

## EDC16D004

**Title:** Stonewall Index – First Institutional Submission  
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### Issue

The University made its first submission to the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index in September 2016. This document reviews the process and considers approaches for future submissions.

### Recommendation

For Information and comment.

### Resource Implications

N.A.

### Risk Implications

The Index is a nationally recognised measure of evidence and achievement for progress on equality for LGBT members of staff. Such measures increasingly support the University for funding applications and in the REF process as well as being benchmarks to help attract and retain the best staff. Presence in the framework also sends a positive message to students about the culture at the University. There is a risk in non-participation for such well recognised frameworks when competitor institutions widely engage.

### Equality and Diversity

The paper has equality for LGBT staff at its core and links to a key element of the Equality Strategy.

### Timing of decisions

N/A

### Further Information

Further information is available from:

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### Background

This is a new process for the University and the document reflects on improving the experience of LGBT staff and building evidence of this for future rounds of the Index.

### Discussion

See attached paper.

## **The Stonewall Workplace Equality Index 2017 Review of the Submission Process and Next Steps**

### **1. Background**

Stonewall is the primary pressure group for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and now trans, rights. It was established in 1989, initially by a small group of people, who wanted to create a professional lobbying group. At the time the main focus of its efforts was the repeal of Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988. Since then, the group has become well established at national level through its campaigning and lobbying and worked closely with the government on drafts of the Equality Act 2010. Some major successes include helping achieve the equalisation of the age of consent, lifting the ban on LGB people serving in the military, securing legislation which allowed same-sex couples to adopt and the repeal of Section 28. More recently Stonewall has helped secure civil partnerships and then same-sex marriage, and ensured that the recent Equality Act protected lesbian, gay and bi people in terms of goods and services.

The Workplace Equality Index was established in 2004 and has become a nationally respected, cross-sector, annual benchmarking exercise. Taking a business-like stance Stonewall focus on what work is being done within organisations to ensure gay, lesbian, bisexual, and since 2014, trans staff feel safe to be themselves at work. Research on stigma theory (Goffman 1963, Ragins, Singh and Cornwell 2007) supports the view that energy is diverted within the self when people are so stigmatized by society that they have to hide part of their personality. From an equality perspective a positive culture which ensures individuals feel accepted and safe at work regardless of sexual orientation is a fundamental human right and is also underpinned by UK legislation. From a business perspective, such diversion of energy means that an organisations productivity and creativity suffer if a proportion of their staff feel they cannot be fully authentic in the workplace and creates varied issues around employments issues such as absence, potential grievances and retention of good staff.

400 organisations took part in the Stonewall Index 2016 (submitting in September 2015), the results of which were announced in January 2016. The Index is cross sector and the highest scorer from the HE sector is Cardiff University, ranked at #20. The Top 100 Employers are published each year and Stonewall have introduced 'Star Performer' status, for which an organisation has to rank within the Top Ten in three different years. The highest performing organisation is MI5.

### **2. Content**

The Index comprises ten sections, with 50 mandatory questions and three additional in the tenth section. Broad categories included are:

- |                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| 1. Employee policy      | 6. Line Managers                         |
| 2. Training             | 7. Monitoring                            |
| 3. Staff Network Group  | 8 Procurement                            |
| 4. All Staff Engagement | 9. Community Engagement                  |
| 5. Career Development   | 10. Additional Work and Optional Awards. |

Stonewall provide a form which can be uploaded to a dedicated website. Each organisation is asked to reply briefly, sometimes with tick boxes and sometimes with free text boxes (maximum wording in this instance was 300 words) to the questions and upload separately key evidence. The drafting is saved on line and can be carried out over a period of time.

The final exercise is the running of a staff survey which is currently available to UEA staff and has been promoted via the weekly bulletin. The responses to this survey (which had approval by the Chair of the Ethics Committee, the PVC for Academic Affairs and the

Director of Human Resources) go direct to Stonewall. The University will receive a summary of responses as part of the feedback to the submission.

