The Experience of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Trans Students at The University of Western Australia

Research Report 2016

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Foreword

The University of Western Australia (UWA) is committed to creating an environment where students and staff feel welcome. We remain a top ten organisation for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and intersex (LGBTI) inclusion in Australia (AWEI Index).

Building on the University’s existing national status in Equity and Diversity, the LGBTI Working Group initiated the pilot study upon which this report is based.

This pilot study, which targeted LGBT students in order to measure their experience, was the first of its kind to be undertaken at UWA. The results have been enlightening.

In summary almost two-thirds of students believed that the University created a welcoming campus climate for LGBT students. A significant proportion viewed the climate of their classes to be accepting of LGBT people. Most students (69%) agreed that UWA is a safe place. These results vindicate the efforts of staff and the Student Guild to make the University a welcoming place for students.

Nevertheless, there is always room for improvement, and as part of the pilot study, a number of areas for improvement have been highlighted. Sixteen percent of students had experienced harassment or discrimination at UWA because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. Only 55.8% of students reported that they would be comfortable reporting LGBT harassment or discrimination to the University. Students would like to see more visible leadership across the University on such matters, which require a joint approach.

We are an institution that strives for continuous improvement in all areas; as such we take the messages in this pilot study seriously. The Inclusion and Diversity Committee, and specifically the working groups will give careful consideration to the findings and recommendations of the report. In addition, we will engage further with the LGBTIQA+ community as a part of the development in 2017 of the UWA Inclusion and Diversity Plan.

This valuable report has been an important initiative for UWA students and staff, and one which will support positive changes.

I would like to acknowledge the role of the UWA Alumni Fund Grants, which made this project possible. Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the staff and students who supported this project, facilitated its aims, and are committed to making UWA a safe and inclusive place.

Professor Dawn Freshwater
Acting Vice-Chancellor, Chair of the Inclusion and Diversity Committee
Student Guild endorsement

The UWA Student Guild firmly believe and advocate that UWA should be a place where all students feel welcomed and valued, and that we celebrate our differences and uniqueness.

We would like to thank the students who took part in the survey, acknowledging our dismay to read that many of you have not had a positive experience, which has allowed us to both reflect on our own initiatives, but also on the efficacy and direction of our advocacy. We are and will remain committed to pushing for facilities which are inclusive, and leading a conversation around acceptance and understanding.

In collaboration with the Inclusion and Diversity Committee, the Guild will seek to implement as much of this feedback as we can, and become even more visible in our leadership on LGBTI inclusion.

We look forward to seeing positive change.

Maddie Mulholland
103rd UWA Student Guild President
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Executive summary – key findings

This report provides a broad overview of the experience of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans (LGBT) students at The University of Western Australia (UWA). The pilot study upon which this report is based was the first of its kind conducted at the University. We also believe that it was a first for the Australian higher education sector, at least on this scale and with whole-of-university support.

The aims of the project were twofold: first, to ask LGBT students directly about their experience at UWA and, second, to offer recommendations to the University and the Student Guild for improving the LGBT student experience.

The recommendations are based on feedback from participants of the study as well as examples from around the globe. The report identifies where future efforts can be best placed for the University and the Student Guild to address the needs of students of diverse sexualities and genders.

The findings are based on responses from 264 UWA students to an anonymous online survey which combined quantitative and qualitative questions (see Appendix 1). The following summary presents the key findings of the research and concludes with a snapshot of our recommendations.

Student perception of campus climate

Participants perceive campus climate to be hostile towards trans students and comparatively friendly towards gay men.

Participants believe that trans students are most likely to experience harassment or discrimination and that female bisexual students are least likely to experience harassment or discrimination.

Just over half of participants (53.7%) reported not disclosing their sexual orientation, gender history/expression or history of transition at UWA in the past 12 months to avoid harassment or discrimination.

Classes and studies

Most participants (63.2%) view the climate of their classes to be accepting of LGBT people.

One fifth of participants (20%) said that their sexual orientation and/or gender identity/expression had disrupted their academic progress.
Campus activities and groups

Approximately a third of participants (30.8%) reported that their sexual orientation and/or gender identity/expression had affected their ability to socialise at UWA.

Eighteen percent of participants had at some point felt excluded from UWA clubs or societies on the basis of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity/expression.

Supports and resources

Three-quarters of participants (74.8%) are aware of the Student Guild Queer Department (QD), and 47.4% of these participants have interacted with or visited QD. Experiences, however, were polarised.

Just under half of the participants (48.1%) are aware of the Ally Program. Of those who are aware of the program, 61.6% believe that its existence has contributed to them feeling welcome at UWA.

Almost two-thirds of participants (62.6%) believe that UWA provides visible resources on LGBT issues and concerns.

Harassment and discrimination

In the past 12 months, 15.9% of participants had experienced harassment or discrimination at UWA because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Of these participants, 88% experienced harassment or discrimination from other students.

One quarter of participants (24.9%) had in the past 12 months witnessed harassment or discrimination against other people because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. The vast majority of these incidents (92.3%) were perpetrated by other students.

Reporting discrimination and harassment

Only 55.8% of students would be comfortable reporting LGBT harassment or discrimination to UWA.

The vast majority of participants (82%) are unsure as to whom they should report an incident of LGBT harassment or discrimination at UWA.

Safety

Most students (69%) agreed that UWA is a safe place.
A number of participants (8.9%) reported that in the past 12 months they had feared for their safety at UWA.

Trans, non-binary, and gender non-conforming students expressed concerns for their safety, particularly when it came to using toilets or displaying visible markers of being LGBT.

**UWA’s approach to LGBT issues**

A high percentage of participants (65.5%) are uncertain if UWA responds effectively to harassment or discrimination related to sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.

Many participants (41.3%) are uncertain if UWA has visible leadership from senior administration regarding issues of sexual orientation and gender identity.

Over 60% of participants believe that UWA is a welcoming place for LGBT students.

**Our recommendations**

The majority of participants agreed that UWA is a welcoming place. Nonetheless, about a third were undecided. What can be done for this second group of students? This report concludes with a list of recommendations on how the University would be able to improve the experience of LGBT students and ensure that they feel welcome at their chosen place of study. The recommendations are especially valuable because they are guided by feedback from the students themselves. In summary they are:

1. That campus climate for LGBT students be formally assessed at least once every five years
2. That the Inclusion and Diversity Committee coordinates efforts with the Student Guild to communicate to students the University’s ongoing implementation of LGBT initiatives
3. That QD and the Ally Program be better promoted to students via all the means available to them
4. That the topic of sexuality and gender diversity form its own subpage under the UWA “Student Experience” webpage
5. That there be a student-specific anti-bullying/anti-harassment policy and procedures document, written in a clear and user-friendly style
6. That UWA trials a compulsory online module for incoming students on equity and diversity issues and on anti-bullying/anti-harassment
7. That UWA investigates the possibility of compulsory equity and diversity modules for incoming and existing staff
8. That the University adopts the acronym LGBTIQA+ over the current usage, LGBTI, in order to explicitly include asexuals and additional identities

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1 LGBTIQA+ means lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex, queer, asexual, and more.
9. That nominees for the positions of Queer Officers be trained as Allies before they are elected and that the Queer Officers be accepting of all sexualities and gender identities/expressions

10. That unisex toilets be installed in the Student Guild and that future unisex toilets be devoted solely to the function of being unisex toilets (rather than being accessible toilets that are incidentally unisex)

Implementing these recommendations would go a considerable way towards addressing the issues currently faced by LGBT students at UWA.
Introduction

Campus climate is a lens through which to measure the experience of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans (LGBT) students in higher education (Tetreault, Fette, Meidlinger, & Hope, 2013). According to Rankin, Weber, Blumenfeld, and Frazer (2010), campus climate refers to the campus environments of colleges and universities. The same authors argue that students and employees are critical members of the campus community and therefore influence their institution’s climate. Campus climate significantly influences students’ learning and development because students who perceive and experience positive climates usually have positive learning outcomes (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Securing data on the existing climate for LGBT students would provide universities with important knowledge on how to improve the LGBT student experience. In addition, a warm campus climate is likely to have a positive effect on student recruitment and retention. A study from Canada has found that, in choosing colleges or universities, there was some tendency among LGBT participants (46%) to gravitate towards LGBT-positive institutions (Schneider & Dimito, 2010). According to the same study, nearly one third of participants (32%) reported choosing their institution or intended institution so as to “come out” away from home.

About this report

The pilot study upon which this report is based was the first to focus solely on the LGBT student experience at The University of Western Australia (UWA). Additionally, the study was almost certainly a first for the Australian higher education sector, at least on this scale. Very little research has been conducted to assess the state of campus climate for LGBT people in the Australian higher education sector. The major exception is Pride in Diversity’s annual Australian Workplace Equality Index (AWEI) survey of employees, which encompasses several member universities including UWA. That survey, however, does not involve students. This report aims to address the dearth of knowledge about LGBT students in Australia by drawing upon results of an anonymous online survey of 264 LGBT students from UWA. We therefore hope that our report will make a valuable contribution to future research and to diversity initiatives in Australian higher education settings.

Our survey employed the language used in most of the existing research. Hence, in keeping with previous studies, we used the term LGBT and did not include intersex participants. We noted in the participant information sheet (see Appendix 1) that our definition of trans was broad and based on the definition proposed by Hyde et al. (2013).

Aims of the report

The aims of the research project were twofold: to ask LGBT students directly about their experience at UWA and to offer recommendations to the University and the Student Guild for improving the LGBT student experience.
The recommendations in this report are based on feedback from participants of the study as well as best practice from around the globe. The report identifies where future efforts can be best placed for the University and the Student Guild to address the needs of students of diverse sexualities and genders.

Our goal is for this report to inform future policies and initiatives in order to improve campus climate for LGBT students at UWA. Moreover, we recommend that it provide a foundation for future data collection and comparison. Such research is necessary to monitor how effectively the University is meeting its obligations in creating a welcoming environment for LGBT students.

**Why this report matters**

In 2015, UWA had just over 24,500 enrolled students (The University of Western Australia, 2015). Yet, to date there have been no studies at UWA or in Australia targeting LGBT students to measure their experience of campus climate and to gather their ideas on how to improve LGBT student inclusion.

While UWA and the Student Guild (largely through the Queer Department or QD)² currently put on LGBT events, have policies in place to protect LGBT students, and provide LGBT resources and services, the study identified a number of issues relating to the experience of LGBT students at UWA. The University and the Student Guild are strongly encouraged to address these issues for several reasons, including the following: to promote the wellbeing of LGBT students, enhance student recruitment and retention, reduce discrimination and harassment, protect institutional reputation, and create a more welcoming campus climate.

The report provides recommendations to address the issues faced by LGBT students at UWA. Some of these recommendations will be relatively easy to implement. Other recommendations will be more complex and time-consuming to put into place; these in particular will require commitment and cooperation from one or several areas across the University.

Implementing these recommendations will have a positive impact across the institution as a whole, notably, on the decisions and actions of senior administrators; on the Student Guild and the groups within its remit as they engage with LGBT students; on students’ awareness of diversity issues and their attitudes and behaviours towards other students; and on teaching and professional staff when they engage with diverse student populations. In short, carrying out these recommendations will improve campus climate for LGBT students.

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² In the middle of our survey period, QD underwent a name change to become the Pride Department. However, for the sake of maintaining consistency with the survey instrument, we will continue to use the name of the Queer Department (QD) in this report.
Background research

In their landmark study, Hall and Sandler popularised the term “chilly” to describe the hostile climate experienced by female students which puts them at an educational disadvantage in relation to their male peers (1982). The term “chilly” has since been used to describe the climate experienced by other groups such as LGBT students (Blumenfeld, Weber, & Rankin, 2016). While institutions of higher education attempt to foster welcoming and inclusive environments, they are not immune to negative attitudes and discriminatory behaviours.

As microcosms of societal culture, places of higher learning are subject to attitudes and acts of prejudice, discrimination, and harassment (Nelson & Krieger, 1997). Rankin et al. (2010) found that, despite improvements in campus climates for LGBT people, negative experiences for these individuals were still commonplace. Jayakumar (2009) has argued, however, that, although universities reflect the sexual prejudices of the wider society, “they also have the capacity to resist or even transform these troubling viewpoints” (p. 676).

In her overview of literature addressing LGBT issues on campus, Renn (2010) argued that campus climate studies “are critical for uncovering persistent, systemic disadvantages based on identities and group membership, as well as for measuring progress where it is occurring” (p. 136). Such studies remain relevant because LGBT individuals generally rate campus climate as being chillier or less inviting than their non-LGBT peers (Brown, Clarke, Gortmaker, & Robinson-Keilig, 2004; Yost & Gilmore, 2011). The negative perception of campus climate is not surprising, given that LGBT students are liable to experience invisibility, multiple social identities, discrimination, and the dominant heteronormative culture (Schueler, Hoffman, & Peterson, 2008).

