

Recognizing Heterosexism and Homophobia:

Creating an Anti-Heterosexist, Homophobia-Free Campus



Understanding Sexuality

University campuses are a reflection of the wider society. Indeed, part of a university's strength is the diversity of all its members. Like other forms of discrimination and harassment, homophobia and heterosexism weaken diversity. Bias and hatred have no place at the University of British Columbia.

In order to increase awareness of homophobia and heterosexism, it is useful to understand two of the components of sexuality: gender identity and sexual orientation.

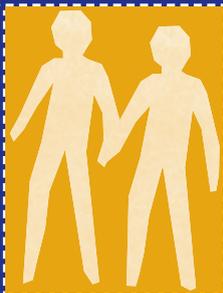
Gender Identity:

A person's self-concept of their own gender (regardless of biological sex) that may be the same as or different from the gender traditionally associated with their birth sex (male, female or *intersex**). Thus, adopting the female gender means becoming socially and culturally female, even if one is biologically male or intersex. A person may also define their gender identity as being more fluid than *either* male or female or as multi-gendered. In other words, their gender identity may encompass parts of masculinity, femininity and other non-traditional gender expressions. Some people do not identify with any gender labels at all.

Sexual Orientation:

One's sexual, affectional and romantic interests to members of the same gender (usually called *gay*, *lesbian* or *queer*), another gender (usually called *heterosexual*) or both/all genders (usually called *bisexual* or *queer*). Some people experience their sexual orientation as an unchanging, lifelong part of their nature, and others experience it in a more fluid way that changes over time or across situations. Everyone has a sexual orientation whether or not they are sexually active.

* Terms in bold italics are defined in the glossary at the end of the brochure.



What are Homophobia and Transphobia?

Homophobia and transphobia involve harassing, prejudicial treatment of, or negative attitudes about, *lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, trans-identified, transgender, transsexual, two-spirit and/or intersex (LGBTTI)* persons and those perceived to be of these sexual orientations or gender identities. Discrimination and harassment on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity are not acceptable at UBC.

Homophobia and transphobia include a range of feelings and behaviours from discomfort and fear to disgust, hatred and violence. It manifests itself in four different ways. Personal homophobia (or internalized homophobia) consists of personal beliefs and prejudices. Interpersonal homophobia (harassment and individual discrimination) involves individual behaviours based on those personal beliefs. Institutional homophobia includes the ways that governments, organizations, some religions, businesses and other institutions discriminate against people on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Lastly, cultural homophobia (heterosexism) refers to societal values and "norms" that privilege heterosexuality over all other forms of gender expression and sexual orientation.



Homophobic or Transphobic Behaviours Include:

- “Gay-bashing” or physical violence, including sexual violence
- Making derogatory comments, innuendos, insults, slurs, jokes or threats about sexual orientation or sexual practice
- Silencing talk of sexual or gender diversity
- Forcing people to “come out” or to stay “in the closet” (disclose or hide their sexual orientation or gender identity)
- Linking homosexuality with pedophilia (child abuse)
- Accusing LGBTQTTI persons of “recruiting” others to join their sexual orientation
- Defacing notices, posters or property with homophobic or transphobic graffiti
- Rejecting friends or family members because of their sexual orientation or gender identity
- Behaving as though sexual orientation is solely about sexual practice or is a “lifestyle choice”
- Treating the sexual orientations or gender identities of LGBTQTTI persons as less valid than those of heterosexuals
- Behaving as though all LGBTQTTI people have AIDS or are responsible for the spread of it
- Refusing to use pronouns or names consistent with a person’s gender identity
- Harassing someone because they do not fit easily into society’s limited definition of what it means to be, and look, like a man or a woman

What is Heterosexism?

Heterosexism is based on societal values that dictate that everyone is, or should be, heterosexual. Intentionally or unintentionally, our society privileges heterosexuality and heterosexual persons, and denies, erases, devalues, mistreats or discriminates against lesbian, gay, bisexual, two-spirit, queer and/or transgender persons or groups and those perceived to be so.

Recognizing Heterosexual Privilege

Heterosexual privilege bestows unearned and unchallenged advantages and rewards on heterosexuals solely as a result of their sexual orientation. These benefits are not automatically granted to LGBTQTTI persons.

