

Foreword

I am delighted to present the University of Sussex's new LGBTQ+ Inclusion Action Plan.

The University is committed to inclusion of all. The Action Plan develops the ambitions and goals of the broader strategic framework at Sussex, including the new Sussex 2035 strategy as well as the Inclusive Sussex Framework. It contributes to the Sussex 2035 vision of creating progressive futures, as well as to the transformational theme of human flourishing. The plan also sits within our broader duties under the Equality Act 2010, including the Public Sector Equality Duty which obliges us to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, and victimisation; advance equality of opportunity; and foster good relations.

I know that recent years may have been challenging for some in our LGBTQ+ communities at Sussex, including in light of national and global developments. With this action plan, we restate the University's undiminished commitment to inclusion of all LGBTQ+ staff and students, and to materially bettering the experience of those communities.

Prof David Ruebain (Pro Vice Chancellor, Culture, Equality and Inclusion)

Introduction

With the introduction of Sussex 2035 and the Inclusive Sussex Framework, and against the backdrop of broader global events, the time has come for us to revisit, reinvigorate, and strengthen our LGBTQ+ action plan. Our plan complements our longstanding and steadfast LGBTQ+ inclusion work at Sussex, including but not limited to a revision of the LGBTQ+ Steering Group Terms of Reference, the development of Chair Role Descriptions, and renewed recruitment for active membership. I am also honoured to take on the role of Chair of the Steering Group, in addition to my role as Associate Dean for Culture, Equality and Inclusion in the Business School.

Our revised two-year action plan provides clear time-frames, action owners, and success indicators. Actions are bold, but achievable, time-bound, and with clear rationales. Importantly, every action on our revised plan was co-developed with several stakeholders and derived by triangulating numerous employee and student voice mechanisms: staff survey results, a qualitative survey of the LGBTQ+ Staff Network, feedback from the Trans and Non-Binary Staff Network and Students' Union officers, LGBTQ+ Steering Group meeting discussions, amongst others. We also took into account the University's broader strategic commitments and ongoing legal developments, evaluated good practices across the sector, and benchmarked our position.

Our LGBTQ+ action plan has four priority areas in Phase 1: Leadership and Culture, Policies, Processes and Practices, Data Gathering and Progress Monitoring, and Communication and Awareness. Our areas of foci are underpinned by the need for robust and evidence-based data, which is why we are proposing a strong data plan for the next two years. This work will sit alongside complementary actions: for example, introducing a Trans and Non-Binary Code of Practice and associated suite of case studies, and adding Sexual Orientation e-learning to our training provision.

We will also monitor our progress and hold ourselves accountable to milestones. Importantly, we – as a Sussex community - will co-own the action plan and work with stakeholders to co-design Phase 2.

I also want to acknowledge the importance of taking an intersectional approach to marginalisation and inequality. The LGBTQ+ community is not homogenous and our intersectional identities influence and impact on our lived experiences. We will hold this in mind as all actions are implemented, and further embed intersectionality in Phase 2.

Our planned activities and progress will be reviewed in August 2027, and any necessary evidence-based actions added to the plan accordingly, particularly in the light of data gathered. In the meantime, the LGBTQ+ Steering Group will regularly monitor the action plan and ensure accountability.

We hope that the revised LGBTQ+ Inclusion Action Plan will result in improved understanding of the experiences of our LGBTQ+ staff and students, enhanced sense of belonging, and reduced barriers to an equal and just participation.

Lilith Whiley (Chair of the LGBTQ+ Steering Group, Associate Dean for Culture, Equality and Inclusion, University of Sussex Business School)

LGBTQ+ Inclusion Action Plan, Phase 1 (January 2026 – August 2027)

The focus is on achievable actions with clear rationales. Acquiring and assessing a greater range of data will help in the development of a larger Action Plan going forward. This phase of the Action Plan is designed to cover two academic years, including this one.

1. Leadership and culture							
No.	Planned action	Rationale	Action owner	Success criteria	Start date	End date	Update
1.1	Review how leadership can show visible support for LGBTQ+ members of the University community Consider having leadership representation at key LGBTQ+ events	LGB+ and non-binary staff reported low levels of trust in leadership in the October 2024 staff survey. Feedback from TNB Staff Network membership that they would like senior leadership to be visible at key events such as Trans Day of Remembrance.	PVC CEI, ADs CEI	LGB+ and TNB staff report higher levels of trust in leadership in the next full staff survey Positive feedback from LGBTQ+ and TNB staff network regarding senior leadership engagement	Ongoing		Associate Dean CEI for the Business School attended Trans Day of Remembrance event in 2025 TNB Staff Network Chairs have invited senior leaders to Trans Pride event in July 2026
1.2	Review whether and how to increase visibility of LGBTQ+ leadership	Feedback from the LGBTQ+ Staff Network and LGBTQ+ Steering Group members regarding the value of seeing openly LGBTQ+ senior leaders.	LGBTQ+ Steering Group, PVC CEI	Positive feedback from the LGBTQ+ Staff Network regarding visibility	Ongoing		Two PVCs featured in Pride at Sussex exhibition

