on gender and sexuality at UCL was vital.

> **"I had students on [an internationally-focussed] master's programme, who really were only able to do it because they didn't have to move to London and pay our exorbitant rents, and that sort of thing. So, they were able to stay in Russia, and take part in scholarly debates about homosexuality, and Putin, which they wouldn't be able to do at a Russian university." (Gay man, Professor)**

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RESEARCH

RESEARCHING GENDER AND SEXUALITY

Many of the LGBTQ+ academic staff in this study are involved in empirical gender and sexuality research or draw on conceptual ideas (e.g., queer theory, feminist standpoint theory) that relate to these fields. However, these staff often felt that they were working in siloes and there appeared to be little collaboration across faculties and disciplines. As a result, some staff felt isolated, particularly those doing gender and sexuality research in faculties and departments that have not traditionally prioritised research in these areas.

> "I realised that there were some parts of the university where queer theory, gender, and sexuality studies were not a big thing. Yet for me those were sort of islands of tolerance, but for other colleagues working in some other disciplines they didn't really have those opportunities" (Gay man, Professor)

This issue of isolation also extended beyond UCL and into the wider research field. As this member of staff explains, researchers working to challenge disciplinary norms related to gender and sexuality can experience wider structural barriers to publication and building a research career.

> "I wrote a paper on LGBT issues a few years ago for a busy global conference in international education. There were just a few other people in the room doing same sex sexualities work in the field – it was disappointing to see so little interest in LGBT issues. I finished the paper after the conference, but the specialist journal in the field couldn't find anyone to review it. So, it was stuck in this process for many months and then the editor got back to me and said we can only find one reviewer. It was a good enough review but in the end I just thought I don't want to publish this paper because I didn't have enough trust in the review process and it seemed to say something about a general lack of interest in LGBT issues." (Gay man, Associate Professor)

Gender and sexuality research across UCL appears to be shaped by disciplinary norms and their underlying onto-epistemological assumptions. For example, researchers in disciplines that have historically privileged large scale or lab-based experimental research (e.g., STEM) may be less likely to have encountered research that foregrounds the social construction of gender and sexuality. Likewise, researchers in disciplines that have engaged with critical gender and sexuality studies (e.g., arts and humanities) may have something to learn about how to bring their work to bear on 'real world' situations and problems. There appears to be enormous untapped potential for fostering interdisciplinary research on gender and sexuality and encouraging epistemic pluralism.

> "A lot of the work we're currently doing, including the work I do, excludes people who do not fit into nuclear families because we're relying on that genetic pattern of inheritance and the kind of like- So it won't work, the research methodology won't work if you're not looking at biological parents and their children. So that's a necessity but in my view, you can still extend that to at least single parent families for instance, or same sex families and use biological parents, but yes, it's a disciplinary thing." (Gay man, Research Fellow)

> "When you think of animal models, they tended to use males because they were assumed to be less variable, and it turns out that actually when you look at the hormonal cycles, the males are more variable in mice and rats. It was all because somebody thought, oh they have an oestrous cycle so therefore they must be kind of problematic and it turns out, no the males are the ones that are problematic. A lot of these things are deeply ingrained in all of our research are to do with our training and where it's all come from, and it kind of made us think differently so that was good." (Gay man, Research Fellow)

As with teaching, when the subject of research is also part of one's own identity, this can cause researchers to feel more cautious and vulnerable than if the topic were something less personal. These feelings of vulnerability appear to have been heightened by the current hostility being projected towards gender, LGBTQ+ and queer studies research from academics with gender critical views at UCL and beyond.

> "I feel like doing some kinds of queer research at UCL have got worse in the last couple of years. I think the context has shifted in relation to the debates around gender identity in particular. I've worked and published in the field of trans studies, I contributed to a conference a couple of years ago which was organised at UCL, and I gave a paper at this event. There was an incident

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> with a security guard and one of the participants experienced transphobia and ended up not attending or presenting at the conference. There were issues with someone live tweeting the event from inside; some of my own paper was basically misrepresented and then posted on to Mumsnet and things like that. I mean the event itself was great and generally very supportive, but it feels like we're in a sort of, and I don't think it's unique to UCL, but we're in a bit of a sort of hostile environment." (Gay man, Professor)

One researcher described their experience of presenting at another UK university where they were aware of the possibility of meeting a senior fellow who was known to be homophobic. Visiting other institutions under such circumstances can leave staff feeling vulnerable and powerless.

> "There was one time when I went to Oxford and when you go, and you give a paper or something often it's somebody's job to take you out to dinner. And sometimes they take you to a restaurant, sometimes they take you to their college and you'll sit at high table. And I was going to a college where I knew there was somebody who was really homophobic like some senior fellow was super homophobic. And I remember thinking well, I wonder if I'll encounter this person at high table, this guy? And it's some old guy right, and I didn't, I was almost disappointed. But I was a little bit trepidatious you know, because that's not my work environment but I'm there in the capacity of being a lecturer and being an academic." (Lesbian woman, Associate Professor)

LGBTQ+ academic staff with pre-existing connections to qUCL and the MA in Gender Society and Representation emphasised the importance of these interdisciplinary centres for bringing gender and sexuality researchers together and fostering collaboration.

> "[...] qUCL is just a really good forum for people across disciplines to come together and share and talk about research so I have shared some of my own research at events they have done. My graduate students who have been involved in those sorts of topics have also been involved in events. That has been a really useful forum to engage with the relevant sexuality studies across faculties, across disciplines, and to meet colleagues working from different perspectives." (Gay man, Professor)

More can be done to support interdisciplinary working on gender and sexuality research via qUCL and the recently rejuvenated Gender and Feminism Research Network (GFRN).