Major studies in the US and UK have further illuminated our understanding of the experiences and perceptions of LGBT students at colleges and universities. We refer to these in the Findings section. With the exception of two cross-campus studies in the UK involving LGBT students (Ellis, 2009) and LGBT students and staff (Valentine, Wood, & Plummer, 2009), much of the notable research of campus climate has originated from the US, with the most comprehensive to date being the study conducted by Rankin et al. (2010). In addition to the published material, several institutions (e.g. University of Northern Florida, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis) have undertaken assessments of campus climate, and their reports are available online.

LGBT young people in Australia

Australia actively courts a reputation as a friendly country for LGBT people (Jones, 2016). However, research conducted among LGBT young people paints a different picture (Hillier et al., 2010; Robinson, Bansel, Denson, Ovenden, & Davies, 2014; Smith et al., 2014). In recent years, substantial LGBT student research has been conducted at Australian high
schools in the areas of policy (Jones, 2015, 2016; Jones & Hillier, 2012), cross-national studies (Ferfolja, 2015; Meyer & Stader, 2009), bisexual students (Jones & Hillier, 2014; Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2010, 2011, 2014), and trans and gender non-conforming students (Jones et al., 2016). The focus on schools has led to the development of resources aimed at improving the climate for LGBT school students, such as the 2014 launch of the national program Safe Schools Coalition Australia, funded by the Australian Government’s Department of Education and Training. In our home state of Western Australia, the WA Equal Opportunity Commission published The Guidelines for Supporting Sexual and Gender Diversity in Schools (2013), aimed at addressing bullying directed against LGBTI students in public and private schools. Murdoch University in Perth recently released a resource booklet for English high school teachers, with the aim of enhancing discussion of LGBTI rights in the English curriculum (Pearce, Gardiner, Cumming-Potvin, & Martino, 2016).

The research conducted in Australian high schools and about young people in general could offer insights into the experiences of young LGBT students in Australian higher education. For instance, 40% of participants of the large-scale study by Hillier et al. (2010) were either attending university or TAFE (Technical and Further Education). As with findings from the US (Guittar, 2014), the study indicates that young people are coming out at an increasingly early age, around the age of 16. That young people are coming out at an earlier age might explain why rates of homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia among young people have steadily risen in recent years (Hillier et al., 2010). Consistent with research into campus climate in the US and UK (Rankin et al., 2010; Valentine et al., 2009), Australian studies of LGBT young people found homophobia and transphobia to be largely inflicted by fellow students (Hillier et al., 2010; Robinson et al., 2014). That these major studies (Hillier et al., 2010; Robinson et al., 2014; Smith et al., 2014) are devoted to measuring the mental health and wellbeing of LGBT young people is indicative of concerns over the health repercussions associated with homophobia and transphobia.

The presence of institutional support for LGBT students, along with the students’ awareness of such support, has found to be beneficial to their wellbeing and school experience. One conclusion from studies of Australian schools is that young people can feel safer at school through the implementation of appropriate policies and practices (Hillier et al., 2010). Jones and Hillier (2012) have detailed links between education policies protecting LGBT students and significantly decreased likelihoods of violence, suicide risk, and self-harm for LGBT students. Similarly, well-promoted policies against homophobia can decrease the risk of self-harm and suicide among students (Jones, 2016). In short, as Jones and Hillier (2012) have concluded, “policy-based protection makes a positive difference” (p. 443).

**Australian universities**

In contrast to the school environment, institutions of higher education have traditionally been imagined as liberal spaces (Valentine et al., 2009). State and Commonwealth governments in Australia have enacted legislation to prohibit discrimination on the
grounds of sexual orientation and gender history (Australian Government, 1984; Government of Western Australia, 1984). UWA is legally required to comply with these legislations. The notion of universities as liberal spaces, and thus as institutions that not only accept but promote diversity, could be one reason for the dearth of published research devoted to the LGBT student experience in Australian universities. Another possible reason is the fact that there are only 43 universities in Australia: 37 public Australian universities, three private universities, two international universities, and one private speciality university (Department of Education and Training, 2015).

Nonetheless, as student numbers continue to rise at Australian universities, the need for research into the LGBT student experience has become increasingly important. The Department of Education and Training report that the number of domestic higher education students has more than doubled since 1989, reaching just over a million in 2014 (2015). The inclusion of international student numbers (n=347,650) meant that around 1.4 million were enrolled in higher education in 2014 (Department of Education and Training, 2015). According to the same government report, the vast majority of these students (92%) were enrolled at a university.

Despite the growth in student numbers, there has been no published research about the experience of LGBT students within universities. A study by Hong (1983) explored the attitudes of heterosexual university students from a provincial Queensland city (Toowoomba) towards homosexuality. A second study by Hong (1984) compared the response of a sample of the Toowoomba public towards homosexuality with that of the students in the previous study. The studies did not, however, set out to explore campus climate.
The University of Western Australia

“The Charter […] recognises that students are central to a dynamic University community. In so doing the University recognises the importance of student rights, responsibilities and opinion and encourages diversity within the student body.”

The University of Western Australia’s Charter of Student Rights and Responsibilities

UWA has had a longstanding commitment to LGBT advocacy. This report provides an introduction to the key research undertaken at UWA and the two main support services currently available to LGBT students.

The Rainbow Project

From what we can gather, the only published study into campus climate for LGBT people in Australia involves the Rainbow Project, which was based at UWA (Goody & de Vries, 2002). The study had several components. One was a survey of students regarding their attitudes towards and awareness of LGBT people and issues. In addition, two informal forums (one for LGBT staff, the other for non-LGBT staff) were conducted to obtain staff perspectives. The student survey had methodological limitations, given that the survey was administered to students in large lecture classes, and therefore likely to have compromised participant anonymity and responses (Sullivan, Goody, McFarlane, & Fialho, 2002). Moreover, the study did not actively recruit LGBT participants. As a result, from a total of 754 completed and returned surveys, 92.8% of participants identified as heterosexual, thereby leading to a low response rate from LGBT students: 2.4% identified as bisexual, 1.7% identified as homosexual, 0.8% identified as trans, while 2.3% of participants made no response to the question about their sexual orientation (Sullivan et al., 2002). Ultimately, the survey aimed to understand student attitudes towards, and knowledge about, LGBT people, rather than targeting LGBT students for their experience of campus climate.

The Rainbow Project found that UWA student perceptions of LGBT people were mostly favourable and that the students were accepting of LGBT people (Goody & de Vries, 2002; Sullivan et al., 2002). However, there were several key indicators that negative societal beliefs about LGBT people were a part of the campus climate (Sullivan et al., 2002). According to Sullivan et al. (2002), male students were less accepting of gay men than they were of lesbians, while female students were less accepting of lesbians than they were of gay men. Almost 41% of participants said that seeing two gay men being affectionate in public made them uncomfortable, whereas 24.6% agreed that public displays of affection between lesbians made them uncomfortable. The study also found “significant correlations between knowledge scores (about GLBTI people and their issues) and attitudes towards GLBTI people,” leading the authors to conclude that “the more students know about GLBTI people and their related issues, the more positive their
attitude is toward GLBTI people” (p. 13). These key findings of UWA student attitudes towards LGBT people are now fifteen years old. Our study aims to discover the main issues faced by LGBT students at UWA in 2016.

**Ally Program**

The Ally Program was introduced to UWA following the recommendations provided by the Rainbow Project (Goody & de Vries, 2002). UWA was the first to introduce the Ally Program into the Australian higher education sector (Skene, Hogan, de Vries, & Goody, 2008). Originally appearing in US campuses in the early 1990s, the aim of the Ally program at UWA was to extend the University’s diversity initiatives into the area of sexuality (Skene et al., 2008). The program trains Allies (which at UWA includes both LGBT and non-LGBT people) to create a more diverse and inclusive campus culture by promoting greater visibility and awareness of LGBT staff and students and the issues they face.

The Ally program is currently overseen by Equity and Diversity, which sits in Human Resources, and therefore has a strong staff focus. The 2008 evaluation of the program by Skene et al. evaluated the effectiveness of the program among Allies. It did not evaluate the effectiveness or awareness of the program among UWA LGBT staff and/or students. Given the importance of the Ally Program to UWA’s history of LGBT advocacy, we believe it is necessary to evaluate its impact on the LGBT student experience at the University.

**Queer Department (QD)**

The UWA Student Guild is the union that represents all students at the University. The Guild provides students with support services, along with events and opportunities for volunteering. The Guild’s Departments are composed of collectives that represent certain issues or groups. As such, the Departments form part of the Guild’s representation of all students at UWA.

The Guild’s main representation and support service for LGBT students is the Queer Department (QD).³ QD is run by two elected LGBT officers, holds regular events for LGBT students, and has a room in the Guild Village that includes LGBT resources. QD has had a long history of activism. In its inaugural year (1979), the Homosexuality Information Department (as QD was then known) ran a campaign to encourage students to come out without fear on campus (Leong-Salobir, 2013). Leong-Salobir notes that as part of these efforts a phone-in on homosexuality was organised for new students during Orientation. Given that QD is the main support service for LGBT students at UWA, it is important to evaluate its impact on students at the University.

³ As previously mentioned, QD underwent a name change to become the Pride Department in the middle of our survey period.
Survey methodology

The study focused on the perception of campus climate by LGBT students at UWA. It did not include the perception of campus climate by any staff or by students who do not identify as LGBT. Therefore, like several existing studies, it focused solely on LGBT students in higher education (Ellis, 2009; Garvey & Rankin, 2015; Garvey, Taylor, & Rankin, 2015; Rankin, 2005; Tetreault et al., 2013).

The survey instrument comprised both quantitative and qualitative questions (see Appendix 1). A number of the survey questions were adapted from previous studies of campus climate or LGBT populations to enable comparisons with these studies (Hyde et al., 2013; Rankin, 2003; Rankin et al., 2010; University of North Florida Commission on Diversity Committee on Lesbian, 2011). Permission to adapt the survey instruments was sought from and granted by the lead investigators of the above studies. Our questions were modified and expanded as necessary to ensure their appropriateness for the Australian higher education sector and UWA in particular. We then held a focus group in February 2016 with a current Queer Officer, a former Queer Officer, and a LGBT student to refine the questions and ensure they were culturally appropriate. Ethics approval to conduct the study was obtained from UWA’s Human Ethics Office.

The survey was launched online using Qualtrics Survey Software. This was an anonymous, cross-sectional, internet-based study of LGBT students enrolled at UWA aged 18 and older. All questions apart from those to determine eligibility for the study were voluntary. The survey covered the following topics: perception of campus climate for LGBT students at UWA; safety on campus; harassment and discrimination; classroom environment and academic disruption; experience of social settings and groups; level of administrative support; and perception of available resources and services. Participants were also asked if the experience for LGBT students at UWA could be improved and, if so, how this could be achieved. In the section on demographics, we included the category of heterosexual as a sexual orientation in order to enable heterosexual trans people to identify as such. The study was originally intended to include focus groups with survey participants who had nominated to attend. However, given the higher-than-expected response rate to the survey and the amount of data we subsequently received, we decided that these focus groups were unnecessary.

The survey ran from 14 April to 30 June 2016 and was promoted extensively via multiple modes including print, social media, email, and LMS (Learning Management System). Posters were put up at the Student Guild, around the Crawley and Nedlands campuses, and at the Telethon Kids Institute. It was neither feasible nor practical for us to put up posters at certain campuses due to their geographical distance and size (Albany and Claremont, respectively). It was difficult to target medical students with posters because of the time these students spend at hospital locations. However, a poster was displayed

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4 UWA uses Blackboard, an e-learning software which students access in order to obtain lecture recordings and assignment questions, download online readings and other documents, upload and receive their assignments, interact with course members, and so on.
and flyers placed at the Medical and Dentistry Library situated at a nearby hospital. Flyers were also placed at the two main university libraries, Reid Library and the Science/Barry Marshall Library. Posters were displayed and flyers left at Student Central (the location for Student Administration, Student Support Services, and the Global Learning Office), the chaplaincy office, and several Student Guild club rooms including that of the Queer Department. Flyers were handed out to students at a quiz night held by the Queer Department, which coincided with the launch of the study.