Heterosexual Privilege Includes the Right To:

- Show affection in public safely and comfortably, without fear of harassment or violence
- Openly talk about one’s partner and relationships to others without considering the consequences
- Benefit from societal “normalcy”: the assumption that heterosexual individuals and relationships are valid, healthy and non-deviant
- Assume that all people and relationships are heterosexual, unless otherwise known
- Not face rejection from one’s family and friends because of one’s sexual orientation or gender identity
- Easily access positive role models and media images for one’s gender identity and sexual orientation
- Not be asked to speak on behalf of all heterosexuals
- Use gender specific pronouns when referring to one’s spouse or partner without discomfort or fear of reprisal
- Have automatic recognition of one’s spouse as next-of-kin in emergencies
- Easily select reading or viewing materials in which heterosexuality is the predominantly reflected orientation
- Have families similar to one’s own represented in children’s literature
- Raise children without fear that they will be rejected or harassed by peers because of their parents’ sexual orientation or gender identities
- Receive support and validation from a religious community if so desired
- Not risk being denied employment, housing or other services because of one’s sexual orientation or gender identity
- Not be seen as needing therapy to “cure” one’s sexual orientation or gender expression

What is Anti-Heterosexism?

Anti-heterosexism involves recognizing and questioning the power and privileges society confers on heterosexual people because of their sexual orientation. It involves respecting and fostering the inclusivity and diversity of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities. Anti-heterosexism challenges the assumptions that disadvantage LGBTQTTI persons because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

What Can I Do About Homophobia and Heterosexism?

Whether you are gay, lesbian, bisexual, two-spirit, queer, transgender, trans-identified or heterosexual, we all share the responsibility to end homophobia and heterosexism. Here are some tips.

BE NON-JUDGMENTAL. Being LGBTQTTI is not something to be ashamed of or judgmental about. Homophobia, not sexual orientation or gender identity, is the problem.

USE GENDER INCLUSIVE AND NON-HETEROSEXIST LANGUAGE. Use gender neutral pronouns that do not assume that you know someone's sexual orientation, gender identity or that presume the gender of their romantic/sexual interests. Use inclusive language even if you know someone is heterosexual. Help educate and encourage others to use inclusive language, as well.

ASSUME THAT ANYONE COULD BE LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, QUEER, TWO-SPIRIT, TRANSGENDER OR HETEROSEXUAL. Don't assume that everyone is heterosexual "unless you know otherwise" or that everyone should be heterosexual. Similarly, don't assume that someone is LGBTQTTI based on stereotypes or assumptions about their friends.

DON'T TEASE OR HARASS OTHERS for exhibiting behaviours that are not traditionally associated with their gender (or what you perceive their gender to be).

DON'T "OUT" PEOPLE. Do not force anyone to disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity. Also, if you know that someone is LGBTQTTI or is questioning their sexual orientation or gender identity, don't assume that you may tell anyone else. Be sensitive to the fact that some people are "out" in some areas of their lives, but not in others.

DON'T THINK OF LGBTQTTI PERSONS SOLELY IN TERMS OF THEIR SEXUAL ORIENTATION OR GENDER IDENTITY. Just as the lives of heterosexual people include far more than their attraction to members of the opposite sex, LGBTQTTI persons also have friends, skills and multifaceted interests unrelated to their sexual orientation or gender identity. Don't define anyone by their sexual orientation or gender identity.

DON'T ENGAGE IN HOMOPHOBIC JOKES, COMMENTS, SLURS OR OTHER BEHAVIOURS. Speak up against these when you witness them. If you don't, your silence condones and encourages such behaviours.

EDUCATE YOURSELF. If there are things you don't know or understand about LGBTQTTI issues, do some research, ask questions or contact a group that deals with these issues.

TALK ABOUT SEXUAL AND GENDER DIVERSITY. Maintain an inclusive group, classroom, living or workspace by talking openly and respectfully about LGBTQTTI issues when they come up. Treat these issues as you would any other issue.

REMEMBER THAT AN INDIVIDUAL'S SEXUAL ORIENTATION INVOLVES MORE THAN SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR. It includes attraction, companionship, intimacy and emotional attachments as well as sexual activity.

DO NOT FORCE PEOPLE TO HIDE their sexual orientation or gender identity.

DON'T ASSUME THAT LGBTQTTI PEOPLE ARE SUFFERING or have regrets about their sexual orientation and want to be heterosexual. Likewise, if someone who is LGBTQTTI is having problems, don't assume that sexual orientation is the cause.