DOING INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH AS AN LGBTQ+ MEMBER OF STAFF

When LGBTQ+ staff travel internationally for fieldwork, conferences and to meet with international collaborators, they can experience threats that are directly related to their gender and sexuality, for example, LGBTQ+ staff who travel to countries where homosexuality is illegal. While legal frameworks are helpful for identifying countries that may make LGBTQ+ staff particularly vulnerable, and universities can use this knowledge to make judgements about risks to staff who travel internationally on university business, there are also many countries where LGBTQ+ people still face potentially significant levels of harassment and violence despite legal protections being in place.

It is not just the LGBTQ+ identity of a staff member that shapes their vulnerability. UCL staff who travel internationally to disseminate research in the field of gender and sexuality can also experience threats to their safety and security.

> "While I was [at the University of Belgrade], they asked if I would give a talk on my research, which I did. They advertised it quite widely. It was quite well attended, but then this group of young men appeared. But they were very much outnumbered by those who had turned up to listen to me. And so, there was a stand-off [...] A colleague of mine was in the front tweeting all of this. And so, then it became a news story, and then the media appeared, and I was on the news. So, that was a bit unpleasant. I've not been back to Serbia since then" (Gay man, Professor)

There appears to be a lack of clear UCL guidance and support for LGBTQ+ staff who travel internationally for work. By default, therefore, UCL appears to be adopting a reactionary approach to the risk management of LGBTQ+ staff rather than one that is proactive.

> "I wouldn't know what UCL was going to do to support me as a member of staff if somebody did have a problem with my identity and my relationships. It hasn't happened before thankfully, and there was some reassurance from the previous Provost. But I think it is a particular issue with a global institution, an internationally focused role, and it's certainly one that my team faces. [...] And it's also been tricky when

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> I've travelled for UCL internationally. You usually go out for dinner with people you're working with and get asked questions. Our former Provost, I did raise this with him, said that UCL would always be supportive if anything happened that God forbid would be a difficult situation for a staff member to find themselves in. But obviously and thankfully, we're yet to have a situation where that's needed to be proven. But I think that is in large part down to self-censoring, where you don't disclose as if you're in London when you're somewhere else in the world." (Lesbian woman, Professional Services)

This has led individuals to make their own decisions about how to keep themselves safe. Some staff navigate this complexity by choosing not to disclose their LGBTQ+ identity.

> "I did a lot of research in Nigeria in the past, which is a context where it's illegal be gay [...] When I'm there for work, I wouldn't be meeting people, you know, I kind of, put that part of my life on hold [...] But, as an LGBT researcher dealing with other national legal systems which are discriminatory, or dealing with people who I would suspect don't have the cultural capacity, I sort of had to work that out on my own. If there is research, if there is guidance out there about that, it is not something I am aware of." (Gay man, Associate Professor)

Meanwhile, others seek to minimise concerns about the risks involved when travelling.

> "I didn't think it was particularly relevant, you know, in that circumstance and I don't think I wanted to maybe consider what might have happened or, you know, whether it would have impacted the partnership and that sort of thing" (Gay man, Professional Services)

While the decision not to disclose may seem a straightforward solution, disclosure is not always within an individual's control. One member of staff was out in London, but not in their lab abroad. A colleague who knew them from London told others at the institution abroad, which led to the member of staff experiencing homophobia.

> "He told everybody about it because he'd seen me being out in London. And then everybody was like laughing every time I went into the room [...] people would be like scared of interacting with me you know after that" (Gay man, Research Fellow)

Online and socially networked lives make concealing aspects of personal identity more challenging. LGBTQ+ staff who have a research profile in the field of gender and sexuality or who have some other public presence, perhaps because of the equalities work they do at UCL, are less likely to be able to conceal their identity. One researcher explains that they are no longer prepared to travel to Russia for work for these reasons.

> "The only time I think it may be a disadvantage is I refuse now to go to Russia for work. And so, because we have very close ties with Russian universities, I tell my bosses not to consider sending me there for meetings." (Gay man, Professor)

It is also important to note that non-binary and trans staff can face a particularly challenging time when travelling internationally for university business. For example, if a sex marker in a passport does not match their gender identity. The intersection of LGBTQ+ and racialised identities can affect staff differently when travelling abroad, and this can put LGBTQ+ people of colour at additional risk. One Chinese academic described their experience of travelling to South Asia, which involved a racially motivated detainment at an airport and possibly unlawful reading of their personal data. This put them at further risk from homophobic discrimination.

> "It was really late it was 10pm in the evening and then, and then, [I was] just stuck in the interrogation chamber in the airport for six hours where they just cross-examined you about what you're doing in India. [...] three hours later he was still reading through like my Tinder messages. [...] and I haven't been back to India since." (Asian gay man, Research Fellow)

In addition to the security risks involved in working internationally, LGBTQ+ staff must also navigate assumptions of heterosexuality and different norms and values around gender and sexuality.

> "Usually the least comfortable situation is when you go abroad somewhere else, and they give a presentation and you go for a seminar and then you know, are you married? Yes. What does your wife do?" (Gay man, Associate Professor)

> "One guy I was working with, was trying to tell me all about like gay churches in Nigeria which I didn't know existed where apparently men could get married. And another guy [...] was trying to convince me that [...] gay people are all going to be burning in hell [...] I hadn't said to them I was gay or anything. They just started talking about it on their own. And, then you know, and then, and then that was kind of the topic

"WHAT IS HAPPENING NOW AT UCL IN THE LGBT SPACE MAKES ME WANT TO LEAVE UCL.

NOT BECAUSE OF THE GREAT WORKS OF VOLUNTEERS, BUT JUST THE LACK OF SHIFT AND CHANGE IN EXPLICIT SUPPORT FOR STAFF, AND HOW THAT SUPPORT IS ABSOLUTELY DECIMATED ONLINE WITH SOCIAL MEDIA, PERSONAL VIEWS THROUGH VERY PROMINENT ACADEMIC STAFFS' SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS.

SO, IT MAKES ME ACTUALLY WANT TO GO. AND IT MAKES ME WANT TO GO TO AN INSTITUTION WHICH IS BRAVER."