Staff from all five residential colleges agreed to promote the study to residents via posters and/or emails. A webpage (linked to Equity and Diversity) as well as Twitter and Facebook accounts were also created to target UWA-based groups and social networks. The study was promoted through the social media and/or email networks of Student Support Services, the Queer Department, UWA BTW (Bi the Way) (the UWA bisexual network coordinated by the lead investigator of the study), and a number of individual staff members. A callout was placed in the Guild Weekly online newsletter, the Postgraduate Students’ Association online newsletter, and the UWA Career Hub webpage. The UWA student magazine Pelican ran individual interviews with three students over several weeks to promote the study on their social media pages and website.

All the faculties and schools (with the exception of a faculty and a school) promoted the study to their students via email or LMS. Through the Senior Diversity Officer, the study was emailed to the Ally Network and LGBTI Staff Network. Personal contacts, such as LGBT students known to the researchers, were also approached and invited to participate in the survey.

A total of 279 responses were recorded. Six responses (1.4%) were excluded because they did not answer any survey questions, while 9 responses (2.2%) were excluded because they identified as both heterosexual and cisgender/non-trans, and were therefore ineligible for the study. We were left with 264 responses for data analysis. Each participant was given a unique ID code for data analysis. The quantitative data was analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics, version 23, and the qualitative data was thematically analysed using NVivo, version 11.

**Limitations**

As with all empirical studies, there were limitations to the study’s research design. This was a pilot study which surveyed only LGBT students rather than the entire student population or staff members, and which therefore did not enable comparisons with non-LGBT students or with staff. Random sampling was cost-prohibitive and unfeasible due to the small size of the LGBT population; given previous studies of the adult population (Gates, 2014; Office for National Statistics, 2016; Richters et al., 2014), the LGB population at UWA is likely to comprise 1.7% to 3.1% of students from a total population of around 24,500 enrolments.5

5 The trans population could be around 0.3% of the general population (Gates, 2014).
Sexuality and gender identity are sensitive topics for many and are subject to various social, religious, and legal customs. As a result, it is possible that we recruited students who are more likely to be “out” than students who are not. The survey questions were not validated. There may be some degree of response bias in the sample, but we conducted an anonymous study to minimise this possibility. Given the anonymous nature of the survey, we cannot be certain that all respondents were UWA students or LGBT UWA students. Although we checked for duplicate responses, we do not know if any participants completed the survey more than once, as we did not collect any identifying information (e.g. student numbers) for the sake of protecting anonymity. Not all students will have readily available internet access and it is possible that those of higher socioeconomic status may have been more likely to take part in the study. Participants who had experienced more serious incidents of harassment or discrimination may have been more likely to respond, thus biasing our study in the direction of negative campus experiences. Although the sample size necessitates caution when interpreting the results, it is likely that the study delivers a reasonable overview of the LGBT student experience and provides a starting point for further research.
Findings

Participant demographics

A total of 264 people took part in the study. This number represents 1.1% of the 24,547 students enrolled at UWA as at 31 March 2015, the latest figures provided by the University (The University of Western Australia, 2015). Estimates of the percentage of adults in the population who identify as LGB varies across studies, ranging from 1.7% to 3.1% (Gates, 2014; Office for National Statistics, 2016; Richters et al., 2014). Higher levels of LGB identities exist among younger populations (Gates, 2014), with the 16- to 24-year-old age range almost doubling the general adult population in a recent major UK report (Office for National Statistics, 2016). The size of the trans population is unknown, but estimates suggest that it could be around 0.3% of the general population (Gates, 2014). We believe that we are likely to have recruited close to the majority of the target population and therefore our findings are probably representative of the LGBT student experience at UWA.

Our survey was open to undergraduate and postgraduate students. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 47 years, with a mean age of 22.5 years (SD=5.2). The largest single group of participants in our study comprised third year or later undergraduate students (31.7%, n=64), followed by second year undergraduate students (19.3%, n=39), postgraduate students (e.g. Masters or PhD) (19.3%, n=39), first year undergraduate students (14.9%, n=30), postgraduate professional students (8.4%, n=17), and Honours students (6.9%, n=14).

The frequencies of each field of study reported are displayed in Table 1. The categories are not mutually exclusive and therefore students who studied across faculties are listed in more than one faculty. A previous study found that LGBT participants gravitated towards the arts and sciences (Tetreault et al., 2013). This is consistent with our findings, in which the highest percentages of participants were from Arts (31.3%, n=70) and Science (19.2%, n=43). However, given that these percentages are not consistent with the student load, they are unlikely to reflect the proportion of faculty enrolments: as at 3 September 2015, the student load for Arts was 14%, while for Science, the largest faculty, the load was 25% (The University of Western Australia, 2015). The discrepancy might be explained in part by the fact that the Faculty of Science elected not to promote the study to its students, but we cannot be certain that this is a cause. Twenty-nine students chose not to identify their field of study.

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6 194 participants answered the question about their age.
7 202 participants answered the question about their status.
8 Note that the student load is based on the equivalent full-time student load (EFTSL), not total enrolments per faculty. Figures for the latter were not readily available.
Table 1: Participant fields of study by UWA Faculties (n=206)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Frequency (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Architecture, Landscape and Visual Arts</td>
<td>6 (2.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>70 (31.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business School</td>
<td>24 (10.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>&lt; 5 (&lt; 2.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering, Computing and Mathematics</td>
<td>23 (10.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>10 (4.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences</td>
<td>18 (8.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Indigenous Studies</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>43 (19.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>29 (13.0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the participants, 45.8% (n=93) identified as men, of whom 10.8% (n=10) were trans; 41.4% (n=84) identified as women, of whom 15.5% (n=13) were trans; and 12.8% (n=26) identified as non-binary, agender, bigender, genderqueer, or genderfluid. Out of a total of 203 responses to this question, 11.3% (n=23) identified as trans. It is difficult to know if we recruited a representative sample of the LGBT student population by gender or gender identity, given that the University collects details of gender according to male and female alone, with 50.1% of students identifying as female (The University of Western Australia, 2015).

The most common sexual orientation was bisexual (36.8%, n=74), followed by gay (male) (35.3%, n=71), lesbian (16.4%, n=33), queer (15.9%, n=32), other (8.5%, n=17), asexual (7%, n=14), questioning (7%, n=14), and heterosexual with a trans identity (1.5%, n=3). The sexual orientations reported under “other” included pansexual, aromantic, fluid, and undefined under the umbrella of LGBT. This is reasonably consistent with previous studies which indicate that bisexuals form the largest single LGBT group and that men are more likely to identify as LGB (Office for National Statistics, 2016; Richters et al., 2014). Some people have multiple orientations, and so participants were able to identify in more than one category. Figure 1 shows the proportion of sexual orientations among participants.

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9 201 participants answered the question about their sexual orientation.
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander participants comprised 3.5% (n=7) of the study, which is consistent with the national Aboriginal population of around 3% (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011). However, the percentage of international students in our study comprised 12.3% (n=25), which is not comparable to the percentage of international students at the University; as at 31 March 2015, international students made up 19.3% of student enrolments (The University of Western Australia, 2015). Despite our best efforts to recruit Aboriginal and international students, we did not perform any sub-analyses of these two groups because of insufficient participants.

Twenty-seven percent of participants (n=55) have lived in a residential college during their time at UWA.

Perception of campus climate

Participants were asked for their perception of the campus environment for LGBT students. They were asked to consider the likelihood that individual groups (lesbian students, gay male students, female bisexual students, male bisexual students, and trans students) would be accepted at UWA.

Participants believe that gay male students are most likely to be accepted, followed by lesbian students, bisexual students, and trans students. (There was essentially no perceived difference in the acceptance levels of female and male bisexual students.) Almost two-thirds of participants (63%, n=165) believe the campus environment to be somewhat or very accepting of gay male students, whereas less than a fifth of participants (17.9%, n=46) believe it to be somewhat or very accepting of trans students. Therefore, in terms of acceptance, participants perceived campus climate to be unfriendly (or “chilly”) towards trans students and comparatively friendly (or “warm”) towards gay men.

10 199 participants answered the question about whether they were Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, while 203 answered the question about whether they were an international student.

11 203 participants answered the question about whether they had ever lived in a residential college during their studies.
While around 40% of students from the Rainbow Project (the overwhelming majority of whom were heterosexual) expressed discomfort at the thought of two men being affectionate in public (Sullivan et al., 2002), the respondents of our study might have based their perception about gay male acceptance at UWA on the predominance or “overrepresentation” of gay male perspectives in media reports of the LGBT community (McKinnon, Gorman-Murray, & Dominey-Howes, 2016) and/or on the related phenomenon of “gay male privilege,” in particular, the privileging of cisgender/non-trans, gay, white masculinity within the LGBT community (Martinez, 1998).

Table 2 details the participants’ perception of how likely groups of LGBT students would be accepted according to sexuality or gender identity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Somewhat or very accepting n(%)</th>
<th>Neutral n(%)</th>
<th>Somewhat or very unaccepting n(%)</th>
<th>Do not know n(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lesbian (n=262)</td>
<td>119 (45.4)</td>
<td>50 (19.1)</td>
<td>19 (7.3)</td>
<td>74 (28.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay male (n=261)</td>
<td>165 (63.2)</td>
<td>31 (11.9)</td>
<td>20 (7.7)</td>
<td>45 (17.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female bisexual (n=260)</td>
<td>103 (39.6)</td>
<td>47 (18.1)</td>
<td>26 (10)</td>
<td>84 (32.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male bisexual (n=259)</td>
<td>102 (39.4)</td>
<td>38 (14.7)</td>
<td>39 (15.1)</td>
<td>80 (30.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trans (n=257)</td>
<td>46 (17.9)</td>
<td>40 (15.6)</td>
<td>85 (33.1)</td>
<td>86 (33.5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants were also asked for their perception of how likely students would be to experience discrimination or harassment on campus as a result of their LGBT sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. Table 3 below reports on the results of these perceptions.

Participants believe that trans students would be most likely to experience harassment or discrimination and that female bisexual students would be least likely to experience harassment or discrimination. Indeed, twice as many participants (53.4%, n=135) believe that trans students are somewhat or very likely to experience discrimination or harassment at UWA compared to female bisexual students (26.6%, n=68). Results for perceptions of male bisexual students, lesbian students, and gay male students were very similar (ranging from 32.4% to 33.7%). The participants’ perception that trans students would be most likely to experience harassment or discrimination reflects previous studies that found rates of harassment experienced by trans students to be highest among all LGBT students (Garvey & Rankin, 2015; Valentine et al., 2009).
**Table 3: Participants’ perception of the likelihood of groups facing harassment or discrimination on campus as a result of sexuality or gender identity/expression**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Somewhat or very likely n(%)</th>
<th>Neutral n(%)</th>
<th>Somewhat or very unlikely n(%)</th>
<th>Do not know n(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lesbian (n=252)</strong></td>
<td>83 (32.9)</td>
<td>40 (15.9)</td>
<td>86 (34.1)</td>
<td>43 (17.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gay male (n=252)</strong></td>
<td>85 (33.7)</td>
<td>39 (15.5)</td>
<td>99 (39.3)</td>
<td>29 (11.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Female bisexual (n=256)</strong></td>
<td>68 (26.6)</td>
<td>33 (12.9)</td>
<td>102 (39.8)</td>
<td>53 (20.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Male bisexual (n=253)</strong></td>
<td>82 (32.4)</td>
<td>34 (13.4)</td>
<td>86 (34)</td>
<td>51 (20.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trans (n=253)</strong></td>
<td>135 (53.4)</td>
<td>24 (9.5)</td>
<td>40 (15.8)</td>
<td>54 (21.3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Disclosing sexual orientation and gender identity**

The prior literature indicates that LGB students are likelier than their heterosexual peers to experience prejudice and, subsequently, hide their sexual identities (Rankin, 2003). Students who feel the need to hide their identities and have experienced negative consequences based on LGBT bias are more likely than their peers to consider campus climate as less positive and less safe, and to consider alternatives such as leaving (Tetreault et al., 2013).

Given the results of such studies, we wanted to ask our participants if they had at any time in the past 12 months not disclosed their sexual orientation, gender history/expression or history of transition at UWA in order to avoid harassment or discrimination. Just over half of participants (53.7%, n=115) responded in the affirmative. This is consistent with a 2003 study which found that 51% of respondents concealed their sexual identity/gender identity in the past year to avoid intimidation (Rankin).

A number of participants who expanded qualitatively on their surveys said that they did not disclose their LGBT identity at all; that is, they were not “out” at UWA. Many of these participants were afraid they might be “judged” or treated “differently” if people knew about their LGBT identity. Participants who were not out often reported a highly cautious, safer than sorry attitude to non-disclosure.

*I am not out as transgender to any of my university friends, only [to] my friends from school who knew me previously. This is due to the extremely diverse cultures at UWA, of which I am sure most would be accepting but and I feel safer [with] them not knowing.* [P20]

*I am a closeted bisexual male. I feel that coming out in any way invites more trouble than benefit.* [P22]

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12 214 participants answered the question about non-disclosure of their sexual orientation, gender history/expression or history of transition.

