LGBTQ+ CAREERS HANDBOOK

US

UNIVERSITY
OF SUSSEX

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INTRODUCTION

The diversification of scientific fields has been significantly slower than standards in other industries in post-industrial societies. It is estimated that the representation of LGBTQ+ people in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths/Medicine) is about 20% lower than expected.

We want to encourage every student to go forward into their chosen profession with confidence and the toolkit to succeed, so we've created this career guide to provide some resources.

YOUR LEGAL RIGHTS

If you're working in the UK, you are legally protected from discrimination (in the workplace and more generally in society) by the 2010 Equality Act.

The Equality Act ensures that it is against the law to discriminate against anyone because of these protected characteristics:
- age
- gender reassignment
- being married or in a civil partnership
- being pregnant or on maternity leave
- disability
- race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

The law protects you against discrimination at work, including:
- dismissal
- employment terms and conditions
- pay and benefits
- promotion and transfer opportunities
- training
- recruitment
- redundancy

ADVICE ON THE LAW AND YOUR RIGHTS

If you think you have been treated unfairly and want advice check gov.uk for more information and contact one of the below organisations:

EQUALITY ADVISORY SERVICE

The Equality Advisory service is a helpline that advises and assists individuals on issues relating to equality and human rights, across England, Scotland and Wales.

ACAS

Acas gives employees and employers free, impartial advice on workplace rights, rules and best practice.

CITIZENS ADVICE

A network of independent charities offers confidential advice online, over the phone, and in person, for free.

EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

The Equality and Human Rights Commission safeguards and enforce the laws that protect people's rights to fairness, dignity and respect.

CODES OF CONDUCT

As an LGBTQ+ person, you are explicitly protected by the policy of a number of professional bodies as well as the law. Chartered professionals will need to adhere to these codes, risking their chartered status if they do not.

INSTITUTE OF ELECTRICAL AND ELECTRONICS ENGINEERS (IEEE)

The IEEE has a fully inclusive code of ethics. The code states that the organisation commits to "treat all persons fairly and with respect, and to not engage in discrimination based on characteristics such as race, religion, gender, disability, age, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression". (IEEE Policies, Section 7 - Professional Activities, Part 7.8.II(7))

INSTITUTION OF MECHANICAL ENGINEERS (IMECHE)

The IMechE Code of Conduct requires members to "treat all others – including other members and Institution staff – with complete respect, regardless of position or any protected characteristic such as: a) age b) disability c) gender reassignment d) marriage and civil partnership e) pregnancy and maternity f) race g) religion or belief h) sex i) sexual orientation The Institution recognises the Equality Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1998" (IMechE Code of Conduct Instructions, CR2, Point 20).

It further also requires members to "contribute to creating an inclusive working environment where individuals are respected and where the value of having a diverse and inclusive workforce is recognised." (IMechE Code of Conduct Instructions, CR4, Point 28).

INSTITUTION OF ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY (IET)

The IET is a Stonewall Diversity Champion. In addition, LGBTQ+ people are a key focus of their EDI strategy and they have an LGBTQ+ network for their staff memebers,

All members of the IET are required to adhere to its Code of Conduct. One of the rules is that members must report their employers for a breach of conduct including "any breach of legal obligations including any act of discrimination (in accordance with the Equality Act 2010)." (IET Rules of Conduct, 10.2).

BRITISH COMPUTING SOCIETY, THE CHARTERED INSTITUTE FOR IT (BCS)

The BCS code of conduct requires all members to "conduct your professional activities without discrimination on the grounds of sex, sexual orientation, marital status, nationality, colour, race, ethnic origin, religion, age or disability, or of any other condition or requirement and promote equal access to the benefits of IT and seek to promote the inclusion of all sectors in society wherever opportunities arise." (BCS Code of Conduct, Section 1 Parts C and D). They also have a Pride Specialist Group to address LGBTQ+ issues.

FINDING AN LGBTQ+ FRIENDLY COMPANY

Although the law protects you from discrimination, this does not guarantee a positive company culture wherever you work. Here are some tips to suss out potential employers.

FINDING PLACES TO APPLY

There are website specifically catered towards jobs for LGBTQ+ people, for example LGBT jobs or Proud Employers. You can be reasonably certain that employers who choose to advertise on specifically LGBTQ+ job sites will have a solid commitment to LGBTQ+ inclusion in their culture.

You can also use Bright Network, a network focused on connecting diverse people with new opportunities.