Lesbian woman, Professional Services

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> of the conversation for the rest of my stay in Nigeria." (Gay man, Research Fellow)

In one instance, a member of LGBTQ+ staff disclosed their sexuality by mentioning their partner during a presentation at a conference abroad. Following the presentation, some staff at the university subsequently avoided him.

> "[...]in terms of working internationally I have had negative and positive experiences. So positive experiences of being very included and welcomed as a gay man but also the opposite. So for example, I was asked to give a keynote in a country in Africa and the university I'd been invited to- there'd been a team of researchers there, they'd adapted some of my research in relationship to people living with HIV and AIDS, and there was a conference around HIV and AIDS, and in my keynote speech I talked about my experience of my partner having HIV and dying from AIDS. Before the keynote speech the staff talked to me and interacted with me and after that I was snubbed. Essentially the majority of people at the university, not the team that worked with my ideas but the wider staff didn't come near me. (Gay man, Professor)

However, this member of staff went on to explain that their disclosure appeared to have a positive impact on LGBTQ+ colleagues in the audience who had otherwise felt unable to come out or be out at this university.

> "Well, the positive part of that experience was that a number of students and staff found me in quiet moments and came to talk to me about how they were lesbian or gay and couldn't come out that was a very positive experience in terms of they found someone to talk to who was of status as it were." (Gay man, Professor)

While UCL has a duty of care to ensure the safety and security of LGBTQ+ staff who travel on university business, some staff are wary of having the university intervene in what they see as a personal choice.

> "There's no particular guidance for international travel or anything like that. I think it's tricky in some sense because most of us you know, if you work in [this field] then we have chosen the career because we wanted to go into developing countries. The work that we do is more important than the people being mad at you for being gay or not, you would do the work anyway. So, most people like us we're quite motivated to go to these countries" (Gay man, Research Fellow)

Others are concerned that the university may seek to instil blanket bans on international travel for LGBTQ+ staff rather than consider more nuanced understandings of the context and individual experience when making decisions about risk. Any discussion of the security risk management of LGBTQ+ staff needs to include these staff in decision-making.

CLINICAL SETTINGS

Only 5 members of staff interviewed for this research project were in clinical roles and further research is needed to understand their experiences. Despite these low numbers, some consistent themes emerged that appeared to be specific to clinical settings.

One gay staff member within clinical medicine described a formative experience whereby they were singled out as a risk in a clinical setting, and this had a lasting effect on their feelings about being out in this field.

> "I think it's the medical thing. [...] When I was in my first week as an undergraduate at Cambridge I was handed a piece of paper that said if you, something like, "If you have a lifestyle that puts you at risk of obtaining a transmissible disease that could put your patients at risk you should, you should reflect on your career in medicine. Please sign here to say that you understand"... to a closeted gay person in 1996 that sort of basically said there's no place for gay people in medicine... so I was very like okay that's fine I'll just, I'll just not be gay then and I think so and that really kind of coloured my experiences for a while." (Gay man, Professor)

LGBTQ+ clinical staff in patient-facing settings reported feeling judged as non-professional by their patients. When these judgements were made, they were related to the ways that staff looked or dressed, particularly if they transgressed social and cultural gender norms. In these instances, LGBTQ+ staff felt they had to work harder to be viewed as experts or medical professionals.

> "I remember in general practice I had a shaved hair style so, it was shaved with a sort of wonky bit to one side and with the nose piercing and I remember a patient saying, "We weren't at all sure about you to start with," but actually, having seen them over quite a few months in connection with their medical problem she then said, "Oh no. We really like you. We prefer to see you and

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> prefer you to the other doctors." I thought, well actually that felt good to me, that I'm judged on how I care for them and whether they trust what I say. So, I was judged on my appearance and they started out thinking, not sure, but somehow that felt like it was the right way round, is that they start off not trusting a medic and then they come to trust me because of my attitude and advice, rather than automatically trusting somebody just because they're a doctor. I don't know." (Queer trans non-binary, Associate Professor)

Despite the potential for feeling judged as less professional, some LGBTQ+ clinical staff in this study felt it was politically and socially important to assert their LGBTQ+ identity even if it was in very small ways.

> "[...] one time I took my tendon hammer to Pride and I decorated the top of it with some rainbow tape and I thought I should probably take that back off when I go back into clinic but then I thought you know fuck it. If anyone is so offended by a bit of rainbow tape on a tendon hammer and it obviously identifies it as mine anyway for practical purposes but so there's a, I suppose there's always been a bit of me that's wanted little hints of my true "full self" - in the words of our esteemed Provost - to creep into, into my very kind of staid traditional professional life" (Gay man, Professor)

In some contexts, being out in a clinical setting was also viewed as important for forging connections with LGBTQ+ patients.

> "I think, you know, that's part of practicing medicine in and of itself. Who you are is a performance. You know, who you are with that person at that time depends on so many things. You know, what does that person need? What is the issue here? [...] And I think, you know, some of the only time when I have to overtly say that I'm gay- because I think, you know, people's gaydar, they're like tuned into that but you know, I can remember examples, you know, patients saying, oh, can I ask you, are you- you know, asking outright. But then, there's a reason behind it because they don't think you understand the issues overall, you know. So, that's okay." (Gay man, Clinical Academic)

Staff working in specific research areas e.g. sexual health or STI related research reported that often there was a higher prevalence of LGBTQ+ staff and this made them feel like much safer, open and inclusive spaces for LGBTQ+ staff.

> "[...] coming from a kind of sexual health, HIV, clinical background actually, it's quite a queer space generally, and so, I think I have never really felt the need to try and seek out formal structures or groups because pretty much everyone at work is- well, yes." (Gay man, Clinical academic)

In other areas of medicine less directly related to sexual and gender diversity however, LGBTQ+ clinical staff could still identify ways in which their lived experiences brought different perspectives to the medical conditions they are working with, even if other colleagues did not see these dimensions.