13 Some participant quotes have been lightly edited to remove spelling and grammatical infelicities.
Some participants currently do not disclose their identity because of past negative experiences when coming out:

I don’t disclose my orientation. Tried to when first at UWA and received backlash, have not been out at UWA since, as I feel it would hamper career efforts. [P31]

I keep my sexuality quite private as in past experiences women tend to distance themselves (because I’m a lesbian) or stop talking to me altogether, and men have made inappropriate comments. [P32]

Many participants choose not to disclose their sexual orientation or gender because they want control of their image. This wish for control appears to be linked to the need to minimise potential negative outcomes.

[...] I do not advertise my sexuality publicly through social media either through a statement of whom I’m interested in, photos of me at certain ‘gay’ clubs, or more intimate pictures (say kissing or hugging/other close body contact, shirtless on holiday or at the beach with another guy) of me and my current or previous male partners. To do this, I must individually manage the friends who are allowed to see the more private pictures, as I have many UWA friends and acquaintances through social media that I do not share my personal life with. This is so when I apply for committee positions or begin working on projects (in classes or casual work at UWA), where I am often in a leadership and/or management position, there is no judgement on my leadership capabilities or whether my views will be ‘influenced’/‘affected’ simply because I am gay. [P01]

I have to correct myself in conversation to not talk about the woman I’m currently dating or past relationships with women in order to avoid outing myself. [P58]

It sucks but I’d rather live a lie than have people judge me or base their expectations on something I don’t control – stereotype me before they know me. [P138]

Others were reluctant to disclose their identity, particularly in new or certain situations, for fear of harassment, discrimination, or lack of acceptance.

I generally don’t tell people my orientation until I feel that they would respond positively. [P02]

In general I disclose neither my sexuality nor my gender identity because a) it is rarely relevant and b) I fear harassment/discrimination. [P05]

If students do not feel safe enough to disclose information about their sexuality or gender diversity at UWA, then they are unlikely to feel a strong or complete sense of belonging here. It appears from the comments above that some participants do not feel that the
Climate of the University is as welcoming to them as it is to their peers, including peers whom they fear might end up harassing or discriminating against them.

**Climate of classes**

Negative experiences and unfair treatment by teaching staff can have an impact on LGBT students’ perceptions of climate and likelihood of leaving (Tetreault et al., 2013). We therefore wanted to ask participants if the climate of their classes is accepting of LGBT people. It was explained that the climate included everything from the subject matter taught in class, to teachers’ attitudes towards LGBT people, and the impact their peers have on them during class.

Of the 220 responses received, two-thirds of participants viewed the climate of their classes to be accepting of LGBT people, with 20% (n=44) strongly agreeing, 43.2% (n=95) agreeing, 27.7% (n=61) being uncertain, 8.2% (n=18) disagreeing and 0.9% (n=2) strongly disagreeing. We did not provide an opportunity for participants to elaborate on their response about class climate. However, some participants went on to provide details about personally experiencing or witnessing negative experiences in other sections, notably in those pertaining to discrimination and recommendations.

**Disruptions to academic progress**

Participants were asked if their sexual orientation and/or gender identity/expression had ever disrupted their academic progress.14 Twenty percent of participants (n=44) responded that their sexual orientation and/or gender identity/expression had caused disruption.

The major themes that emerged from the qualitative analysis were: feelings of discomfort in class or around other students, and mental health issues as a result of coming to terms with an LGBT identity or as a result of homophobia or transphobia. Discomfort in classroom situations or at university stemmed from negative impressions of teaching staff or feelings of insecurity around other students.

*In one class I had to write a short piece on my childhood. With my tutor being extremely Christian I felt like I could not write about my actual childhood honestly, and could also not approach the tutor to explain my situation, fearing their perception of me would alter with negative consequences. Besides from the tutor, I also was not too comfortable writing about my childhood as it was a challenging experience growing up the wrong gender.* [P20]

*It makes me too nervous to talk to classmates sometimes so I have no one I can talk to or ask about uni work, so a lot of the time I work by myself which makes uni more difficult. I’m always worried they’ll end up finding out and be uncomfortable.* [P135]

14 220 participants answered the question about potential disruptions to their academic progress.
By far the most detrimental impact on academic performance was existing poor mental health, mainly depression. Poor mental health was often a result of experiences indirectly linked to university, such as coming to terms with an LGBT identity or coming out to family and friends.

*The negative impact of my sexual orientation on my mental health has had a negative impact on my overall academic career e.g. GPA [grade point average]. [P34]*

*During the time when I came out to my family who didn't really take it well, my marks really suffered [P57]*

However, these mental health conditions were sometimes exacerbated by the pressures of being at university.

*Transitioning and [studying] Honours at the same time was not a good experience. Mental disaster. [P24]*

The above comments suggest that disruptions to academic progress are likely to originate from confluent factors including those that are external to UWA and over which the University has no control. However, while the University cannot control certain factors pertaining to a student’s personal life and wellbeing, it should nonetheless be firmly committed to minimising its contribution to a student’s current or potential mental health problems in order for the student to achieve their academic potential.

The issue of mental health is especially pressing for LGBT students and young people. Australian studies indicate that, as a result of homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia, LGBT young people are at a higher risk of depression, anxiety, self-harm, suicidal thoughts, and suicide than their peers (Hillier et al., 2010; Robinson et al., 2014; Smith et al., 2014). These findings reflect studies conducted in the US confirming similar mental health disparities among LGBT higher education students, with the worst outcomes experienced by trans people and bisexuals (Effrig, Bieschke, & Locke, 2011; Kerr, Santurri, & Peters, 2013; Oswalt & Wyatt, 2011; Woodford, Howell, Silverschanz, & Yu, 2012).

Queer Officers and staff who have contact with LGBT students can play a crucial role in mitigating mental health risk by creating a climate in which these students feel safe and their needs are heard and met.

**Socialising at UWA**

Participants’ LGBT identities had an impact on their interaction with others. Approximately a third of participants (30.8%, n=64) reported that their sexual orientation and/or gender identity/expression had affected their ability to socialise at UWA.15

15 208 participants answered the question about whether their sexual orientation and/or gender identity/expression had ever affected their ability to socialise at UWA.
Some participants explained that they felt constrained in their interaction with others as a result of self-censorship, sticking to neutral topics of conversation, or avoiding being open about their partners.

*It is difficult to open up to someone when you are hiding something, especially if that something is a big part of your life. Thus, I am confined to neutral conversation topics like things related to school/uni.* [P90]

[…]*I often decide not to bring my current partner to any UWA social events as I don’t want to have to spend an evening explaining that, contrary to their beliefs, I am indeed gay and that my male guest is not just my friend.* [P01]

A few participants expressed heightened alertness or a degree of anxiety in their interaction with others.

*Sometimes talking to people they’ll say something that puts you on notice for the rest of the conversation and/or association with them.* [P14]

*My sexual orientation and gender expression can sometimes cause anxiety in social situations, especially around new people.* [P29]

A number of participants felt that their ability to socialise was impacted by people’s reception of their gender identity or gender expression.

*On a general level, some people will not let up re: questions about my gender identity or the way I swing. It’s taxing and I hate being put in a position where I’m forced to discuss these things with total strangers. I avoid these situations. Occasionally, I can gauge whether it will come up or whether someone is about to interrogate me about it, so I can slip away from these conversations. But, sometimes, I can’t. It makes socialising, networking and group work emotionally exhausting.* [P13]

These comments suggest that LGBT students believe the climate at UWA to be one that privileges sexual and gender norms to which many participants do not conform and which leaves some of them anxious or guarded in their interaction with others. As a result, these participants feel unable to speak freely about some important aspects of their lives, such as their partners, for fear of outing themselves as LGBT. These limitations on the participants’ ability to socialise are likely to have a negative impact on their opportunities to form close friendships at the University and participate fully in campus communities.
UWA clubs and societies

Some participants felt neither accepted by nor comfortable within UWA clubs and societies. Eighteen percent (n=38) had at some point felt excluded on the basis of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity/expression.\(^{16}\)

Several participants felt unwelcome or potentially unwelcome by one or more clubs.

> Not necessarily excluded, but I have felt uncomfortable in joining because of fear of discrimination. [P57]

> The [name of social club redacted] is not very accepting when it comes to gay members. [P106]

Some participants reported negative experiences from, or at least expected to be discriminated against by, faith-based or cultural groups.

> Any of the societies with a strong religious or cultural background tend to be less welcoming. On one occasion when passing a stall that represented a specific cultural group I was openly stared at and pointed out by group members. [P37]

A number of participants believe that certain clubs and social events conformed to heteronormative or drinking cultures, making them ultimately unwelcoming places for many LGBT students.

> Certain societies and clubs have quite a heteronormative culture. This means certain characteristics must be displayed to work within them. [P41]

> Some of the orientation camps involve hooking up competitions etc. I think for non-straight students you do feel a little left out of the fun of these games. [P30]

Institutes of higher education are diverse and cosmopolitan spaces that by their very nature bring together individuals and groups with different views and values (Valentine et al., 2009). Heteronormativity within UWA, or the privileging of heterosexuality as the norm, mirrors and is reinforced by heteronormativity within society. It is unsurprising that some participants report feeling unwelcome in spaces where other students either consciously or unconsciously place pressure on them to act in (“straight”) ways that contradict their sexual orientation. While many of the students in these spaces might not be actively promoting negative attitudes towards LGBT people, they nonetheless reinforce norms that exclude marginalised sexualities and/or gender expressions.

A study by Valentine et al. (2009) has identified tensions between LGBT people and faith-based groups within the UK higher education sector. As indicated by some of our

\(^{16}\) 211 participants answered the question about whether they had ever felt excluded from any UWA clubs or societies because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity/expression.
participants, these tensions also exist at UWA. However, like studies before us, we caution against generalisations that all faiths (including groups within a single faith) are necessarily anti-LGBT and that all LGBT people are dismissive of religion (Holland, Matthews, & Schott, 2013; Valentine et al., 2009). We believe that the Student Guild could play an active role in promoting the acceptance of LGBT students within the faith-based groups under its remit.

UWA enrolls students from around the world, including countries where LGBT people, issues, and rights are not recognised to the same extent as they are in Australia. Indeed, homosexual intimacy might be outlawed in some of these countries. While a student’s cultural background is likely to play a part in their attitudes regarding LGBT people, these attitudes are open to change due to various factors. In other words, it is possible for a person’s ideas to change over the course of their time at University. In one US study, three out of four students reported that they were accepting of same-sex relationships by their senior year, thereby indicating a shift in attitude (Jayakumar, 2009). Participation in diversity coursework and programs, along with exposure and interaction across sexual orientations, are factors in helping reduce negative attitudes towards LGBT people (Jayakumar, 2009).

**Queer Department (QD)**

While some clubs were singled out for their members’ exclusionary behaviours or attitudes, the vast majority of complaints were directed towards the Queer Department (QD). Approximately three-quarters of participants (74.8%, n=154) are aware of QD, and 47.4% (n=73) of those students have interacted with or visited QD. The latter participants were invited to elaborate on their experiences. What emerged from their comments is that the experiences of QD were polarised.

A large number of participants described QD as being unwelcoming, cliquey, and uncomfortably political.

*People in the Queer Department are very unwelcoming to those they believe don’t fit the stereotypes of an LGBTQ person, and are very exclusive. In fact, in my experience it can be quite a hostile environment at times which is very uncomfortable. It does make me feel very alone as they are the one group I feel I can safely identify with.* [P32]

*Didn’t seem particularly welcoming, it seemed fairly cliquey (noticed this with most Queer groups to be honest)* [P59]

*I found it a little uncomfortable because the people there were incredibly political and there were a lot of arguments.* [P78]

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17 206 participants answered the question about whether they were aware of QD.
Not an adequately open social group. Many frequent members hold somewhat radical views and don’t provide the breadth of acceptance that should be expressed in a department for marginalised individuals. [P146]

In contrast, a similar number of students reported positive experiences of QD.

One of the members is in a club I am also in, I have spoken to him and some other members at O Day. Everyone seems very lovely and welcoming. [P18]

I have been able to form an accepting, diverse and relatable support network within QD and spend much of my time on campus there. [P29]

I have always had a wonderful time with QD. They are tons of fun and always supportive. [P45]

I like it, it’s a nice, safe space and the people are very nice [P56]

Several participants, however, believed QD was less accepting of some groups.