Attend LGBTQ+-specific recruitment events to meet and speak to representatives from employers that you are interested in:
- LGBTQ Professional Recruitment Events - Human Rights Campaign
- UK Official Diversity LGBT Recruitment Job Board
- LGBT Professional Events | Networking | Career Fairs | Worldwide

SCOPING OUT A COMPANY

Sussing out the company culture can start in the job description! The language of the job description is very important. There is academic research supporting that certain words or terms can indicate and perpetuate inequalities. Some companies also include an inclusivity statement within job descriptions to welcome a diverse range if applicants.

You can also:

- Check the company's website thoroughly for visible support of pride events, LGBTQ+ staff networks, or an allyship programme.
- Do a deep dive on the company social media to see if they have posted to celebrate LGBTQ+ events such as Pride month or Trans Visibility day.
- See employee reviews of the company on sites such as Glassdoor and Indeed.
- Look at company equality policy and check for commitments made to equality within the company, for example - Do they have a Equality, Divertiy & Inclusion page on their website?
- See if the company is rated on the Stonewall Equality Index and their Top 100 Employers list, the Trans inclusive-employers list, and if they are signed up as a Stonewall Diversity Champion.
- What is the company score on the Human Rights Campaign Corporate Equality Index?
- Research how employers engage with different communities and what their Corporate Social Responsibility commitments are.
- It is also worth checking out the attitudes and laws of the country the company is based in on the LGBT Equality Index.

APPLICATIONS AND INTERVIEWS

APPLICATIONS

Should I disclose that I'm LGBTQIA or trans at any point during the application or interview process?

This is an entirely personal decision; you do not have to disclose your gender or sexual identity at any point during the recruitment process and you should not be asked about it by an interviewer. However, you may want to shine a light on any actions you took as part of an LGBTQ+ society, community group or similar, as part of highlighting relevant skills. You can do this without discussing your gender or sexual identity.

During the recruitment process mistakes may be made with respects to correct use of your pronouns. If this happens say something like "Actually, I use they/ them pronouns," and then move on. Later, you can evaluate whether this seems like part of a broader pattern and is potentially a red flag.

If you are asked an inappropriate question during the interview process you may choose to seek clarity about its relevance to the vacancy and selection process.

QUESTIONS TO ASK DURING INTERVIEW

In an interview, you will nearly always be given time to ask questions of your potential employer. A good way to find out how LGBTQ+ friendly an employer is is by asking!

Some examples of questions you might want to ask about the company and culture are:
- What are your core company values?
- What wellbeing resources do you provide to employees?
- How would you describe your company culture?
- Would you say that your company has a diverse employee base?

Some examples of direct questions about equality and diversity you might want to ask are:
- What are your inclusion policies and practices?
- What diversity and inclusion training do you provide to employees?
- Does your organisation have an LGBTQ support or social group?

REFERENCING

Employers often look up applicants on their social media accounts and websites you appear on. It's a good idea to review your online presence to ensure consistency in how your name is displayed and how you choose to present yourself in the workplace. Check your privacy settings so that you are only sharing content you are happy for potential employers to see.

If you are supplying a potential employer with references, ensure that your referees know to use your correct name and pronouns. Say something like 'I'm applying for jobs; you might get a reference check. So this is my name now and these are the pronouns I'm using' .

PROFESSIONAL NETWORKS

Networking is a good way to develop your career and look for opportunities, as well as building a support network.

You can use it to:

- find out about what a particular career or sector is like, routes in and what experience you might need
- research specific employers, find out about the work culture and what it's like to work there
- find work experience/internship or job opportunities
- Find support and resources from people with similar experiences

For more information and advice on networking for your career, visit sussex.ac.uk/careers.

OUT IN TECH   01.

Out in Tech unites the LGBTQ+ tech community by creating opportunities for members to advance their careers, grow their networks, and leverage tech for social change.

QUEER ENGINEER   02.

A non-profit global network of engineering, technology, and applied science professionals and students. Together, they work to build resources and authentic community at the intersection of LGBTQIA+ and STEM.

INTERENGINEERING   03.

InterEngineering is an organisation that aims to 'To connect, inform and empower LGBTQ+ engineers and their supports to foster greater inclusion in engineering.'

OUT IN STEM   04.

Out inSTEM is non-profit professional association for LGBTQ+ people in the STEM community.

LESBIANS WHO TECH

05.

Lesbians Who Tech & Allies is a community of LGBTQ women, non-binary and trans individuals in and around tech (and the people who support them).