> "I don't work on any specific issues but I have flagged it a few times within my role because people from the LGBT community come for support, and their needs are very much different towards living with dementia compared to heterosexual couples. And I've done a lot of talking with my team before about how we should probably think of different ways to support that community, because there's lots of different stigmas around, and in that kind of age group as well, so that over 60's." (Bisexual woman, Research Associate)

There is some creative and innovative practice being led by LGBTQ+ staff in clinical settings. One member of staff described how moving away from binary gender language towards more anatomically driven language had been positively received by other staff and patients in a sexual health clinic (- Gay man, Clinical Academic). Another member of staff explains how LGBTQ+ themed vignettes and role plays can help support staff development on inclusive clinical practice.

> "Yeah, really good so I've done some Zoom sort of tutorial types of stuff and then I'm now meeting people in small groups to talk through kind of vignettes so, role playing a patient who is trans and a clinician on how do we actually navigate pronouns and asking people about their history. Yeah, so that feels good, constructive. So, with those staff members I feel confident because I think it's absolutely relevant that they get on board with this and I can bring in my own, well I tell them I identify as non-binary and a little bit about what that means. I haven't said that my partner is a transwoman in that forum. Why? Similar issues really I think. Just, interesting. I mean I wonder if it's just another level of taboo that makes it quite a hard conversation." (Queer trans non-binary, Associate Professor)

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Despite these pockets of inclusive practice in clinical settings, these practices are not universally or instantaneously accepted by all colleagues. Making changes to practice can make people feel quite anxious or uncertain and there needs to be space and time in training to explore these feelings.

> **"I'm teaching sexual health and within the sexual health services, I mean I would say most of my colleagues are not queer. They're older women, ciswomen who are a bit nonplussed about, especially about non-binary and trans. I mean it's shameful to be honest because this is a clinic in, well I won't say where it is, central London and the nursing and doctors are not competent about trans and non-binary people. They get quite sort of anxious and panicky about it and they are in sexual health in central London so, I'm actually doing some training with them." (Queer trans non-binary, Associate Professor)**

There is also the sense that more needs to be done to tackle EDI issues within clinical settings, particularly in understanding the root of the problems experienced by LGBTQ+ staff at UCL.

> **"Before that I was in the NHS when we actually had LGBT support for patients, and people living with dementia, we had specific resources for the LGBT community, which is something which I've kind of pushed for in my current role [at UCL], but again it's not really – I don't want to say that it's not been taken seriously because I do feel like I have been listened to, but it's very much that is a very nice thing to happen in the future, but then in the future never comes around." (Bisexual woman, Research Associate)**

> **"People are extremely unaware, ignorant about intersex variation. So, in the module that I offered last time we invited, I invited two intersex people to come and talk and we co-planned the session together and it was fantastic and there's an awful lot that none of us had realised at all about the complexity of dealing with the health services as an intersex person but, yeah. That's definitely made me realise UCL is completely clueless, completely clueless and we say LGBTQI but the 'I' is not for intersex really in terms of, who do we actually mean by intersex and what are intersex people's needs and where are their voices?" (Queer trans non-binary, Associate Professor)**

LGBTQ+ staff in medical and clinical faculties and departments at UCL felt isolated from wider UCL LGBTQ+ focused activities. Despite feeling distant, they were still impacted, however, by the general climate for LGBTQ+ staff at UCL, as one clinical member of staff shared:

> **"So I'm talking intellectually but this really fucking upsets me, like it really, I've you know given 16 years of my life for UCL. It's right in the middle of London, it's one of the most cosmopolitan cities in the world and I've succeeded here as a clinical academic, an out gay clinical academic but next door in the IOE the staff are terrified that someone's going to invite a speaker to their workplace who's going to say that they don't have the right to exist in their, as they identify themselves and that's horribly upsetting to me the idea that the institution sees that and is okay with it and it makes me, it makes me feel a very deep distrust of where, where this takes us and what that could mean for me who's now very out and gay like am I next against the wall when it comes to sides that UCL will take in a debate about you know whether gay people should continue to be allowed to get married or have equal rights." (Gay man, Professor)**

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

Professional services[9] staff were included in this research project as part of a broader commitment to understanding the diversity of experiences of all LGBTQ+ staff at UCL. And, as the findings in this section of the report suggest, there are certain themes that are particularly significant for LGBTQ+ staff in these roles.

Professional services staff at UCL are higher education specialists, but many of their skills are transferrable to other sectors. They often, therefore, make proactive choices to work in higher education. LGBTQ+ professional services staff in this study said they chose to work in the higher education sector because they had experienced it to be or imagined it to be more socially liberal or 'progressive' than other sectors. For study participants, a socially liberal workplace appears to be aligned with the idea that LGBTQ+ staff could freely and without prejudice express their gender and sexuality at work.

> **"I feel that universities are more open minded, they need to be open minded which is why, that was one of the reasons why I wanted to work in the education sector for a university [...] I've**

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> worked in the charity sector, worked in tourism, insurance they weren't so accepting or inclusive or politically correct for that matter as compared to UCL." (Gay man, Professional Services)

> "I definitely feel like [my identity] is celebrated and awarded where I am at the moment, which is part of the reason I came back to the department after leaving. I felt like it was where I felt comfortable, and I felt appreciated for my work in that area, but also I felt appreciated for just me as well, I guess." (Queer woman, Professional Services)

Communications from the university were seen as an important way to foster feelings of a socially liberal and supportive workplace for both current and new staff in professional services roles. This included emails about LGBTQ+ topics from the EDI team, events such as Pride month, and staff networks such as Out@UCL and the UCL Trans Network.