RECOGNIZE INTERSECTIONS AND SIMILARITIES OF PREJUDICE. Heterosexism and other forms of oppression and discrimination have similarities and areas of overlap. For example, a black lesbian may experience homophobia, racism and sexism. An East Asian heterosexual man may be disadvantaged by racism in ways that are similar to the ways a gay man is disadvantaged by homophobia and heterosexism.

ENGAGE IN INCLUSIVE PRACTICES. Create work, study and living environments in which gender and sexual diversity are included, modeled and valued.

Glossary:

BISEXUAL: A person who is romantically/sexually attracted to or involved with both men and women.

GAY: A man who is romantically/sexually attracted to or involved with other men; also used as an umbrella term for everyone who has same-sex romantic/sexual attractions or relations.

HETEROSEXUAL: A person who is romantically/sexually attracted to or involved with members of the opposite sex.

INTERSEX: A person who is born with both male and female sex characteristics.

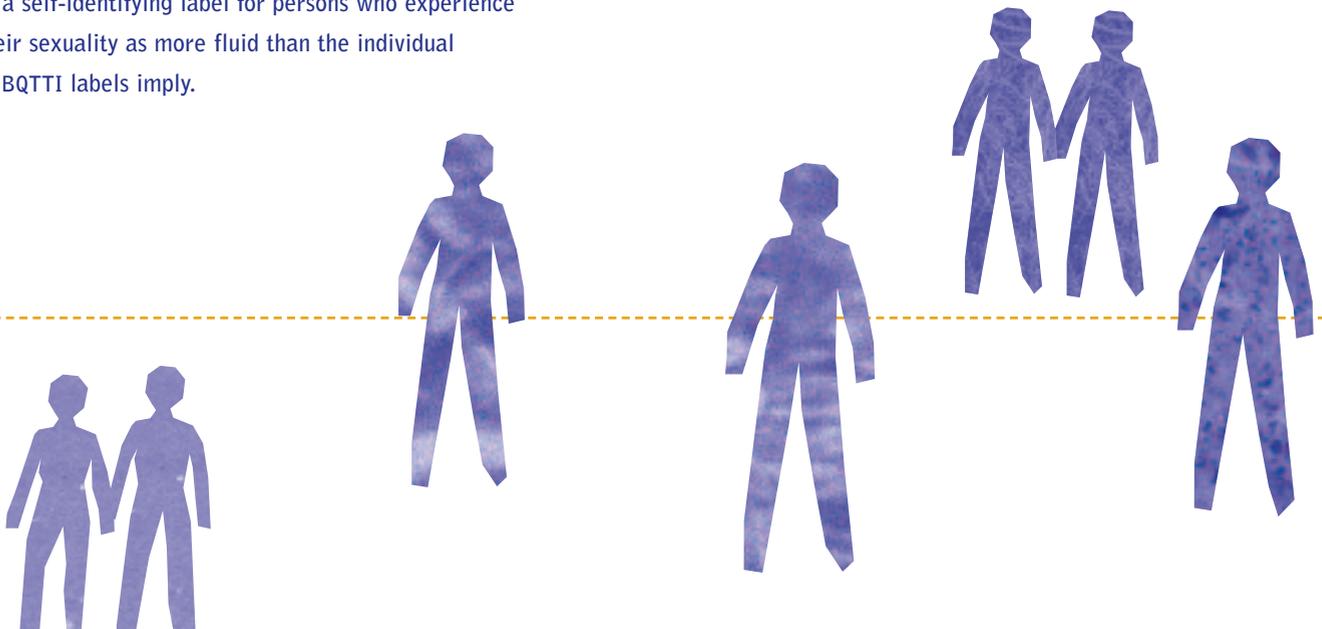
LESBIAN: A woman who is romantically/sexually attracted to or involved with other women.

LGBQTTI: An acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer, Trans (transgender, transsexual, trans-identified, genderqueer), Two-Spirit and Intersex.

QUEER: A once derogatory term reclaimed by some LGBQTTI persons, often used as an umbrella term to encompass all of LGBQTTI, or to refer to political activism or academic inquiry on LGBQTTI issues, or as a self-identifying label for persons who experience their sexuality as more fluid than the individual LGBQTTI labels imply.

TRANSGENDER, TRANS or TRANS-IDENTIFIED: A person who identifies with a gender identity other than the one that was ascribed to their biological sex at birth; or a person who views their gender as more fluid than the strictly male or female gender categories allow; or a person who expresses their gender in ways that challenge societal expectations of the range of possibilities for women and men. Also used as an umbrella term for transsexual, transgender, cross-dressing, intersex, bi-gendered, genderqueer, multi-gendered and androgynous people and those who don't identify with any gender labels. Trans persons may be gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer, two-spirit or heterosexual.