QUEER DESIGN CLUB

06.

Queer design club are building a community where LGBTQ+ designers can celebrate queer contributions to the design industry and visual culture, share their work, and connect with each other.

INTERNATIONAL GAME DESIGN ASSOCIATION

07.

The International Game Developers Association (IGDA) is the world's largest nonprofit membership organization serving all individuals who create games. They have an internal network for LGBTQ+ people in game design.

TRANS IN STEM

08.

Trans in STEM is a twitter community for trans and non-binary people in sciences to connect and find representation.

PLUS MANY MORE - GET GOOGLING IF YOU CAN'T SEE A RELEVANT ORGANISATION IN THIS LIST!

COMPANY NETWORKS

Depending on the size of the company you work for, they may also have internal LGBTQ+ networks for you to join.

Some examples include:
- IBM – IBM EAGLE
- Google – Gayglers
- Microsoft – GLEAM
- National Grid – Pride
- Arup – Connect Out
- Network Rail – ArchWay

You can find more listed on the InterEngineering website here.

CHARITIES AND RESOURCES

OUT & EQUAL
01.

Out & Equal is a Workplace Advocate organisation working exclusively on LGBTQ workplace equality.

500 QUEER SCIENTISTS
02.

A visibility campaign for LGBTQ+ people and their allies working in STEM and STEM-supporting jobs.

CODEBAR
03.

Codebar is a charity that facilitates the growth of a diverse tech community by running free regular programming workshops for minority groups in tech. It is not precisely a professional network, but you can get involved in networking opportunties with them as a teacher or student! They also have a specific Brighton chapter that you can get in touch with via Slack.

WELLBEING RESOURCES

THE CLARE PROJECT
01.

A self-supporting transgender support and social group based in Brighton and Hove open to anyone wishing to explore issues around gender identity.
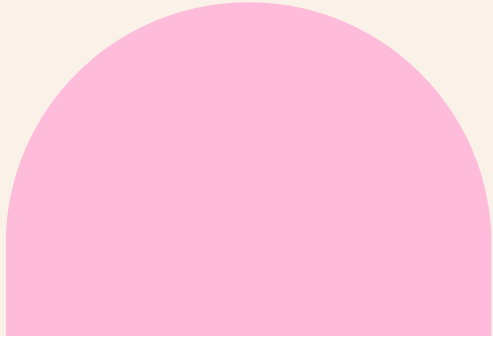
BRIGHTON LGBTQ SWITCHBOARD
02.

Charity for LGBTQ people: for community, support or information, and provides services and links to other specialist organisations.

ALLSORTS YOUTH PROJECT
03.

Listens to, supports and connects children and young people under 26 who are LGBTQ+.

MINDOUT
04.

MindOut is a mental health service run by and for lesbians, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer people.

UNIVERSITY RESOURCES

CAREERS AND ENTREPRENUERSHIP: WHAT CAN THEY HELP WITH?

Careers and Entrepreneurship is here for you throughout your time at Sussex. They can support you with finding part-time work through to graduate level opportunities; with CV and application advice; or can simply help you explore your options.They offer one-to-one careers consultations, workshops, and events; these can be booked via CareerHub.

Career Lab is a programme offered primarily for undergraduate students. It develops students' confidence, knowledge, skills and experience through exclusive funded opportunities. This includes internship programmes, skills sessions and student consultancy opportunities.

The Entrepreneurship team is on hand to help if you have plans for your own business venture, including information about going freelance or developing a social enterprise. You can get help through Startup Lab which is the business start-up course, attend specialist events and meetups and book one-to-one appointments to discuss ideas and get specialised advice.

As a Sussex graduate, you have access to all careers services up to three years after graduation.

Appointments: One-to-one appointments can be in-person or via phone or Zoom. In-person appointments will be in the Student Centre. You can book appointments via CareerHub

TRANSITIONING AT WORK

View University staff guidance and policies to give you some ideas around the process of transitioning at work. Most companies should have a similar policy that they follow for this process. Look at their website or ask their HR team.

CAREER EQUITY PROJECT

The Career Equity Project is a collaboration between The University of Sussex Students' Union and the Careers and Entrepreneurship service. After addressing the disparity and inequality within many career industries for underrepresented communities, the project creates a safe space for students by offering them access to events and workshops to gain valuable guidance to enhance accessibility to employment.

Sessions are usually facilitated by a specialised organisation or charity who are highly knowledgeable and understands the sensitivity of the topics about the specific community. The events share careers insights into areas such as developing skills, discussing rights as workers, improving employability and to overall empower students to overcome challenges.