> "The EDI coordinator for ISD was sending out stuff around LGBT things when I first started. And there was some webinars to go on to learn more about things like that, so that was great. So it was like, okay so they actually care about this stuff, which is brilliant. Since then there has been more stuff sent out and more inclusion, pointed to the Office of the Provost website. So Out@UCL, the new trans network and so on, so it's not like a dirty little secret, it's out, it's front page. A lot of the time it's in the weekly news bulletins that come out. So it's absolutely, in terms of progressiveness and how that makes me feel comfortable, it's brilliant, it's really good." (Lesbian trans woman, Professional Services)

> "I think UCL do really well on this front of all the groups and the staff groups and the social groups, and all the big promotion stuff with Pride week and whatever. It's all in the newsletters. I see they're flying flags and everything. Yes, seems to be loads of opportunities, for if I would want to, to go and join any staff groups." (Gay man, Professional Services)

In addition, there is a belief that universities are more likely to have robust EDI policies and processes and if any issues were to arise, they would be appropriately handled.

> "I'm certainly very aware that were say I want to apply for adoption leave or something, that's all available, that's all there. And if I needed to I'm sure I could dig in the policies and I think there's loads of good stuff there. But I also think that if I were to have any issues about the way I'm treated as a gay man or if I needed anything particularly which might be because of my say sexuality or anything, then I certainly think the management, various managers I've had in UCL and the whole sort of structure is there to support it." (Gay man, Professional Services)

> "I think by seeing how much investment UCL puts into trying to showcase that it's an ally. I think LGBT voices are very prominent at UCL and I can think of quite a few staff members who are LGBT, which makes me feel comfortable. And I think that, you know, as part of my job I sometimes work a lot with the EDI team and kind of seeing and knowing the stuff that they do, it reassures me that if there was an issue, I would feel comfortable that it would be acted upon. [...] I would trust UCL to take action if I was the subject of discrimination based on my sexuality." (Gay/Pan/Bisexual man, Professional Services)

> "UCL seems to be very good, you know, with the wording of their policies, you know, with the spirit of it, I know that when it filters down to each individual part of it, things, you know, don't usually go to plan or they are slightly changed, you know." (Gay man, Professional Services)

Another participant stated that UCL being accountable in part to state funding necessitated the development of supportive, inclusive policies, as is the case with other organisations they had worked for.

> "I guess that there's something around the funding model of universities in that there is standard state funding that goes into universities that means that they have to be accountable, but means they have to have good equality policies. [...] Before I worked for universities, I worked for some local government organisations as well, and I felt the same way there. [...] I think that there are certain organisations that are going to be more exemplar than a private company. [...] But even then, I still expect them to be a safer place to work and have better quality policies. Even as I see UCL as one of the most corporate universities." (Gay man, Professional Services)

As with academic staff, professional services staff pointed to the role of line managers as important interlocutors who can facilitate supportive environments or create barriers to being out at work. One staff member in

9. Professional services staff at UCL work across 'Central Professional Services', 'Vice-President and Vice-Provost Offices', and within faculties.

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Professional Services described how important it had been for them that their line manager had helped signpost LGBTQ+ networks at UCL.

> "And my manager had said, "There are all of these different networks." And had said, "There's like an LGBT team," so I thought that was great and so I joined the mailing list. [...] it's been really nice to just I guess go to talks or to attend different things." (Queer/Pan/Bisexual woman, Professional Services)

Despite faith in UCL being a socially liberal workplace, professional services staff experience and fear experiencing homophobia, misogyny, and transphobia. The fear of negative repercussions and discrimination prevented some staff from feeling comfortable to be out at work.

> "I'm open, some of my colleagues who I know are LGBT are not open. And that kind of ranges from colleagues who, if somebody asks them directly, asked them, are you straight or are you LGBT? They would probably admit that they were, but they just don't bring it up often. To then some colleagues who will only use very neutral terms, so they would describe having a partner and leave it at that. And that is kind of despite me being very open about it." (Gay/Pan/Bisexual man, Professional Services)

> "I'm not fully out, I don't know if I would be discriminated or not, because it's like I don't really know." (Gay man, Research Associate)

Two participants described encountering anti-LGBTQ+ views from colleagues. One staff member felt that they would feel supported in the future by UCL, whilst the other staff member did not feel their workplace would be supportive. However, both staff members described how these experiences had had a detrimental impact on their confidence to be open about their gender or sexuality at work.

> "My boss 16 years ago said, "My husband doesn't agree with lesbianism." Well, that person is in a very senior position – they're still there. The messages to me from the institution are, yes, it's important to be out. As you know, we've got an EDI team, we've got a staff network. But actually, day-to-day on the ground, junior member of staff joining a massive research-intensive world-leading university, but yet encountering that level of comment, ignorance, whatever it is, is confusing. It makes you unsure and really does mean that you might put certain parts of you away to do your role. [...] I know we've got the bullying and harassment anonymous reporting tool now, which I think is great. If that had been around, I don't know if I would have used it 16 years ago because I was very junior. I was just through the door. Would I really have said that to somebody about my boss – I don't know." (Lesbian woman, Professional Services)

> "I don't feel comfortable [coming out as non-binary] to the people that I work with because not only do I think there isn't the support network there, but there isn't even understanding level there to accept it. And I frankly believe that it would be, with some people, it would actually be more of a detriment to me, than it would be otherwise. And I made a comment about the things that we should say and the things that we shouldn't say and, just as a place of the moral high ground, and I was called a Gen Z puritan" (Pansexual non-binary, Professional Services)

Two members of staff further reported being misgendered by colleagues, or laughed at by senior leaders for using inclusive pronoun practices.