The LGBT club doesn’t appear to include people who are asexual, or aro[mantic]. [P31]

I felt very out of place as a bisexual woman. [P140]

Bad. Unfriendly people especially for international students like me. [P58]

While several participants criticised QD for its political bent, they did not elaborate on the nature of the views to which they objected (i.e. whether the politics pertained to the Guild, State, or Commonwealth and how these related to LGBT issues). It is clear, however, that the political nature of QD resulted in these participants feeling uncomfortable and unwelcome. We believe that QD’s history of LGBT activism is one of the reasons why UWA is a more progressive and inclusive place than it was in 1979, when QD originated (though under another name). The fact that homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia still exist on campus – as evident in the results of our study – is one of the reasons why QD should retain its role in LGBT activism. However, the political positioning of QD is one that should be made known to potential members, and it should be made known within the context of QD as a place that welcomes a diversity of views which support and do not hinder the rights of LGBT people. Potential members should also be made aware that, in addition to its activism role, QD also offers inclusive social events.

It must be noted that several of the participants’ negative comments clearly allude to past events and/or Queer Officers. We surmise that the nature of QD is likely to depend greatly on the nature of the Queer Officers. Queer Officers (who usually hold one-year terms) vary in personality, leadership qualities, and levels of self-awareness, knowledge, and openness. What this means is that it might be difficult to make sweeping generalisations about QD and the Queer Officers. However, while it would be impossible for QD to fulfil
the needs and preferences of all LGBT students, the number of negative comments in the study cannot be ignored and the recurring themes should be addressed. What we find most concerning are repeated claims made by participants (particularly asexuals and bisexuals) that QD is not accepting of them, despite the participants’ expectations or hopes that QD would be a welcoming place. Given that Queer Officers are unlikely to be professionally trained in LGBT issues, nominations for the roles should include Ally status (that is, prior training under the Ally Program) and assurances from nominees of an open mind to all the sexualities and gender identities that QD is meant to represent.

Ally Program

The Ally Program has been running at UWA since 2002, longer than at any other Australasian university. Despite this long history, the impact of the program among the student body has not been measured. We believe it is imperative to know if the program has had an impact on students’ perception of campus climate.

As a starting point, we asked participants if they are aware of the UWA Ally Program. Just under half of the participants (48.1%, n=99) informed us that they are. The Ally Program seems to be effective for most who are aware of its existence, as 61.6% (n=61) of these participants believe that its existence has contributed to them feeling more welcome at UWA. While some students report that the program has little impact on their lives, the majority feel reassured by seeing the Ally signs around campus.

Although I have never consciously interacted with someone simply because they were an Ally, I am comforted when I see the Ally stickers in front of staff members’ desks and windows. [P01]

As kitsch as they are, the little rainbow signs that staff can display on their door and around their workspace is a GODSEND. Queer/LGBT topics are far more likely to come up with regards to coursework or research (in my case, at least) so this really helps with gauging how...forward(?) I can be. This is not to suggest that I can’t discuss such things with staff who aren’t Official Allies. But, I spend less time making sure that they’re familiar or comfortable (e.g. with my research). [P13]

I felt relieved when seeing the Ally program, when I enrolled at UWA. [P39]

Of the participants who knew about the program, some expressed confusion over its purpose or direct relevance.

I’m aware of it as far as seeing stickers on doors but I don’t know what it actually is, and I know some other queer people who also don’t know what it is or what it means for us. [P56]

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18 206 participants answered the question about whether they were aware of the Ally Program.
I don’t really know anything about what it does other than being something to do with acceptance of LGBTs. [P71]

I think that it is a good thing to have visible assurance that particular staff on campus are conscious and understanding of LGBTQIA+ issues, but beyond stickers on doors I don’t actually know what else the Ally Program contributes beyond this peace of mind. [P133]

Several participants thought that the program did not always achieve the aim of improving staff approachability or support of LGBT students.

I am an Ally. I feel like the program does good work in educating those who choose to participate but ultimately does little to help those who may need an Ally, particularly students. Some of those who have Ally signs on their door don’t appear particularly approachable or fluent in the topic. [P05]

I have heard stories from some friends at QD that led me to think that perhaps the Ally stickers are a bit of a hollow symbol. I’ve heard of friends confiding in a perceived ‘Ally’ on campus who has then been discriminatory and lacked understanding. [P29]

Means well so I appreciate it, but it’s ultimately a pat on the back for Allies. [P126]

Addressing the final lot of comments, we believe that it would be difficult for programs such as Ally to have control over a person’s motives for joining and for what they take or do not take away from a training session. Despite undergoing the same training, it is inevitable that some people more than others would be better suited to taking on the role of an Ally. However, a 2008 evaluation of the impact of the Ally Program among Allies indicates that, on the whole, the program has had a positive effect on the attitude of Allies (Skene et al., 2008). It is possible, however, that Ally training could be more rigorous and extensive, by either being an all-day rather than half-day workshop and/or requiring refresher workshops. A more rigorous program should assist as both a screening tool and an opportunity to consolidate an Ally’s capacity to assist LGBT students.

The results of our survey suggest that the Ally Program needs to be better promoted among students. The current level of awareness among a key target population for a program that aims to improve campus climate could and should be higher. Improving awareness of, and knowledge about, the program among the student body in general and the LGBT student population in particular should help to improve student perception of campus climate. We know this because most participants who are aware of the program have indicated that it has resulted in them feeling more welcome at UWA.
Visible resources

Like the Ally Program, current resources could be better promoted among the student body. We asked participants about the visibility of LGBT resources of available to them.\(^{19}\) In response, 14.1% (n=29) of students strongly agreed, 38.3% (n=79) agreed, 24.3% (n=50) were uncertain, 17.5% (n=36) disagreed, and 5.8% (n=12) strongly disagreed. In other words, only 52.4% of students believed that UWA provides visible resources. These percentages are shown in Figure 2.

![Figure 2: On whether UWA provides visible resources on LGBT issues and concerns (%)](image)

Experience of harassment or discrimination

Discriminatory attitudes of any kind on a campus may contribute to negative perceptions of campus climate (Tetreault et al., 2013). Rankin, Weber, Blumenfeld, and Frazer (2010) report that LGB participants were more likely to experience harassment compared to their heterosexual counterparts, and that trans and gender non-conforming participants were the most likely to experience harassment.

Given the prior literature, we were interested to know if participants in our study had recently experienced harassment or discrimination. Participants were asked if in the past 12 months they had experienced harassment or discrimination at UWA because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation and/or gender identity.\(^{20}\) A number of participants (15.9%, n=34) replied in the affirmative.

Of these participants, 88.2% (n=30) experienced harassment or discrimination from other students, 14.7% (n=5) from academic staff, and 2.9% (n=1) from general staff. This result is consistent with research that found the main source of harassment to be other students (Rankin et al., 2010; Tetreault et al., 2013; Valentine et al., 2009). Discrimination and

\(^{19}\) 206 participants answered the question about the visibility of LGBT resources of available to them.

\(^{20}\) 214 participants answered the question about whether they had experienced discrimination or harassment at UWA.
harassment occurred 64.7% (n=22) of the time at the Crawley campus, followed by the Nedlands campus and UWA surrounds (both 26.5%, n=9), and when traveling to and from UWA on public transport (17.6%, n=6).

The main form of discrimination or harassment experienced was verbal harassment, including “jokes,” name-calling, insults, or inappropriate comments. This is concerning, given that non-assaultive harassment or language can have a negative effect on LGB students’ academic performance and social integration (Woodford et al., 2012).

Jokes about being a butch, or being frigid. [P31]

Often called a faggot or similar degrading term. On campus the perpetrators are often quite discreet, saying the words just loud enough that you hear but not so loudly that others in the vicinity hear. On one specific occasion I dyed my hair and was openly told by another student that ‘only girls dye their hair’. Away from campus usually insults are yelled from moving vehicles or openly made on the street. [P37]

Just childish/inappropriate comments from guys one time when me and my girlfriend were hanging out together and kissing at UniHall.21 [P49]

A few participants reported being discriminated against by other LGBT students. Others reported being socially excluded or losing friends because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

There are two sources from my experience, one is the other trans students on campus based on exclusionary mentalities and the other is the strongly religious students. Typically the former is more a ‘cold shoulder’ treatment while the latter is a look of disgust and avoidance. [P53]

[…] Being in the ‘sports’ crowd and at a single-sex school, many of the guys I went to school with in the group struggle with the idea that an individual can be both ‘sporty’ and ‘gay’. Telling this to those people one day at uni led to me severing ties with them, as they couldn’t cope with the idea that one of their friends was ‘gay’. [P141]

Toilets on campus were sometimes tense spaces. Several trans, non-binary, or gender non-conforming students reported feeling uncomfortable or experiencing harassment when using the toilets of their choice.

[…] I would consider myself feminine, to some degree, and the way I dress reflects that. In the past 12 months there have been three incidents in which people using the men’s toilets have made me feel uncomfortable (e.g. by leering over me and standing in my way as I’ve tried to use the bathroom). In one instance, I walked passed someone to enter a cubicle and they said ‘what the fuck...’ before turning to their friend and loudly proclaiming ‘fucking f*ggots’. It always occurred in the bottom floor

21 UniHall, or University Hall, is one of the five residential colleges.
It seems, then, that using toilets – one of the basic facilities that most people take for granted – can be a fraught experience for a group of students who are more likely than their peers to be harassed on campus.

Witnessing harassment or discrimination

Participants were asked if they had recently witnessed discrimination or harassment at UWA.22 One quarter (24.9%, n=53) responded that they had within the past 12 months witnessed harassment or discrimination against other people because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity.

As with the previous section, the vast majority of these incidents were perpetrated by other students (92.3%, n=48), followed by academic staff (11.5%, n=6) and general staff, including residential college and facilities staff (7.6%, n=4). Most of the harassment or discrimination witnessed occurred at the Crawley campus (76.9%, n=40), followed by the areas surrounding UWA (17.3%, n=9), Nedlands campus (15.4%, n=8), when travelling to or from UWA on public transport (7.7%, n=4), and other areas including residential colleges, the UWA Albany campus, and online platforms (5.8%, n=3).

Much of the witnessed harassment or discrimination was against trans students, either with or without the trans person’s knowledge.

Witnessed rude hand gestures towards someone I thought may be trans re: genitalia. [P31]

Sitting in lecture room. Snickering from group of students behind me when trans student was adding comments to class. [P72]

Male students began making fun of my trans female friend. They called her names and asked to see what was in her pants, and followed us to our lecture hall. [P78]

Participants also reported witnessing students making negative comments about other students behind their backs.

22 213 participants answered the question about whether they had witnessed discrimination and harassment at UWA in the past 12 months.
I was working with 5 other students on a group project. Simply because one of the female students didn’t look or dress in a stereotypically feminine way, I overheard much discussion on the status of her sexuality. She just so happened to identify as a lesbian; however I still didn’t think it warranted their comments. […] [P01]

Overheard derogatory comments from another student about a gay male student. [P125]

Finally, students reported hearing homophobic or transphobic language in everyday interactions or conversations, usually from other students.

General widespread use of homophobic language. […] [P66]

Students have sometimes used homophobic language to put down others (regardless of the perceived orientation of those they’re putting down). [P130]

It is clear from the study that other students are the main perpetrators of harassment and discrimination towards LGBT students. This indicates that future initiatives to improve campus climate need to target student attitudes towards LGBT people and issues, preferably from orientation onwards. As suggested in the prior literature, mandating diversity programs as part of the early socialisation of incoming students might be beneficial towards improving overall LGBT campus climate (Holland et al., 2013).

Safety

Fears and concerns over safety issues on campus can have a negative impact on perceptions of campus climate (Kelly & Torres, 2006). We therefore asked participants if UWA is a safe place for LGBT students.23 Most students agreed, with 18% (n=37) strongly agreeing and 51% (n=105) agreeing. Nonetheless, 26.7% (n=55) were uncertain if UWA is a safe place for LGBT students, while 4.4% (n=9) disagreed that the University is a safe place. These percentages are shown in Figure 3.

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23 206 participants answered the question about UWA as a safe place for LGBT students.
Participants were also asked if in the past 12 months if they had ever feared for their safety at UWA because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity/expression. Several participants (8.9%, n=19) reported that they had.

Trans, non-binary, and gender non-conforming students who expanded qualitatively on their surveys expressed concerns for their safety, with comments echoing themes from the preceding section, particularly when it came to using toilets or displaying visible markers of being LGBT.

*In general, I feel quite unsafe anywhere because of my sexual orientation and my gender identity/expression. I am perceived as a non-feminine woman (even though I am non-binary), so when I hold my girlfriend’s hand the fear is often there.* [P21]

### Reporting harassment or discrimination

We were interested to know if students would be comfortable reporting an incident of LGBT harassment or discrimination to UWA. Only 18.4% (n=38) of students strongly agreed and 37.4% (n=77) agreed that they would feel comfortable. Of the other participants, 22.8% (n=47) were uncertain, 18.4% (n=38) disagreed, and 2.9% (n=6) strongly disagreed. These percentages are shown in Figure 4.