2. Policies, processes and practices							
No.	Planned action	Rationale	Action owner	Success criteria	Start date	End date	Update
2.1	Review approaches to single-sex spaces and facilities - Convene working group - Publish and communicate revised guidance	The Supreme Court judgement in <i>For Women Scotland v The Scottish Ministers</i> , interim EHRC guidance and forthcoming statutory EHRC guidance have changed the legal situation regarding single-sex spaces.	EHRC working group	University guidance is legally compliant and facilitates an inclusive environment. Feedback from key stakeholders regarding usability and clarity of the guidance is positive.	02/26	End date dependent on final EHRC guidance being issued	Working group convened. Interim edit made to Transitioning at Work Policy regarding facilities. Facility assessment undertaken.
2.2	Undertake organisational stress risk assessment in relation to trans and non-binary staff community	Statement prepared by the TNB Staff Network reporting high levels of stress and distress as a result of external factors	Assistant Director Culture, Equality and Inclusion	Actions identified to mitigate risk of stress	02/26	05/26	Draft Stress Risk Assessment complete and actions identified. Risk Assessment now with TNB Staff Network Chairs for further refinement and consultation with network.
2.3	Review and update Transitioning at Work policy	Supreme Court judgement in <i>FWS</i> . Feedback from trans and non-binary members of staff that the proposed single point of contact for transitioning does not function effectively.	EDI Consultant leading on LGBTQ+ Inclusion	Trans and non-binary staff who engage with the updated process report improved clarity and usability.	06/26	12/26	Interim update made to the Transitioning at Work Policy regarding facility use.
2.4	Ensure that staff and students are correctly named and	Feedback from staff and students that deadnaming occurs	Student Engagement and Enhancement	Reported deadnaming incidents reduce over the academic year.	06/26	08/27	SEE team working with Transcend and TNB SU

	gendered by university systems • Work with IT to understand and find solutions to deadnaming issues • Look at interim solutions such as communicating to trans staff/students how to report a name issue	throughout university systems					Officer on TNB Student Guide.
2.5	Develop and implement Trans and Non-Binary Code of Practice	Prior University commitment to a refreshed Trans and Non-Binary Policy	EDI Consultant leading on LGBTQ+ Inclusion	Key users of the Code of Practice report clarity and usability. Positive feedback from the University community.	01/26	End date dependent on Office for Students revisions to Regulatory Advice 24.	Code of Practice pending further edits following OfS revisions to RA 24.
2.6	Develop Trans and Non-Binary case studies to accompany the Code of Practice		EDI Consultant leading on LGBTQ+ inclusion	A minimum of three case studies are developed and published alongside the Code. Feedback from stakeholders indicates that the case studies improve clarity and usability.	06/26	02/27	

3. Data-gathering and progress monitoring

No.	Planned action	Rationale	Action owner	Success criteria	Start date	End date	Update
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3.1	Review data that would be useful for developing action plan further • Put together an outline of useful data (e.g., promotion rates, qualitative feedback) • Review data where it already exists • Plan how to collect data that does not currently exist • Consider TNB staff and student focus groups for gathering qualitative data	Limited data exists regarding the representation of LGBTQ+ people among staff and students.	EDI Consultant leading on LGBTQ+ inclusion	Increased level of data on LGBTQ+ representation at the University Data on LGBTQ+ staff and students informs future action planning	01/26	12/26	
3.2	Ensure that equality monitoring questions about sexual orientation and gender reassignment are appropriately worded and included • Input into the development of the new HR System • Provide advice on staff survey	Questions about trans status have previously been omitted from staff survey questions, leading to a lack of data about trans experience	EDI Consultant leading on LGBTQ+ inclusion	Updated monitoring questions are adopted in the new HR system and any future staff surveys. Future staff surveys include correctly worded questions about trans status.	Ongoing		EDI Consultant in active conversation with those leading HR System project Wording of question on trans status altered for new HR System after consultation with TNB Staff Network

	demographic questions						
3.3	Promote data disclosure for LGBTQ+ staff Encourage disclosure in internal communications	Limited data exists regarding the representation of LGBTQ+ people among staff and students.	EDI Consultant leading on LGBTQ+ inclusion	Percentage of staff disclosing sexual orientation and transgender status on HR systems increases compared with the previous reporting period.	Ongoing		

4. Communication and Awareness							
No.	Planned action	Rationale	Action owner	Success criteria	Start date	End date	Update
4.1	Regularly put out internal communications on LGBTQ+ days of significance (Bi Visibility Day, Trans Day of Visibility, etc.)	Marginalised LGBTQ identities such as non-binary, queer and asexual reported more negative experiences in the October 2024 staff survey.	EDI Consultant leading on LGBTQ+ inclusion	At least six articles per year are published on key LGBTQ+ days.	Ongoing		LGBTQ+ days of significance included in EDI Unit comms plan Articles are regularly posted
4.2	Add Sexual Orientation e-learning to our provision	There is a gap in our e-learning and training provision here	EDI Consultant leading on LGBTQ+ inclusion	At least 100 staff complete the module within the first year, or there	01/26	12/26	Vinciworks Sexual Orientation e-learning is under review EDI Consultant has discussed with LGBTQ+ SN co-chairs

				is a measurable uptake among key staff groups (e.g., line managers).			
4.3	Communicate the work of the LGBTQ+ Steering Group and the LGBTQ+ Action Plan • Publish Broadcast article about revised action plan • Publish termly articles about the work of the Steering Group • Publish a public-facing version of the Action Plan on EDI webpages	Ensure transparency and increase engagement with LGBTQ+ inclusion work	EDI consultant for LGBTQ+ inclusion	Public-facing Action Plan page is live and updated at least once per term. Feedback indicates greater awareness of LGBTQ+ Steering Group and Action Plan.	Ongoing		
4.4	Communicate transitioning processes clearly to staff and students (name changes, etc.)	Feedback from TNB SU officer that trans students aren't aware of photo ID change process.	Student Engagement and Enhancement, TNB SU Officers/Transcend	Trans and non-binary staff and students report more positive experience	02/26	06/27	SEE and Transcend/TNB SU Officer liaising to produce TNB Student Guide.

	• Publish TNB student guide • Review student- and staff-facing information for completeness, usefulness and accuracy	Feedback from Head of Software Development that many deadnaming issues in our systems stem from the name change not being requested correctly.		transitioning at Sussex.				
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