> "With this new person that I have just hired, I asked them specifically, like what are your pronouns, what's your preferred name? Like what do you feel comfortable with? So that then when I introduce them to the team, I can use the right framework, whatever they would be happy with. And I was talking to like a project group that we have and I said to them, you know, they, referring to the officer, they are starting, but I said I am specifically saying they because they have not confirmed their pronouns for me yet. And two people that were in that meeting who were part of our senior leadership team laughed, like they laughed at me. And I will be honest, I was so angry because that isn't acceptable. And, you know, the person confirmed everything for me. So then I sent the introduction to the team and then three people, who were my age, sent me back an email to say it's really great that you have included all that, it's nice actually to have this normalised." (Pansexual non-binary, Professional Services)

> "I still put up with a lot of misgendering I think because people- If I'm invited to a meeting where people don't know me and they've never seen my email signature I don't always initiate pronoun go rounds, in fact I usually don't, partly because I get the feeling that most of the time it will just be me saying a different pronoun and I'm just like, "Do I feel like going through that today?" Sometimes people who know do misgender me and I know it happens, I understand people develop but people

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> who I work with who gender me correctly when they email people copying me in and then suddenly I get three emails in a row where they're referring to me as she then you just start thinking, It's probably not deliberate, it's almost certainly not deliberate, but what's going on here? At what point does it get to the point where I should remind them again? Am I going to have to deal with them being defensive?" (Queer non-binary, Professional Services)

And as with long serving academics at UCL, there is a belief among professional services staff that UCL has 'stagnated' and may even be sliding back on its commitment to equalities, particularly in relation to women and trans staff. Some professional services staff attributed this to a broader societal shift towards the political right that was being reflected within the university, whereas others expressed concerns that positive progress was being hampered by prominent senior academics on social media that held gender critical views.

One professional services staff member with 15 years of experience at UCL felt that the current climate for LGBTQ+ staff at UCL was in decline and they were actively seeking to move to a more progressive institution.

> "It's a chance for me to be retrospective on my 15 years at UCL. What is happening now at UCL in the LGBT space makes me want to leave UCL. Not because of the great works of volunteers, but just the lack of shift and change in explicit support for staff, and how that support is absolutely decimated online with social media, personal views through very prominent academic staffs' social media accounts. So, it makes me actually want to go. And it makes me want to go to an institution which is braver" (Lesbian woman, Professional Services)

> "I feel like there are some things that have changed but probably not much in the last few years, I think things have stagnated. [...] I don't think we have done much more when the world has moved more." (Queer non-binary, Professional Services)

Professional Services at UCL are made up of different operational groups with distinct cultures. Some LGBTQ+ staff felt that some of these groups (e.g., estates) may be less tolerant of LGBTQ+ staff than others (e.g., EDI).

> "I am referring to the boys' club element [in estates], and very much aware of that reality within that. I discovered someone who is gay and in that area and I didn't quite know how much they were advertising their sexuality, but from my experiences I wondered how they would be and act" (Gay man, Professional Services)

> "Some time last year I was at the building and there was this repair person, I mean this person who came into the building he was part of the I think estates team trying to do some renovation work in the offices and I was basically showing him around the office building. And he continued talking about his wife and his child and I mean he didn't ask me anything but back of my mind if I wanted to share something about my life I don't think if I would have probably done that because I don't know I had this notion that the minute I do it he would probably stop all conversation. [...] maybe I was judging him for what he did as a living maybe I thought okay he works in construction he probably meets with other alpha male, hangs around with them. He will not have come across other gay men how would he react if I told him I was a gay man married to another man." (Gay man, Professional Services)

It was notable, however, that professional services staff in this study were more likely to express feelings of isolation than academic staff, particularly in the context of working remotely from home during COVID-19 national quarantining. One member of staff called for "more organised, planned policies [...] to allow LGBTQ people to connect." (Gay man, Professional Services). Another member of staff described the struggle of feeling as though they did not fit and did not have anything in common with colleagues, fostering a feeling of isolation at work.

> "One of the things that I felt here since I started working at UCL, there was a little bit of sense of isolation, because I'm always the only gay in the village so far [...] You know, because it's so vast, our numbers seem to be so low. So, without some thinking and planning and putting structures in place, that feeling of isolation, you know, persists, it's there. And I think on that front there could be some more organised, planned policies, you know, to allow LGBTQ people to connect." (Gay man, Professional Services)

> "I started remotely, like this whole experience has been so much in the air, and it's, a) it's lonely, like let's just admit that it is. But simultaneously I feel really, how do you say, it's not like out of place but like you don't fit. Because the people around you don't, I don't have anything in common with the people that are around me, like with my colleagues." (Pansexual non-binary, Professional Services)

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Common amongst interviewees working in Professional Services were reports of an entrenched academic-professional services hierarchy. Interestingly however, professional services staff felt that being part of department, faculty, or central university LGBTQ+ networks provided significant opportunities for these hierarchies to be disrupted and for more equal working relationships to flourish. One member of staff described this experience of finding connection and friendships at work through LGBTQ+ networks, along with a sense of institutional community that he believes his straight colleagues do not have.

> **"I think there is absolutely a hierarchy between academic and professional service staff, I think as, you know I think even though I think Michael Spence personifies hierarchy, or you know that's been my experience anyway, I think UCL's always been a hierarchical institution and I found it less so in a queer space though. [...] So you know I made some really good friendships that are still very, you know some of my closest friends are academics at UCL and I think I'm quite unusual in that, even now as a professional service member of staff in having had that opportunity. And I did see it as an opportunity because I could see it, even in my colleagues, my straight colleagues within my department, they have no relationship really with the institution, and I felt that I had this opportunity, which was amazing and I'm very grateful for it, to be part of this wider community at UCL which I may never have had access to had I not been a gay man." (Gay man, Professional Services)**

CONCLUSIONS

4. CONCLUSIONS

Understanding the experiences of LGBTQ+ people in higher education settings is a developing area of academic research. In the period since this project was conceived, several other universities have published or are updating research on staff and students within their own institutions (Pentaris, Dudley, Hockham, Evans & Yau 2022, University of Cambridge, forthcoming). Alongside these, other research has contributed to sector wide conversations (Sundberg, Boyce, & Ryan-Flood 2021) and revealed the need to interrogate the most marginalised experiences within the LGBTQ+ higher education communities. Most recently, University of Westminster (Benato, Fraser, & White 2023) conducted a piece of work into the experiences of non-binary staff and students. Research that contributes to this growing picture of staff working conditions and student learning conditions in higher education is vital for the creation of inclusive, dynamic, and thriving workplace cultures for all staff.

