

## Report: Dignity and Respect for UCD LGBTQI+ Community Cultivating Allyship for an Inclusive Campus

### 1. Purpose

This report provides an overview of participants' perceptions of dignity and respect for the LGBTQI+ Community in UCD. An interactive session provided an opportunity for attendees to reflect on experiences and challenges related to dignity and respect and provide recommendations on how UCD can strengthen a culture of dignity and respect for LGBTQI+ employees and students in the University.

### 2. Background

UCD reaffirmed its commitment to fostering an inclusive and respectful campus through an event entitled Dignity and Respect for UCD LGBTQI+ Community - Cultivating Allyship for an Inclusive Campus. The event, held 11<sup>th</sup> February 2025, was organised by UCD EDI LGBTQI+ Subgroup in collaboration with UCD Dignity and Respect Support Service, exploring challenges facing members of our UCD LGBTQI+ community related to dignity and respect both on campus and beyond.

The event programme included a keynote speech from Professor Niamh Moore Cherry, College Principal Social Sciences and Law and Chair of UCD Dignity and Respect Oversight Committee. Professor Agnes Higgins, Trinity College Dublin and Lead Author of Being LGBTQI+ in Ireland Report, shared report findings on the mental health and wellbeing of LGBTQI+ people and public attitudes towards LGBTQI+ people in Ireland.

Marcellina Fogarty, Senior Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Manager presented on Dignity and Respect Supports in UCD. A panel discussion with Dr Andrew McCartan, UCD School of Geography; Catherine Tormey, Dignity and Respect Response Manager; Dr Declan Fahie, UCD Dignity and Respect Contact Person; and Isabela Hermova, LGBTQI+ Student Society Auditor. The event was chaired by Conor O'Rourke, Co-Chair UCD EDI LGBTQI+ Subgroup and Dr Niamh Nestor, Co-Chair UCD EDI LGBTQI+ Subgroup.

### 3. Methodology

The interactive session was designed by UCD EDI LGBTQI+ Subgroup, UCD Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Unit and UCD Dignity and Respect Support Service. Four questions were asked at the session:

1. What are the main challenges to fostering a culture of dignity and respect for LGBTQI+ students and employees?
2. What does allyship mean to you?



3. How is UCD doing in supporting members of the community?
4. What more can be done to support the LGBTQI+ community in terms of Dignity and Respect in UCD?

Participants were divided across eight tables with facilitators from UCD Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, UCD Dignity and Respect and UCD EDI LGBTI Subgroup. Members of the Dignity and Respect Support Service were available to support students and employees as required. Facilitators sought the opinions of participants in relation to the four themes. The outputs from each table were recorded, collated and analysed to give a snapshot of how UCD can support dignity and respect related to LGBTI+ students and employees.

### 3.1 Participants

Sixty-five people participated in the event. Invitations to this event were promoted widely across University channels with targeted communications circulated via UCD Students Union, UCD LGBTQIA+ Student Society, UCD LGBTQIA+ Employee Network, UCD EDI LGBTI + Subgroup, and UCD College Vice Principals for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. Participants at the interactive session included students and employees from the UCD LGBTQI+ community and students and employees who have an interest in learning more about cultivating allyship and championing an LGBTQI+ inclusive university.

## 4. Discussion

Perceptions of existing UCD dignity and respect support and policies were generally positive by employees and students including international students. The launch of EDI Student Ambassadors and the visual communications campaign (#NotInOurUCD) on campus as well as UCD Dignity and Respect Student Ambassadors' weekly stands were commended. Employees at the Student Desk wearing rainbow lanyards, signage on facilities, active bystander training, UCD Students' Union (UCDSU) Pride march, Pride Week in UCD, and the collaboration between LGBTQIA+ Student Society and UCDSU on a handbook for trans students were highlighted as some of the supports already in place. Participants acknowledged the key role UCD plays in creating a welcoming and safe environment, community and improving student and staff life.