The new questions are announced in mid-June each year which means that work during the year cannot be 'matched' to the Index questions – that we must think holistically about the issues on an on-going basis.

### **3. Evidence**

Evidence is provided in the form of relevant extracts from policies, screenshots of communications, examples of training slides and case studies used. An online file has been started so that we can build evidence in the forthcoming year to make the exercise somewhat easier next time. However, it should be noted that the questions are revised every three years and the next revision will be for the 2018 Index (submitted in September 2017). Questions are released in June each year and so there is only a two to three month period of preparation available for the Index.

This year was the first time the questions were inclusive of trans staff, Stonewall having extended its remit to transgender rights in February 2015. The scores for trans questions will not count towards the final score this year but will be included from next years Index onwards.

Around 85 pieces of evidence were found to support UEA's submission to the Index. Following this submission we have also gathered evidence of new initiatives which can be reported in the next Index.

The process and guidance was easy to follow and uploads worked well.

Despite the potential for being a mere box-ticking exercise, the questions were pragmatic and prompted thought and discussion with a range of colleagues about how we might improve policies, processes and practice. It was also pleasing to find that more had been done, for example via procurement practices, than had been anticipated. We did, however, have gaps in some areas where no evidence could be presented (see Section 5 below).

### **4. Evaluation Process and Results**

The submission and accompanying evidence is evaluated by a Stonewall Area Representative. It will not be our own Representative but someone managing a different region of the UK. Submissions are marked twice and any disagreement between first and second round markers are examined in a one to one meeting with close reference to the guidance criteria. Results are given in early to mid-January before the Top 100 is announced in the press.

As this is our first attempt it is hoped we will be ranked somewhere between 200<sup>th</sup> –300<sup>th</sup> giving us a position to build from in the future. Feedback is given by our Regional Representative and will be used to help us progress. The Committee will receive a report at the meeting of 28 February 2017.

### **5. Strengths and Weaknesses at UEA**

During completion of the Index, thoughts were as follows:

- **Strengths**
- Range of training – LGBT references in on line and face to face training sessions
- Active staff network group
- Some work done on procurement already
- Pilot training for Staff Pride group on Dignity and Respect already in place

- **Weaknesses**

- Avenues for reporting issues of harassment (beyond HR or Line Management) – there has been a gap in our provision but the new initiative should improve this for staff.
- Wording in benefits policies could be more inclusive – this will be picked up over the coming year.
- Recognition of activity to support diversity (e.g. participation in the staff network group) in appraisals
- Inviting speakers on LGBT+ issues – will consider for the coming year.
- Visible role models/stories, including those with ‘multiple identities’, e.g. people who might be disabled and lesbian or gay or trans, or from a minority community, and lesbian, gay or trans.
- Being explicitly inclusive within our training brochures – we could include a positive action statement to encourage a range of minority groups to engage with leadership training and include LGBT+ statements within this. (HM/AG)
- More frequent promotion of the staff network and connected events

**For future consideration:**

- ‘Reverse mentoring’ programme – had a variable response at the Stonewall Workplace Conference
- Whether we should have a formal allies programme – again, a variable range of views existed at the Stonewall Workplace Conference.
- Whether we can sponsor local or regional LGBT+ events or use specific avenues of recruitment
- Have explicit role model stories for staff and students to access

Feedback from Stonewall has not yet been received so the above are offered as first impressions only.

## **6. Conclusion**

The index was a thought provoking exercise. It encourages us to think about the support of LGBT+ colleagues more broadly and about how we embed this support into our usual activities.

Although it presents as a tick box exercise there has to have been activity in order to present and upload evidence for Stonewall to consider. It remains to be seen how we fare through the formal evaluation process but the results will be available in January and a full report of these will be presented to the Equality and Diversity Committee in February 2016.

***Helen Murdoch***  
***October 2016***