The large-scale qualitative project on which this report is based makes a significant contribution to national and international research on the intersectional experiences of LGBTQ+ staff in higher education. It was conceived by the LGBTQ+ Equalities Steering Group (LESG) and funded by multiple UCL faculties with the aim of transforming institutional policies and practices and improving the work-related experiences of all LGBTQ+ staff at UCL. While UCL has been the focus of this report, its findings are also likely to be applicable nationally and internationally due to the scale and scope of the project. Eighty-one members of LGBTQ+ staff were interviewed from across each faculty, representing diverse gender expressions and identities and sexual orientations. For the purpose of this report, describing these rich experiences has taken precedence over applying or developing analytical frameworks. That said, the data does speak to broader academic work on gender and sexual diversity and higher educational practices and policy. To this end, academic papers are in process which will engage with these at a more conceptual and methodological level.

The research underpinning this study took place in 2021 and this context is significant for several reasons. COVID-19 was still having an impact on the everyday lives of people in the UK and most university staff were still working from home. LGBTQ+ staff at UCL were also grappling with the university's decision

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◀ to opt out of Stonewall's Diversity Champions and Workplace Equality Index. The wider social and political context for LGBTQ+ people at the time of this project is also significant. For LGBTQ+ staff in this study the rise in gender critical discourses in the media and national politics and their links to unfettered free speech and academic freedom were of particular concern.

- This report makes several unique contributions to knowledge, many of which have been made possible by the breadth and depth of the study. Speaking with LGBTQ+ staff from roles across the university (research, teaching, professional services, clinical) captured the subtle differences within and between academic disciplines and domains of work.

- It has also highlighted the importance of intersectionality for understanding the complexity of LGBTQ+ staff experiences. Intersectionality provided a lens for interrogating how power and privilege operate and affect groups in different ways. This included the vital role that gender plays in structuring experiences. Trans and non-binary staff at UCL reported regular encounters with transphobia, and women at UCL reported concerning levels of sexism and misogyny. Experiences of micro-aggressions, discrimination and prejudice emerge from encounters with institutional policies and structures and in everyday interactions with colleagues. Race, nationality, class and disability were found to multiply marginalisations experienced by LGBTQ+ staff at UCL, and in some cases were believed to be more significant than one's gender or sexuality.

- This report identified a great number of individuals at UCL working to improve the experiences of LGBTQ+ staff and students. This work is occurring via institutional networks, in feminist and queer research and teaching practices, and through the development of evidence-based EDI policies. However, the burden of responsibility and action for LGBTQ+ inclusion clearly falls on the shoulders of individual LGBTQ+ staff members, often working in siloes, and more needs to be done by senior leadership to commit to and develop an inclusive institutional culture. The commissioning of this research, and the fact that some of the key findings from this project fed into the development of the UCL LGBTQ+ Action Plan, is a promising first step. However, it is important that the nuance within these findings is not lost. For this reason, LESG will be taking specific

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◀ aspects of this research to the relevant domains across UCL (research, teaching, clinical, professional services, EDI) to workshop recommendations and improvements in policies and practices moving forward. It will also be important to not only fund a research study such as this at regular intervals to understand whether and how change is happening, but future work needs to engage with the experiences of LGBTQ+ students. Having robust research evidence, especially in the absence of the external audit and oversight, is crucial.

● In an institutional setting as large as UCL, capturing learning and best practices that exist at local levels is key so that these might be shared and replicated more broadly. Hearing about failures and critiques is hard. So too is acting on them. However, both are necessary steps for creating, developing, and sustaining an inclusive university culture where all staff are welcome and able to thrive.

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Appendix 1 Acronyms

UCL

GFRN	Gender and Feminism Research Network
EDC	UCL's Equality and Diversity Committee
IOE	Institute of Education, UCL's Faculty of Education and Society
LEIG	LGBTQ+ Equality Implementation Group
LESG	LGBTQ+ Equality Steering Group
Out@UCL	Social network for LGBTQ+ staff at UCL
qUCL	Research network for staff and students interested in gender and sexual diversity at UCL
UMC	University Management Committee
UCL	University College London

Gender and Sexuality

LGB	Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans
LGBTQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Queer (+)
LGBTQI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer and Intersex

Other

ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BSA	British Social Attitudes
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus.
EDI	Equality Diversity Inclusion
GRA	Gender Recognition Act
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HR	Human Resources
IDAHoBiT	International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia
ILGA	International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association
IPSO	Independent Press Standards Organisation
ISD	Information Services Division
MA	Master's Degree
ONS	Office of National Statistics
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
PGTA	Post-Graduate Teaching Assistant
PI	Primary Investigator
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection
SU	Student Union
TA	Teaching Assistant
TERF	Trans Exclusionary Radial Feminist
UCU	University and College Union
UK	United Kingdom

Appendix 2 About LESG

- The UCL Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Equality Steering Group (LESG) has its origins in a staff network set up in 2009. That network, Out@UCL was established as a networking group for UCL staff who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans or queer (LGBTQ+). It continues to exist as a thriving social network both online and offline.

- After a series of early networking events by Out@UCL members, the LGBTQ+ Equality Steering Group (LESG) was established as a separate, formalised steering committee that serves UCL in an advisory capacity through the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion unit (EDI).

- LESG is open to all lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and queer staff and those interested in promoting LGBTQ+ equality at UCL. LESG steers the Out@UCL network of around 600 LGBTQ+ staff and supporters, as well as championing LGBTQ+ equalities within the university more broadly. It is open to all staff who are interested in actively supporting this ambition, including allies. UCL has previously been awarded a top 100 national ranking place by Stonewall for its support of LGBTQ+ staff and this includes the efforts of OUT@UCL members in increasing visibility, understanding of LGBTQ+ identities and supporter actions for staff equality. These have included direct senior leadership support for UCL's presence at London, Black and Trans pride annual events as well as being an advisory resource for policies affecting LGBTQ+ staff and their families.