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24 214 participants answered the question about whether they had ever feared for their safety at UWA in the past 12 months.

25 206 participants answered the question about whether they would report LGBT harassment or discrimination.
Figure 4: On whether participants would be feel comfortable reporting LGBT harassment or discrimination (%)

We did not ask students to elaborate on their response to this question, so we can only speculate as to the reasons why only 55.8% would feel comfortable reporting LGBT harassment or discrimination. One explanation might be the fact that the vast majority of participants (82%, n=169) are unsure as to whom they should report an incident of LGBT harassment or discrimination to UWA.26 The lack of knowledge around the complaints process could help explain the participants’ unease about potentially making a report. These are issues that need to be addressed.

UWA’s response to harassment or discrimination

Uncertainty as to whether UWA responds effectively to LGBT harassment or discrimination could be another reason as to why only 55.8% of participants would feel comfortable reporting LGBT harassment or discrimination.

We asked participants for their views regarding UWA’s effectiveness in responding to harassment or discrimination related to sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.27 Two-thirds of participants (65.5%, n=135) were uncertain if UWA responds effectively to LGBT harassment or discrimination. A small percentage of students (6.3%, n=13) strongly agreed that UWA responds effectively, while 20.9% (n=43) agreed. A minority of students had opposing views, with 5.8% (n=12) disagreeing and 1.5% (n=3) strongly disagreeing. These percentages are shown in Figure 5.

26 206 participants answered the question about whom to report an incident of LGBT harassment or discrimination.
27 206 participants answered the question about UWA’s effectiveness in responding to LGBT-related harassment and discrimination
This degree of uncertainty over whether UWA responds effectively to harassment or discrimination suggests that students need to be better informed about the University’s policies and procedures around these matters. A greater awareness or appreciation of the University’s response to LGBT discrimination and harassment is likely to enhance perception of campus climate. Recent research on LGBT policies in Australian schools found that 75.1% of LGBT students who were aware of policy-based protection against homophobia at school felt safe there, compared with 46.1% who said their school had no policy (Jones, 2016; Jones & Hillier, 2012). In other words, the presence of institutional support for LGBT students, along with the students’ awareness of such support, was found to be beneficial to their wellbeing and school experience. This is likely to be the case at universities as well.

**UWA leadership**

The uncertainty as to whether UWA responds effectively to a serious issue such as LGBT harassment or discrimination suggests that participants might have doubts over UWA’s leadership in LGBT matters. This leads us to our next question.

Participants were asked if UWA senior administration (the Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellors, Directors, Deans, Heads of School) demonstrated leadership in LGBT matters. Many students (41.3%, n=85) were uncertain if UWA had visible leadership from senior administration regarding sexual orientation/gender identity issues on campus. A small percentage of students (5.3%, n=11) strongly agreed that there was visible leadership, while 17% (n=35) agreed. However, 27.2% (n=56) disagreed and 9.2% strongly disagreed (n=19). These percentages are shown in Figure 6.

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28 206 participants answered the question about leadership among senior administration.
It is clear that there is a strong disconnect between senior administration and students, which fosters a lack of knowledge among students about the role of senior administration in relation to LGBT matters. UWA demonstrates leadership in LGBT matters at the highest levels through the Diversity and Inclusion Committee (an advisory committee to the Vice-Chancellor, chaired by the Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor) and to which the LGBTI Working Group, which represents LGBT stakeholders at UWA, reports and offers strategic advice. However, given the findings of our survey, the existence of both the Diversity and Inclusion Committee and the LGBTI Working Group is unknown and therefore invisible to most LGBT students at UWA. As we will see in the Recommendations section, participants have called for clear and visible leadership from the University around LGBT issues. While many of the affairs of UWA students fall under the concerns of the Student Guild, the call for visible leadership by senior administrators is an issue that should be taken into serious consideration.

UWA as welcoming

The Rainbow Project found that students’ perceptions of LGBT people were mostly favourable at UWA (Goody & de Vries, 2002; Sullivan et al., 2002). However, 92.8% of those participants identified as heterosexual. For our study, we wanted to determine if current LGBT students believe UWA to be a welcoming campus.

Almost two-thirds of participants believe that UWA creates a friendly (or “warm”) campus climate for LGBT students. Of the 206 who responded to the statement “UWA is a welcoming place for LGBT students,” 16.5% (n=34) strongly agreed and 46.6% (n=96) agreed. Only 5.3% disagreed (n=11) and 0.5% (n=1) strongly disagreed. However, 31.1% (n=64) were uncertain if UWA is a welcoming place for LGBT students. These percentages are shown in Figure 7.
While these percentages are good, they also indicate that there is still room for improvement, particularly since almost a third of participants are uncertain as to whether UWA is a welcoming place for them.

**Student recommendations for UWA**

Participants were asked for feedback on how their university experience as a LGBT student could be improved. They were informed that answers to this question would be used to provide UWA with recommendations on how to improve the experience of LGBT students.

Some participants stated that their experiences at UWA have led them to believe that the current climate of UWA is acceptable and that nothing more need be done.

*I strongly believe that culture is shifting towards acceptance. There are groups who would see large displays of ‘respect’, but I believe all this does is identify group lines. I do not make my sexuality obvious, but I don’t attempt to hide it either. I like that UWA takes the stance that all groups are accepted, but we do not need fanfare and ‘acceptance’, and I believe that these are in fact counter productive. [P121]*

Of the students who felt that campus climate could be improved, one of the most common recommendations was for UWA to demonstrate active support for its LGBT students. Visibility was an often-repeated word.

*I suppose it comes down to visibility. Perhaps greater engagement with LGBT issues, more inclusive social events, and being clearer about what resources are available. A rainbow flag here and there might be nice. [P139]*

*UWA is not known for its support of LGBT. Although it provided the tick box solutions the support is not transparent. UWA does not discriminate against the community but my perception is it is very conservative in supporting the community. [P132]*
Participants called for clear and visible leadership, addressing a previous survey response in which 41.3% expressed uncertainty while 36.4% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that senior administration demonstrates visible leadership in LGBT matters.

[...] Stronger words of support from the executive. [P06]

[...] More clear leadership and discussion – not just a flag for Pride. [...] UWA feels very carefully neutral to LGBT individuals and issues – I’d like to see more evidence of active support not merely passive lack of discrimination. [P05]

A previously noted, it is clear that there is a strong disconnect between senior administration and students, which encourages a lack of knowledge among the latter about the role of the former in relation to LGBT matters. It is therefore likely that many of our participants do not know about the University’s official position on LGBT matters or what it achieves in the LGBT space. As we have noted, almost a third of participants are uncertain as to whether UWA is a welcoming place for them. We recommend that the Inclusion and Diversity Committee (via the LGBTI Working Group) coordinates efforts with the Student Guild to actively communicate to students the University’s ongoing implementation of LGBT initiatives.

Participants also called for inclusive policies, user-friendly, and effective procedures, reinforcing the need to address previous survey responses, namely, the discomfort felt by 55.8% of participants, and the lack of knowledge expressed by 82% of them, around reporting LGBT discrimination or harassment, and the high level of uncertainty (65.5%) as to whether UWA responds effectively to LGBT harassment or discrimination.

Stronger leadership on LGBTI issues – clear information on who to go to if there’s a problem. Especially good would be information covering some common scenarios, e.g., What if another student harasses you? What if it’s a staff member? What if it’s not on campus? [P27]

Similarly, I would appreciate clearer information re: what to do if harassment or discrimination occurs. I think I have a good idea with regards to more serious incidents, but I would like to know all my options. For instance, I am AMAB [assigned male at birth] so am I able to call security to escort me somewhere if I feel uncomfortable? Sorry if these appear banal, but it’s the day-to-day stuff that really impacts [on] my time at university! [P13]

We suggest that there be a student-specific anti-bullying policy and procedures page written in a clear and user-friendly style. Teesside University has such a document that could provide guidance for UWA. We believe that this could be included in the “Student Experience” webpage, within the “Complaints” subpage.

Participants stated that active support, promotion, and awareness-raising of LGBT issues are required across the University, not simply by LGBT groups.
Provide more support, be more open about the support, encourage a culture of increased communication. [P76]

Visible staff involvement with LGBTQIA events and services – so far I’ve only seen students talk about anything related to LGBT and students organise it. Which is fine but that hasn’t got much to do with the uni itself, more just what the students will do in their own time. [P18]

This recommendation links to what we believe to be the need for greater promotion of existing LGBT-themed events and awareness-raising initiatives, many of which – judging from survey comments – a number of participants do not seem aware. Some of these events are put on by LGBT groups, while other events, such as lectures and commemorations of LGBT days, are put on by a range of non-LGBT groups including faculties, residential colleges, and the Student Guild. These events are usually open to the larger UWA community, but might not be specifically promoted to the LGBT community.

Similarly, a key recommendation was for internal and external LGBT events and groups to be better promoted to all students.

More social events. Make the community more visible and accessible. [P40]

Making students more aware of the queer society [QD] and advertising it a bit more would increase awareness of it, and help LGBT students to feel more comfortable and meet others ‘in the same boat’. I wasn’t aware of its existence and have been at UWA for almost 3 semesters, and feel that doing more to promote it would be beneficial. […] [P102]

We believe that QD could be better promoted to students via all the means available to the Student Guild. Their Student Guild webpage should be more easily accessible and descriptive than it currently is. This would help make LGBT matters visible among the general student population and to LGBT students who are not active members of QD or for privacy reasons have not joined their social media pages. Further suggestions for LGBT webpages are found below. QD and other Guild Departments and clubs could also work more closely together for cross-promotion. QD could also assist with promoting relevant external LGBT groups, particularly LGBT scholarship and mentoring groups such as The Pinnacle Foundation and Out for Australia, respectively.

Education for students about LGBT issues was considered an important priority. We also agree that it should be a key priority, given the study’s findings that the majority of discrimination and harassment on campus is perpetrated by fellow students.

[…] Actively creating awareness and understanding within the student body would really help, and I think education is the most powerful tool we have to combat discrimination against LGBTQIA+ people. [P113]
Publicly acknowledge the need to be accepting to all students in a way which is clear to all students that it is assumed knowledge. [P36]

Australia in itself is far less homophobic than the United States. […] However, there are some minor homophobic attitudes that persist, and it certainly couldn’t hurt to educate more students on what homophobia is, and despite how accepting many are, there is still room for improvement. […] [P45]

Participants suggested that campus climate and student awareness could be improved by including information about LGBT issues at orientation or in compulsory commencement modules similar to Academic Conduct Essentials (ACE).29

 […] Maybe along with the compulsory ACE, CARS etc. units in first year, there could be one on LGBT issues to increase acceptance from the general student population at UWA. [P144]

Compulsory training on equity and diversity issues have been introduced for students at other higher education institutions (e.g. flagship/state universities in the US such as the University of Illinois system and The University of Oklahoma), and we strongly recommend that UWA trials an online module on equity and diversity issues and anti-bullying/anti-harassment. It should be explained to students that the module would benefit them in areas of group study and skills required by future employers. The module would also send a clear message to students about the values of the University to which they are required to adhere. The module might also include a summary of relevant resources and services on campus, such as the Ally Program and QD. As mentioned in a previous section, mandating diversity programs as part of the early socialisation of incoming students could be beneficial towards improving overall LGBT campus climate.

Education and awareness-raising for teaching staff were also suggested as priorities, so as to improve the classroom experience for LGBT students.

A friend of mine was recently in a class where, as a first lesson ice breaker, the students went around and told their celebrity crush. This is a situation that I, and likely many other LGBT students, would feel uncomfortable in. I don’t like to be made to lie or disclose my sexual orientation to strangers and so I believe some teachers need to be better informed about how questions like this can make some people feel. [P81]

My worst experiences have been with teachers and some classmates making derogatory or ignorant comments. Perhaps there could be a way of monitoring that – whether as part of the SPOT/SURF surveys30 or otherwise. [P140]

29 ACE is a brief online course that introduces students to the basics of correct academic conduct.
30 SPOT and SURF surveys are the University’s official evaluation mechanisms for individual teachers and units, respectively.
An example of solutions offered was to prioritise inclusive language in teaching environments.

Include LGBTIQ (and racial) sensitive language in all faculties, make inclusive language a priority in teaching standards. Especially those that are predominantly (still) understood as masculine areas (engineering, physics – all science faculties). [P62]

Staff members not presuming pronouns would be nice. If people were given the opportunity at the start of the semester to disclose their preferred name (despite what the role call says) and the pronouns they like to use, I would be more comfortable and could actually be open and honest. [P21]

The call for increased LGBT-related education and promotion of inclusive language extended to non-teaching staff, particularly in the health professions.

