

Terms of Reference

1. Introduction

The Rainbow Network (referred to hereafter as “the Network”) is a network for any staff and PhD students at the University who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQ+) and any minority sexual and gender identities.

2. Aims of the Network

- To be a visible group that can inform and influence the University’s approach to LGBTQ+ issues¹ by contributing experience, expertise and ideas.
- To advise and assist in monitoring the effectiveness and impact of equality policies and procedures from a LGBTQ+ perspective.
- To act as a “critical friend” to the University.
- To work towards providing opportunities for mentoring, reverse mentoring, peer networking, support, and personal and professional development amongst LGBTQ+ staff and PhD students to encourage culture change and positive career development opportunities.
- To challenge discrimination and work towards creating and supporting a culture in which all members of the University community are able to participate and fulfil their potential in an inclusive environment where they are valued and respected.
- To raise awareness of LGBTQ+ identities and issues within the University and the wider community.
- To provide a safe, confidential, and supportive environment for staff and PhD students who identify as LGBTQ+ to meet and share experiences, opinions and concerns.
- To provide guidance and signposting for managers and colleagues of LGBTQ+ staff and PhD students to help them to create an inclusive and supportive work environment.
- To provide confidential advice and support to staff and PhD students on LGBTQ+ issues in the workplace.
- To engage with LGBTQ+ groups, networks, and organisations locally, regionally and nationally.
- To engage with other staff and student diversity networks at the University of Birmingham.
- To celebrate and promote the successes of LGBTQ+ staff and PhD students.
- To organise a programme of social events.
- To work with the EDI Team to programme LGBTQ+ History Month and other celebration and awareness raising events (including training sessions for the University’s LGBTQ ally scheme).
- To represent the University at relevant community events (e.g. Birmingham Pride).
- To support LGBTQ+ staff and PhD students with intersectional identities and ensure that their specific needs are represented.

¹ This includes international expansion and collaboration with countries that have anti-LGBTQ laws.

3. Membership and mailing list management

Full membership of the Network is open to all individuals who are committed to the aims of the Network and who are employed, whether full or part time, temporary or permanent, staff member or PhD student, by the University of Birmingham and its subsidiaries.

Associate membership of the Network is open to employees of external contractors carrying out work at the University and employees of closely partnering organisations such as the Guild of Students and the University of Birmingham School. Alumni, former staff, and external contacts with whom the Network committee build a strategic relationship may also be granted associate membership.

Membership may be obtained by contacting the Network Chair via the confidential email address, lgbtq@contacts.bham.ac.uk, or signing up at a Network event. Individuals may choose to sign up with a personal email address, but they will be granted associate membership due to the need to restrict certain commercially confidential information to internal email addresses. Members can revoke their membership at any time upon request, and members will be removed if their email address is deactivated.

The mailing lists will be stored in Mailjet, which the University has deemed to be data protection and information security compliant, or in another system that has been deemed to be compliant. Access to the mailing lists is restricted to the Network Chair and Communications Officer, and the passwords will be updated if either of these people leave or stand down.

Membership is free, although specific events may require an entry fee or donation to cover costs. Non-members of the Network may be invited to certain social, training, and awareness raising events at the discretion of the Committee.

Members of the Network are expected to treat each other with dignity and respect, in line with the University of Birmingham Harassment and Bullying Policy². Any person deemed to be subjecting another member to harassment and/or bullying may be removed from the Network mailing list at the discretion of the Committee.

Members are also asked to respect the confidentiality of colleagues that they meet at Network events, since attendance at events cannot be taken to imply that any LGBTQ+ individual is open about their identity within the wider University.

LGBTQ+ allies are encouraged to join the University's LGBTQ Ally scheme, but it is recognised that there may be some allies on the Network mailing list since individuals are not asked to disclose their sexual or gender identities before joining.

² <https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/collaboration/equality/documents/policies/Policy-Harassment-and-Bullying.pdf>

4. Management of the Network

The Network will hold an AGM each year. All full and associate members will be given a minimum of one month's notice. These Terms of Reference will be reviewed at each AGM, and proposed changes will require formal ratification at the AGM.

The Network will be led by an elected committee who will hold meetings/events and virtual communications throughout the year as required. All full members of the Network will be consulted when matters arise that have the potential to affect them.

The Network committee will be comprised of full members and will include the following roles³:

- Chair
- Secretary
- Financial Officer
- Communications Officer
- Social Media Officer
- Events Officer
- Outreach & Engagement Officer
- Campus Services Officer

Members of the Network can also volunteer as general committee members to encourage diversity of viewpoints at committee meetings.

The Network will be supported by the Staff EDI Adviser (Engagement).

Quorum for making decisions at committee meetings and general meetings is four committee members or general members respectively (not including associate members).

All information provided by the Network is to be considered advisory, and it is recommended that individuals seek professional or legal advice where appropriate. Whilst the Network endeavours to be confidential, it will abide by all current laws and regulations relating to disclosure and criminal or legal proceedings.

³ Descriptions for each of these roles can be found at <https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/collaboration/equality/Areas-and-themes/staff/groups-and-support/Rainbow-Network/Meet-the-Team.aspx>

5. Link to University governance

The core purpose of the Network is to represent the interests of its members.

As a University of Birmingham staff network, the Network will operate within the agreed purpose for staff networks as defined by the Staff Networks Terms of Reference:

“Staff networks support the delivery of the university's equality and diversity objectives by providing visible, active promotion of the university's values and strategic vision. They provide a vital communication link between the formal EDI structures and staff from different communities. Networks also play an important role as a critical friend, advising the equality team on the impact that particular policies or changes could create for their members, although it is recognised that this is carried out in the spirit of working in partnership and good faith to deliver our mutual agenda.”

The staff networks will have the opportunity to report into the University Equality Executive Group (EEG), chaired by the Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor (EDI).

The Network committee will be able to raise matters of concern with the Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor (EDI) and the Executive Lead for LGBTQ+ Equality if these arise between meetings.

6. Sustainability and handover

If a committee member (other than the Chair) stands down, they will arrange a handover meeting with their successor (or the Chair in the event that there is no successor, who will assess whether their responsibilities can be shared among other committee members).

If the Chair stands down, they will arrange a handover meeting with their successor (or the Staff EDI Adviser (Engagement) in the event that there is no successor, who can provide a briefing to anybody who may stand as Chair in the future).

The Committee will maintain a handover document to ensure that future committees are able to maintain Network operations with minimal disruption.