Students who attend these events are encouraged to ask whatever questions they wish as there are never any recruiters invited to attend.

Find more information on the Career Equity Project website. To receive specialised updates about events that might be of interest to you, sign up to the mailing list.

PROFESSIONAL
TESTIMONIALS

We asked some LGBTQ+ people working in tech and engineering what their best careers advice to students would be.

DAVID

Lead Software Engineer

Before joining a company, check their homepage to see if there's any mention to LGTBQ+ inclusivity, or if they support/fund any LGTBQ+ events. Even if they do, that doesn't mean that you may find a good environment, but I think at least their HR team will be by your side in case you get harassed or something.

The best thing would be knowing someone who works at that company, even if in a different team, and ask them about their work environment and whether there's any LGTBQ+ community. For instance, in one of my previous companies we had a LGBTQ+ slack channel, and one of the team leads was a trans woman, but that wasn't publicised externally. But it was a LGBT-friendly environment.

SPENCER

Community Growth Lead

From day one at LVNDR Health it was clear that identity was something that would be celebrated and allowed to thrive as part of the job role. Often we get told to keep our personal lives at home but when it comes to identity that isn't always possible. Usually, one would have to hide or suppress their identity in the workplace in order to remain professional and to some extent protected from discrimination at work.

At LVNDR Health not only was I allowed to be open and honest about my identity from day one on the team, but it also informed decisions and processes within the wider company culture. It helped form very strong bonds amongst colleagues and encourage others to express themselves more confidently and openly at work.

My advice to other companies/employers/employees... Don't hide who you are. Don't see your identity as a weakness. Look at it as the foundations for why you were hired, the reason why you think and act a certain way and how that perfectly summarises your superpower at work. Then encourage others to do the same.

We all deserve to be proud at work, regardless of our intersections and identities.

JOHN
Engineering Program Manager (former Software Engineer)

FIND A GREAT MENTOR. This is the number one advice I give to any person because it's become essential to my life and others. I wish I found a mentor growing up because it would have made my professional, personal, and spiritual life just a bit easier. My life has been full of struggles when living on the intersection as a gay male, devout Catholic, second generation Vietnamese-American, and a child of a single mother who raised me under the poverty line. I'm very blessed to have five mentors who I maintain a strong relationship with and whom I consult for major personal, professional, and spiritual decisions. I'm humbled to have five mentees who I keep in constant contact with and who I have seen grow personally, professionally, and spiritually at work, at home, and in life!

FIND WAYS TO FIRST LOVE YOURSELF TO THEN LOVE OTHERS. When someone asked me what is the biggest accomplishment in my life, my answer was simply: to be alive. As a suicide survivor, I failed to love myself. I always tell anyone I meet to never be afraid to ask for help because all of us are going through something in some way. No one is perfect. Thanks to a lot of hard work understanding the roots of my personality, talents, emotions, wounds, and happiness, I'm a much better husband, friend, employee, and community leader. I'm a flawed human and I'm ashamed of many aspects of myself. However, I will always work to leaving this world a better place through my gifts of time, talent, and treasure.

FIND A COMMUNITY. It pains me that so many folks today lack a strong community with so many people falling into despair, self-isolation, and selfishness. We are human beings and we require human interaction to grow, thrive, and to live. If you don't have a community, how will you learn the important skills such as leadership, networking, empathy, compassion, or self-reflection? Start growing your roots into a community through shared interests, hobbies, faith, volunteering, or even your local city! Find those in the community whom you trust, whom can hold you accountable, and whom be your friend. I always tell this to anyone that this community of your choice will be with you during the brightest times in your life and also during your darkest times in your life.

JON
Lecturer at Sussex

I began my career by doing a degree in Chemistry followed by a PhD. Following that, I spent three very happy years at Sussex as a postdoctoral researcher. For me, Sussex and Brighton were shining beacons of acceptance and I was able to be myself while still following my passion for chemistry. I then became a researcher and then a university lecturer. I really enjoyed the university environment as it was so inclusive for LGBTQ+ people like me. There are lots of LGBTQ+ people in science even though you are sometimes led to believe that they gravitate towards the creative arts. The great thing about working in universities is that you can just be yourself and our differences are celebrated rather than just tolerated. I would certainly encourage any young budding scientists to consider a career in research and academia. I now teach at Sussex and feel lucky to be able to be who I am in a city and a workspace that is so inclusive.

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