More training for medical staff and counsellors – not all are LGBT friendly and it is a bit of a shock. More training for staff so there are fewer heteronormative, cissexist throwaway comments. [P05]

I have been misgendered several times despite my countless attempts of retelling them [i.e. staff] what my preferred pronoun is and why I preferred it. It’s really important that people don’t mention the fact that I am a girl in any occasion because it causes a great deal of stress and troubles for me. [P43]

Equity and diversity training is mandatory for all staff at several institutions (e.g. UK universities such as University of Hertfordshire and University of Dundee), and this is a possibility that UWA should investigate. This recommendation is given weight by the fact that a major study in the UK found that over 50% of LGB and trans staff believe that equity issues related to sexual orientation and/or gender identity are treated less seriously than race by their institution (53.3%, 782 LGB staff; 55.7%, 34 trans staff) and less seriously than disability (51%, 748 LGB staff; 55.7%, 34 trans staff) (Valentine et al., 2009). Likewise, the same study found that over 50% of trans students and over a third of LGB students think that trans and sexual orientation issues, respectively, are treated less seriously than race or disability by their institution. The focus groups suggested that there was a lack of proper resourcing for equity training and that equity staff commonly have less grasp of LGBT issues compared with those relating to the other equity areas (Valentine et al., 2009). These are issues that need to be addressed at UWA.

Participants also felt that the comparative lack of visibility and acceptance of students who are trans, non-binary, or of the least understood sexualities also needed to be addressed.

Trans people seem to me to be completely invisible at UWA. Sounds like there could be a real problem there? At least I know people of various sexual orientations who can be open about those. [P105]
Perhaps a little more visibility or promoted understanding of the vast number of genders/sexualities at UWA, kind of like how they promote a multicultural image. [...] [P86]

As we have seen, trans, non-binary, and gender non-conforming students are more likely than their peers to experience harassment and discrimination. The proposed compulsory modules could assist with increasing awareness among students and staff about the common issues that trans, non-binary, and gender non-conforming people face. We also recommend that the university adopts the acronym LGBTIQA+ over the current usage, LGBTI, in order to explicitly include asexuals and additional identities. Diverse Sexualities and Genders (DSG), though used less often at the University, is still to be used.

Some participants reflected on the need for more unisex toilets in order to alleviate the stress associated with negative interactions with other students. This is a reasonable request, given the comments we have received in the study.

*I would like to know more about unisex or gender-neutral bathrooms around UWA, if there any. If not, why not? It would reduce my stress levels seven-fold.* [P13]

*Have unisex toilets, have unisex toilets, have unisex toilets.* [P63]

Melbourne University has recently introduced 37 unisex toilets at its main campus, Parkville, with other campuses to follow. Unisex toilets have also been introduced at St Catherine’s College, a UWA residential college. The University of Sydney named each of its newly installed unisex toilets “All gender bathroom” to promote inclusion, with signage developed in consultation with LGBT stakeholders.

In the first instance, we suggest that there be an online list of unisex toilets on campus. While the current UWA map lists unisex toilets, they may be difficult to find among the other listed landmarks. We recommend that unisex toilets be installed in the Student Guild. We also recommend the installation of unisex toilets that are devoted solely to the function of being unisex toilets; that is, that they are not accessible toilets that also happen to be unisex, since people with a disability have priority use of these facilities.

Participants noted the importance of peer support networks and that clubs and societies in particular could provide the level of support to which they aspire if they were inclusive of the needs of LGBT students.

*I don’t think there is much that UWA could do from an administrative perspective. It is more the culture of students on campus that needs to be changed. Especially social club culture. While the club culture on campus is changing, and I have witnessed it change personally over this time, I believe homosexuals are still not as included as they could be.* [...] [P115]
Getting more international LGBT students involved in those events will be better. The difference of culture background makes them even less likely to report the problem they encounter because of their sexual orientation. [P89]

To this end, students called for the active welcoming of LGBT students by clubs not traditionally associated with LGBT issues or people.

More events that are not limited to or solely organised by the Queer Department as very few people seem to turn up to those. Maybe events that other clubs or even that the uni itself do, do something to make LGBT welcome, even just a mention. [P135]

Participants also called for LGBT alternatives to QD and, in particular, for partnerships between QD and other clubs in order to build positive relationships between LGBT and non-LGBT students.

Enhance the Queer Department to make it more popular. Encourage cooperation between QD and other social groups like EMAS [Electronic Music Appreciation Society] and Sober? in order to encourage a more popular, social environment which enhances awareness and builds a positive environment between LGBT and allies. [P52]

Honestly, I’m doing fine. I don’t know if others feel this way, but just having more events with QD where they hang out with other Fac Socs and student groups to show people that they’re just your typical person, despite sleeping with / identifying as something other than cis. Like fun events with humour, intermixed with advocacy events. Play with one hand, teach with the other etc. […] [P46]

Several participants offered further suggestions as to how QD could be more inclusive of all sexualities and gender identities. These included being more welcoming of “emerging” identities and of those who were still coming to terms with their LGBT identity, in addition to holding events in which all members could feel comfortable.

Queer groups must be more visible on campus and more welcoming and accepting of ‘emerging’ identities. The queer community is heavily sexualised which is super dangerous for a lot of people just coming to terms with their sexuality. […] [P23]

I would love to be included. The A is not for allies. […] I feel invisible in the one place at uni I would hope not to be. […] I’d love to see some specifically asexual events. I’m sure I’m not the only one out there. P112

31 “Fac Socs” or Faculty Societies are faculty-endorsed Guild affiliated clubs with a focus on careers, education, and advocacy. They also promote and run events for students involved in their faculty.
As we have mentioned, nominees for the positions of Queer Officers should be trained as Allies before they can be elected. They should be people who are open to all sexualities and genders. The QD room and events should likewise be inclusive.

A few participants believed that an inclusive and warmer campus climate would assist students who are not out or are still coming to terms with their LGBT identity to feel comfortable. In addition, inclusive activities or services targeting these students directly or indirectly would be beneficial.

Perhaps branch out to the LGBT Students who are afraid of outing themselves/openly gay. Have an anonymous website where QD provides advice/helpline for those students who are at risk,struggling to cope with their sexuality, particularly when having to confront their family and friends about it. [P141]

Having accessible, well-informed, and up-to-date webpages about sexuality and gender would be an ideal first step for LGBT students in general and LGBT students coming out in particular. At the moment, the “Sexuality, Sexual Health and Relationships Education (SHARE)” webpage on the UWA website falls under “Fit for Study,” which is found under “Health Promotion Unit,” a subpage of the “Health and Wellbeing” subpage of “Student Experience.” In other words, it is not easily found.

We recommend that the topic of sexuality and gender diversity be a subpage added under the “Student Experience” webpage and that it be linked to the QD webpage, and vice versa. The information on the page should include LGBT issues that are not simply about health but about the whole person, and therefore include issues pertaining to LGBT services on campus such as the Ally Program and QD, information on obtaining careers advice, counselling, staff at the Medical Centre who are Ally-trained or LGBT-informed, UWA’s LGBT-related policies, safety on campus, location of unisex toilets, tackling LGBT bullying and discrimination, and so on. Information about coming out should be one of the first topics found on the page, rather than a further subpage, which it currently is on SHARE.
Recommendations to the University

These recommendations are based on student feedback from our study, research in the field, and practices at other universities. We strongly urge that the recommendations be acted upon for the purpose of improving campus climate for LGBT students.

### Assessing campus climate

**Recommendation 1:** That campus climate for LGBT students be formally assessed at least once every five years.

**Rationale:** Comparisons are required in order to effectively monitor the University’s progress in LGBT inclusion.

**Responsibility:** Inclusion and Diversity Committee, LGBTI Working Group, Student Guild, Queer Department

**Notes:** It is common for regular formal monitoring to take place at universities that conduct campus climate assessments.

### Enhancing communication strategies

**Recommendation 2:** That the Inclusion and Diversity Committee (via the LGBTI Working Group) coordinates efforts with the Student Guild to actively communicate to students the University’s ongoing implementation of LGBT initiatives.

**Rationale:** Participants called for visible leadership from UWA in relation to LGBT issues; over 40% of participants were uncertain if UWA had visible leadership from senior administration.

**Responsibility:** Inclusion and Diversity Committee, LGBTI Working Group, Student Guild, Queer Department

**Notes:** There is a strong disconnect between senior administration and students, which encourages a lack of knowledge among students about the University’s role in relation to LGBT matters. It is likely that many of our participants do not know about the University’s official position on LGBT matters or what it achieves in the LGBT space. This could explain why almost a third of participants are uncertain as to whether UWA is a welcoming place for them.

**Recommendation 3:** That the Queer Department (QD) and the Ally Program be better promoted to students via all the means available to them.

**Rationale:** One quarter of participants were unaware of QD, while just over half were unaware of the Ally Program. Participants recommended that LGBT events and groups be better promoted to all students.

**Responsibility:** Queer Department, Equity and Diversity

**Notes:** The QD webpage should be more easily accessible and descriptive. This would enhance LGBT visibility among the general student population and to LGBT students who
for privacy reasons have not joined QD’s social media pages. QD and other Guild Departments and clubs could also work more closely together for cross-promotion. Likewise, QD, the Student Guild, and Equity and Diversity could work closely to promote the Ally Program and encourage students to become Allies. QD and Equity and Diversity could work jointly to promote both their services and inclusion to students at UWA’s residential colleges.

Recommendation 4: That the topic of sexuality and gender diversity form a subpage under the “Student Experience” webpage and that it be linked to the QD webpage, and vice versa. The information on the page should be expanded to include LGBT issues that are not simply about health but about the whole person, and therefore include information pertaining to LGBT services on campus such as the Ally Program and QD, obtaining careers advice, counselling, staff at the Medical Centre who are Ally-trained or LGBT-informed, LGBT-related policies, safety on campus, location of unisex toilets, tackling LGBT bullying and discrimination, and so on.

Rationale: Participants believed that an inclusive and warmer campus climate would assist students who are not out or are still coming to terms with their LGBT identity to feel comfortable.

Responsibility: Student Support Services, Student Guild, Queer Department, Digital and Creative Services

Notes: Having accessible, well-informed, and up-to-date webpages about sexuality and gender issues would be an ideal first step for LGBT students in general and LGBT students coming out in particular. At the moment, the “Sexuality, Sexual Health and Relationships Education (SHARE)” webpage falls under “Fit for Study,” which is found under “Health Promotion Unit,” a page within the “Health and Wellbeing” subpage of “Student Experience.” In other words, it is not easily found. Information about coming out should be one of the first topics found on the page, and not a subpage, which it currently is on SHARE.

Creating a student-specific anti-bullying and anti-harassment policy

Recommendation 5: That there be a student-specific anti-bullying/anti-harassment policy and procedures document, written in a clear and user-friendly style. This document and LGBT policies (such as the Transgender Policy) should be included in the “Complaints” subpage of the “Student Experience” webpage and on LGBT-related pages.

Rationale: Participants requested inclusive, user-friendly policies and effective procedures. This recommendation addresses the discomfort felt by 55.8% of participants, and the lack of knowledge expressed by 82% of them, around reporting LGBT discrimination or harassment. It also addresses the high level of uncertainty (65.5%) as to whether UWA responds effectively to LGBT harassment or discrimination.

Responsibility: Inclusion and Diversity Committee, Complaints Resolution Unit, Digital and Creative Services

Notes: Clear and easily accessible information provided by the University promotes trust that a complaints process exists and that complaints will be effectively handled. Teesside
University has a user-friendly and student-focused anti-bullying/anti-harassment document that could provide guidance for UWA.

**Trialling compulsory online modules**

**Recommendation 6:** That UWA trials a compulsory online module for incoming students on equity and diversity issues and on anti-bullying/anti-harassment.

**Rationale:** This is an important priority, given the study’s findings that the majority of discrimination and harassment on campus is perpetrated by fellow students. Participants considered education about LGBT issues among the student body to be an important priority, and one of their main suggestions was for the introduction of a compulsory commencement module.

**Responsibility:** Inclusion and Diversity Committee, Dean of Coursework Studies

**Notes:** Compulsory equity and diversity modules (either online or peer-run workshops) have been introduced at a number of flagship universities in the US. It should be explained to students that the module would benefit them in areas of group study and skills required by future employers. The module would also send a clear message to students about the values of the University to which they are required to adhere. The module might also include a summary of relevant resources and services on campus, such as the Ally Program and QD.