LESG'S AIMS ARE TO:

- **Promote positive attitudes towards LGBTQ+ people and raise the profile of LGBTQ+ equality across the university**
- **Promote recognition and awareness of discrimination facing LGBTQ+ staff and address any inequalities locally and internationally**
- **Ensure issues of sexual orientation and gender identity are integrated into the UCL Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and report on progress to the UCL Equality Diversity and Inclusion Committee (EDC) and other relevant UCL committees and groups, as necessary**
- **Consider the impact of legislation on UCL policies, procedures, and practices as they relate to issues of sexual orientation and gender identity, both in the UK and internationally**
- **Identify any employment issues, policies, or practices that adversely affect LGBTQ+ staff and highlight to relevant bodies**
- **Liaise with other universities with a view to sharing resources and/or ideas regarding issues of sexual orientation and gender identity**
- **Act as an advisory body to UCL on issues of sexual orientation and gender identity and work with UCL to promote best practice for supporting LGBTQ+ staff and students working internationally.**

Appendix 2 About LESG

LESG'S TERMS OF REFERENCE ARE TO:

Ensure as far as possible that matters of sexual orientation and gender identity are embedded in the UCL EDI strategy, and make recommendations to the Office of the President & Provost and to any relevant UCL committees with the aim of facilitating progress towards these ambitions.

Promote positive attitudes towards LGBTQ+ people and coordinate UCL's involvement in awareness-raising events throughout the year, including LGBTQ History Month and International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia (IDAHoBiT).

Identify, discuss and share best practice for delivering LGBTQ+ equality within the Higher Education sector, in collaboration with other universities and external organisations, and by drawing on the latest research and evidence.

Support staff directly, through coordination of the Out@UCL network and the supporter or allies network - Friends of OUT@UCL, by facilitating networking opportunities for LGBTQ+ staff at UCL, or creating and maintaining links with other relevant local networks.

Consider the impact of UCL policies, procedures and practices as they relate to issues of sexual orientation, gender identity and intersectionality, and to identify any policies or practices that adversely affect LGBTQ+ staff or students.

Liaise with and support other UCL networks and representatives including the LGBTQ Student Network and LGBT Officer. LESG will also provide a representative to the EDI forum, which is an opportunity for sharing and collaboration.

Assist EDI with the facilitation of the Stonewall Workplace Index Application in the years it is deemed feasible to do so, and develop, coordinate and administer projects identified by members in line with the responsibilities above.

Appendix 3 Interview Schedule

ROLE AT UCL

- Please can you tell me about your role here at UCL? PROMPT: Professional Services, senior/junior academic, research/teaching, faculty, type of contract (full-time/part-time, permanent/temporary), also a student, how long have you worked here?
- Are you involved in any staff networks or groups at UCL in a voluntary capacity? PROMPT: If yes – what networks, how are you involved with them? If yes or no – are you aware of any the LGBTQ+ groups at UCL, are there any barriers that prevent you from being involved with these groups?
- Do you work on issues related to gender and sexuality at UCL? PROMPT: In either professional or voluntary capacity; PROMPT: If yes - research, staff networks, Athena Swan, EDI committees etc.; PROMPT: If yes or no – are there any barriers that prevent you from doing this work?

LGBTQ+ EXPERIENCE@UCL

- How would you describe your identity as an LGBTQ+ person? PROMPT: Can I just confirm what pronouns would you would like me to use for you during this interview and in the report? (remind them it will be anonymous quotes)
- Out@UCL is the name of a network for LGBTQ+ staff at UCL. Do you think it is important to be "out" at work? PROMPT: Can you tell me why?/ why not? PROMPT: Are you comfortable to be out the way you want to be, or as much as you want to be, in your role at UCL?
- Do you feel that UCL is a safe and inclusive place to work for all LGBTQ+ staff? PROMPT: If yes, what makes it safe and inclusive – visibility of LGBTQ+ staff/ pride flags / OUT@UCL or other staff networks? PROMPT: If no, why not? PROMPT: Do you think UCL does enough for its LGBTQ+ staff?
- Can you tell me about a time (or times) when you have felt comfortable being open about your LGBTQ+ identity / [your self-ID] at UCL? PROMPT: Teaching, research, meetings, social media, around campus; PROMPT: What is it about these situations that made you feel comfortable? PROMPT: Has your experience of comfort changed during your time here?
- Can you tell me about a time (or times) when you have felt less comfortable being open about your LGBTQ+ identity / [your self-ID] at UCL? PROMPT: What is it about those situations that made you feel less comfortable? / What impact did/does this have on you? / How did/does that make you feel?; PROMPT: How did you manage this/these situation(s)?; PROMPT: What would need to change to make you feel more comfortable?
- Do you feel you've been discriminated against, harassed or bullied here at UCL in ways that relate to your LGBTQ+ identity? PROMPT: If yes, can you tell me about this situation? PROMPT: If yes, did you report the incident? (if no to this, why did you not report it?); PROMPT: If yes, researcher to signpost participant to Union support and to UCL Institutional support (HR)
- Are there any other aspects of your identity that you feel may be relevant to any of the experiences you have described during this interview? PROMPT: E.g. (but not limited to) protected characteristics such as age, disability, race, religion or belief.
- Have workplace changes brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic impacted on your ability to disclose or express your gender or sexual orientation at UCL? PROMPT: working from home, online teaching and relationship with students, social media environment and virtual interactions.

CONCLUSION

- Is there anything else you'd like to share with me that we've not already covered?
- Can I ask why you decided to take part in this project? (if not already covered)
- Are there any questions you would like to ask me about the project?


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