Participants acknowledged that there are different levels of allyship from passive to proactive allyship in UCD. Examples of how allyship could support a culture of dignity and respect, and greater understanding of the lived experience of LGBTQI+ people were discussed. The meaning of allyship was also queried, and whether this is a useful label. It was noted that world events, culture and lived experience outside of UCD has an impact on LGBTQI+ students and employees. The importance of a consistent approach to visible support at a time when organisations globally are being challenged in relation to equality,



diversity and inclusion was highlighted. While it was acknowledged that institutional policies and a range of supports are in place to protect LGBTQI+ students and employees, participants felt that more specific LGBTI activities could be undertaken by the University to strengthen the culture of dignity and respect for LGBTQI+ community and that this would positively impact the lived experience of the LGBTQI+ students and employees and day-to-day life in UCD.

A summary of barriers identified by participants to enhancing dignity and respect for the LGBTQI+ community in UCD are outlined below.

- There is a lack of awareness and experience of marginalisation or apathy to the experience of LGBTQI+. There is a perception that some people feel that this agenda is done. There is a general lack of awareness of minorities within the LGBTI+ community e.g. Trans\*, intersex and asexual people.
- For cultural change to be realised it needs to be reinforced through a continued top down and bottom-up approach to cultural change for LGBTI+ community in UCD is required. Continued vocal and visible senior leadership support, engaging with visible LGBTI+ role models, particularly senior academic level and providing the tools and supports necessary for greater allyship.
- While UCD as an institution communicates a culture of dignity and respect and support for LGBTQI+ community, the size of UCD is a challenge and there are competing priorities. There are some schools, colleges, units that are more engaged or visible in their support than others, it is not guaranteed that all areas of the University are safe and welcoming environments for LGBTQI+ people.
- Support pathways and support information for students and for student-facing roles could be made clearer.
- Linguistic assumptions, language that is exclusionary, or unintentional jokes, so-called banter that have an exclusionary impact on LGBTQI+ experience. It can be difficult to challenge when there is a power differential.
- There is a fear of saying the wrong thing by some participants.
- Curriculums do not engage with intersectionality or queer representation in modules.
- Measuring and communicating the effectiveness of supports for LGBTI+ students and employees.

## 5. Recommendations

Participants identified practical actions and recommendations to support UCD build a greater culture of dignity for LGBTQI+ students and employees in UCD. Recommendations for enhancing a culture of dignity and respect for LGBTI+ employees and students have been

outlined below. Recommendations which align with commitments in UCD Gender Equality Action Plan 2025-2029 have been highlighted.

- Launch tailored campaign and messaging about a culture of dignity and respect for LGBTI+ people in UCD ([GEAP 2024-2029 2.4.10](#))
- Raise awareness about the role of Dignity and Respect Support Service through targeted initiatives for the UCD LGBTI+ community.
- Review how student support pathways related to dignity and respect are communicated as well as trauma informed supports cognisant of UCD LGBTI+ students.
- Review existing training provision and developing targeted training for teaching staff, student facing and support roles, peer mentors and developing mechanisms to increase the uptake of training provided.
- Continue to provide opportunities to celebrate the LGBTI+ community by:
  - Providing continued engagement opportunities for senior leaders to support the LGBTI+ community in UCD.
  - Develop further opportunities to engage LGBTI+ role models, allies and student facing services to visibly communicate support of UCD's LGBTI+ Community.
- Develop guidance, case studies and module descriptor template ([GEAP 2024-2029 2.4.9](#))
- Identify how relevant LGBTI information and supports are sign-posted as part of the overall EDI information provided to international students and students going abroad.
- Identify opportunities for trans issues research in UCD ([GEAP 2024-2029 2.4.10](#))
- Engage LGBTI+ community and measuring progress:
  - Continue to engage with UCD LGBTI+ community in the development of policy, supports and initiatives.
  - Measuring and communicating the effectiveness of supports for LGBTI+ students and employees a ([GEAP 2024-2029 2.4.2](#))

## 6. Conclusion

The next step is for UCD Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Unit in collaboration with UCD Dignity and Respect Support Service and UCD LGBTI+ Subgroup to develop and implement agreed actions based on recommendations.