**Recommendation 7:** That UWA investigates the possibility of compulsory equity and diversity modules for incoming and existing staff.

**Rationale:** Participants recommended education and awareness-raising for teaching and professional staff. This recommendation is given further weight by the fact that a major UK study found that over 50% of LGBT staff believe that equity issues related to sexual orientation and/or gender identity are treated less seriously than race and disability by their institution (Valentine et al., 2009). Likewise, the same study found that over 50% of trans students and over a third of LGB students think that trans and sexual orientation issues, respectively, are treated less seriously than race or disability by their institution.

**Responsibility:** Inclusion and Diversity Committee, Human Resources

**Notes:** Equity and diversity training is mandatory for all staff at several international institutions of higher learning.

**Increasing inclusion**

**Recommendation 8:** That the University adopts the acronym LGBTIQA+ over the current usage, LGBTI, in order to explicitly include asexuals and additional identities. Diverse Sexualities and Genders (DSG), though used less often at the University, is still to be used.

**Rationale:** Participants felt that the comparative lack of visibility and acceptance of students who are trans, non-binary, gender non-conforming, and of the least understood sexualities needed to be addressed. As we have seen, many of these students are more likely than their peers to experience harassment and discrimination.

**Responsibility:** University-wide
Notes: The proposed compulsory modules should assist with increasing awareness among students and staff about the common issues faced by people of diverse sexualities and genders.

Recommendation 9: That nominees for the positions of Queer Officers be trained as Allies before they are elected and that the Queer Officers be accepting of all sexualities and gender identities/expressions.
Rationale: Participants’ experiences of QD were polarised, and they offered suggestions as to how QD could be more inclusive of all sexualities and gender identities. These included: being more welcoming of “emerging” identities and of those who were still coming to terms with their LGBT identity, in addition to holding events in which all members could feel comfortable.
Responsibility: Queer Department

Notes: Currently, the only requirement for nominees is that they be LGBT students.

| Increasing the number of unisex toilets |

Recommendation 10: That unisex toilets be installed in the Student Guild and that future unisex toilets be devoted solely to the function of being unisex toilets; that is, that they are not accessible toilets which also happen to be unisex, since people with a disability have priority use of these toilets.
Rationale: Participants reflected on the need for more unisex toilets in order to alleviate stresses associated with negative interactions in toilets.
Responsibility: Inclusion and Diversity Committee, Student Guild, Campus Management

Notes: In the first instance, there should an online list of unisex toilets on campus, preferably in the proposed sexuality and gender diversity webpage mentioned above. Melbourne University has recently introduced 37 unisex toilets at its main campus in Parkville, with other campuses to follow. Unisex toilets have also been introduced at St Catherine’s College, a UWA residential college. The University of Sydney named each of its newly installed unisex toilets “All gender bathroom” to promote inclusion, with signage developed in consultation with LGBT stakeholders.
References


Appendix 1: Survey instrument

**Project Title:** Enhancing the University Experience of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans (LGBT) Students at the University of Western Australia

**Purpose of the Study**
The Equity and Diversity Office is conducting a study about the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans (LGBT) students at UWA. Our aim is to find out what the university climate is like for LGBT students and to write up a report of our findings and offer recommendations for improving the LGBT student experience at UWA.

**Who is organising the research?**
This project is being coordinated by Research Fellow Dr Duc Dau, with Penelope Strauss as Senior Research Officer. It is funded by a grant from the UWA Alumni Fund Grants.

*Please carefully read the following information before you decide whether you wish to take part in the study.*

**Why am I being asked to do this questionnaire?**
We are looking for LGBT students who are currently studying at UWA. Participants must be 18 years of age or older. You can be a part-time or full-time undergraduate, honours, or postgraduate student.

**Our definition of trans:** *We recognise that the language that trans people use to describe themselves can be complicated and is sometimes controversial. We use the word trans in an inclusive way, and would like to hear from people who use words like transsexual, transgender, sistergirl, androgynous, or genderqueer to describe themselves. All trans people, including those who just describe themselves as men or women, are encouraged to participate.*

**What do I have to do?**
This online questionnaire will take approximately 20 minutes of your time. You will not be paid for participating in this project, nor are there any costs to you. The questionnaire asks you for your views on the LGBT student experience at UWA, a snapshot of your experiences as a LGBT student, and your suggestions for making things better for you at UWA.

**Do I have to do the questionnaire?**
No. Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you can stop the questionnaire at any time.

**What happens to my information?**
The information you provide is completely anonymous and cannot be traced back to you, even if you choose to nominate yourself for the follow-up focus groups by providing us
with your email address at the end of the questionnaire. In other words, your email address will not be linked to your questionnaire responses.

We are using the information from the online questionnaire and focus groups to write up a report of the study findings and to help us develop guidelines for improving the experiences of LGBT students at UWA. The results may also be published and/or presented in professional spaces. The report, guidelines, and any other publications or presentations resulting from this study will not identify you personally or link your name to the study.

If there is any information that you do not want us to include in publications or conference papers arising from the study, then we ask you not to include it in the questionnaire.

**Are there any possible risks to me taking part?**
It is not expected that this questionnaire will cause you any harm. If any of these questions make you feel uncomfortable, you do not have to answer them. If at any time you feel troubled and would like to talk to someone, confidential telephone counselling is available 24 hours a day on Lifeline at 13 11 14.

**Who has reviewed the study?**
Approval to conduct this research has been provided by the University of Western Australia, in accordance with its ethics review and approval procedures. Any person considering participation in this research project, or agreeing to participate, may raise any questions or issues with the researchers at any time.

In addition, any person not satisfied with the response of researchers may raise ethics issues or concerns, and may make any complaints about this research project by contacting the Human Ethics Office at the University of Western Australia on (08) 6488 3703 or by emailing to humanethics@uwa.edu.au.

All research participants are entitled to retain a copy of any Participant Information Form and/or Participant Consent Form relating to this research project.

**What if I have any questions?**
If you have any questions about the study, please contact Duc Dau by email at duc.dau@uwa.edu.au.

Thank you for reading this information, and by clicking “next” you are indicating that you have read and understand the information given here and agree to take part in the study. By completing the questionnaire you are consenting to the research. If you do not want to be involved then simply close this window.
Are you aged 18 years or older?
- Yes
- No

Are you currently a student at UWA?
- Yes
- No

**Your perceptions of the UWA campus environment**

This set of questions asks about your general perception of the university environment for LGBT students.

How would you describe the overall campus environment for lesbian students at UWA?
- Very accepting
- Somewhat accepting
- Neutral
- Somewhat unaccepting
- Very unaccepting
- Do not know

How would you describe the overall campus environment for gay male students at UWA?
- Very accepting
- Somewhat accepting
- Neutral
- Somewhat unaccepting
- Very unaccepting
- Do not know

How would you describe the overall campus environment for female bisexual students at UWA?
- Very accepting
- Somewhat accepting
- Neutral
- Somewhat unaccepting
- Very unaccepting
- Do not know

How would you describe the overall campus environment for male bisexual students at UWA?
- Very accepting
- Somewhat accepting
- Neutral
- Somewhat unaccepting
- Very unaccepting
- Do not know
How would you describe the overall campus environment for trans students at UWA?

- Very accepting
- Somewhat accepting
- Neutral
- Somewhat unaccepting
- Very unaccepting
- Do not know

In your opinion, how likely are each of the following groups to experience discrimination or harassment on campus based on sexual orientation or gender identity/expression?

**Female bisexual students**

- Very likely
- Somewhat likely
- Neutral
- Somewhat unlikely
- Very unlikely
- Do not know

**Male bisexual students**

- Very likely
- Somewhat likely
- Neutral
- Somewhat unlikely
- Very unlikely
- Do not know

**Gay male students**

- Very likely
- Somewhat likely
- Neutral
- Somewhat unlikely
- Very unlikely
- Do not know

**Lesbian students**

- Very likely
- Somewhat likely
- Neutral
- Somewhat unlikely
- Very unlikely
- Do not know

**Trans students**

- Very likely
Your experiences at UWA

This set of questions asks about any harassment, discrimination or exclusion you have experienced or witnessed in the past 12 months at UWA.

If any of these questions make you feel uncomfortable, you do not have to answer them. If at any time you feel troubled and would like to talk to someone, confidential telephone counselling is available 24 hours a day on Lifeline at 13 11 14.

In the past 12 months at UWA, have you experienced harassment or discrimination because of your actual or perceived sexual orientation and/or gender identity/expression?
- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

Please tell us who was the perpetrator of the harassment or discrimination. Check all that apply.
- Other students
- Academic staff
- General staff
- Other, please specify: ____________________

Please tell us where the harassment or discrimination occurred. Check all that apply.
- UWA (Crawley campus)
- UWA (Nedlands campus)
- UWA surrounds, including Broadway, the river, etc.
- Travelling to and/or from UWA on public transport
- Other, please specify: ____________________

Please tell us more about your experience(s):

In the past 12 months at UWA, have you witnessed harassment or discrimination against other people because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity/expression?
- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say
Please tell us who was the perpetrator of the harassment or discrimination. Check all that apply.

- Other students
- Academic staff
- General staff
- Other, please specify: ____________________

Please tell us where the harassment or discrimination occurred. Check all that apply.

- UWA (Crawley campus)
- UWA (Nedlands campus)
- UWA surrounds, including Broadway, the river, etc.
- Travelling to and/or from UWA on public transport
- Other, please specify: ____________________

Please tell us more about your experience(s):

In the past 12 months, have you ever feared for your safety at UWA because of your sexual orientation and/or gender identity/expression?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

Please tell us more about your experience(s):

In the past 12 months, have you ever not disclosed your sexual orientation and/or gender identity/expression/history of transition at UWA to avoid harassment or discrimination?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

Please tell us more about your experience(s):

Have you ever felt excluded from any clubs or societies at UWA because of your sexual orientation and/or gender identity/expression?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

Please tell us more about your experience(s):

Has your sexual orientation and/or gender identity/expression ever affected your ability to socialise at UWA?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say
Please tell us more about your experience(s):

Has your sexual orientation and/or gender identity/expression ever disrupted your academic progress?
- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

Please tell us more about your experience(s):

The climate of the classes I have taken are accepting of LGBT people. This means everything from the subject matter taught in class, to teachers’ attitudes towards LGBT people, and the impact your peers have on you during classes.
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Uncertain
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

**UWA’s Responses**

This set of questions asks about your perception and awareness of UWA’s response to and provision for LGBT students.

UWA responds effectively to harassment or discrimination related to sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Uncertain
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

UWA has visible leadership from senior administration (the Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellors, Directors, Deans, Heads of School) regarding sexual orientation/gender identity issues on campus.
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Uncertain
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

UWA provides visible resources on LGBT issues and concerns.
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Uncertain
- Disagree
Strongly disagree

I would feel comfortable reporting an incident of LGBT harassment or discrimination to UWA.
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Uncertain
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

If you need to report an incident of LGBT harassment or discrimination to UWA, do you know who to report this to?
- Yes
- No

Are you aware of the Queer Department (QD) at UWA?
- Yes
- No

Have you ever interacted with or visited the QD?
- Yes
- No

Please tell us more about your experience(s):

Are you aware of the UWA Ally program?
- Yes
- No

Does the Ally program contribute to you feeling more welcome at UWA?
- Yes
- No

Please tell us more about your experience(s) of the Ally program:

UWA is a welcoming place for LGBT students.
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Uncertain
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

UWA is a safe place for LGBT students.
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Uncertain
Disagree
Strongly disagree

Your additional thoughts

Answers to this question will be used to provide UWA with recommendations on how to improve the experience of LGBT students.

How could UWA improve your university experience as a LGBT student?

Demographic Information

The final set of questions asks some basic information about you.

What is your age?

Are you of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin?
- Yes
- No

Do you live, or have you lived during your time at UWA, in a residential college?
- Yes
- No

What sex were you assigned at birth?
- Male
- Female

Do you identify as trans?
- Yes
- No

How do you describe yourself?
- I am a man
- I am a woman
- Other, please specify: ____________________

How do you identify your sexual orientation? Please check all that apply.
- Asexual
- Bisexual
- Gay (male)
- Heterosexual
- Lesbian
- Queer
- Questioning/not sure
- Other, please specify: ____________________
Are you an international student?
☐ Yes
☐ No

What is your status at UWA?
☐ Undergraduate student (first year)
☐ Undergraduate student (second year)
☐ Undergraduate student (third year or later)
☐ Honours student
☐ Postgraduate professional student (e.g. Law, Medicine)
☐ Postgraduate student (e.g. Masters or PhD)

What area of study are you enrolled in? (e.g. Engineering, Arts)
The Experience of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Trans Students at The University of Western Australia

Research Report 2016

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