TWO-SPIRIT: A spiritual identity of some First Nations persons who embody masculine and feminine spirits or genders within the same body. Traditionally, two-spirit peoples were considered to be visionaries and healers who fulfilled roles assigned to both sexes and/or other roles reserved only for two-spirit individuals. This term, drawn from the traditional belief that sexuality and gender are inseparable from other aspects of life, can refer to a person of aboriginal ancestry who is lesbian, gay, bisexual or queer or who identifies as being either of mixed gender or transgender.



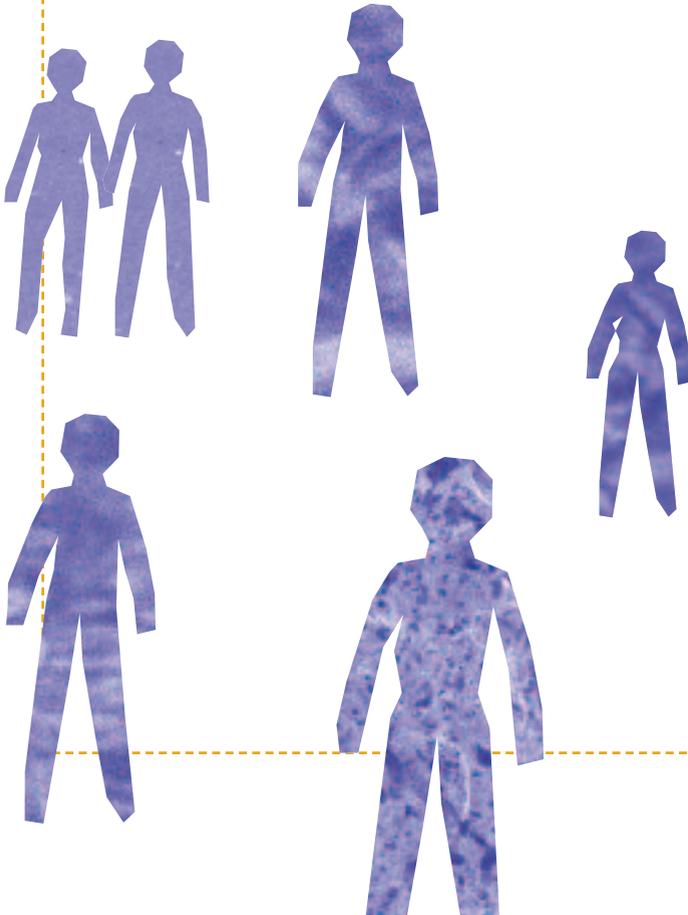
Other Resources:

ON CAMPUS:

POSITIVE SPACE CAMPAIGN – 604-822-4859, positive.space@ubc.ca, www.positivespace.ubc.ca
Promotes visibility and support for LGBTQTTI people and issues on campus by training resource people and identifying queer/trans-positive spaces and resources. This campaign is coming soon to UBC Okanagan. Contact the UBC-V Campaign Co-ordinator for more information.

PRIDE UBC (UBC VANCOUVER) – SUB 125N, 604-822-4638, www.ams.ubc.ca/pride An AMS Resource Group that provides support, discussion groups and social activities to LGBTQTTI students and others

PRIDE CENTRE (UBC OKANAGAN) – SSC 013, email: queerpeers@gmail.com Student club that organizes events and provides resources to LGBTQTTI students and allies



OFF CAMPUS – VANCOUVER AND KELOWNA:

THE CENTRE – 604-684-5307, www.lgtbcentre.vancouver.com/ A centre that provides support, health and social services and public education for LGBTQTTI persons and issues; offers a phone help line, HIV/AIDS clinic, library, counselling, legal clinic and various social and support groups in Vancouver

OKANAGAN RAINBOW COALITION – 250-860-8555, okrainbow@hotmail.com An organization that offers peer counselling, events, entertainment and information to the LGBTQTTI communities in Kelowna and the surrounding area

THE PRIDELINE – 604-684-6869, 1-800-566-1170
A non-judgmental, confidential peer support, information and referral phone line run by The Centre. Open 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. 7 days a week

TRANSALLIANCE SOCIETY – 604-684-9872, ext. 2044, www.transalliancesociety.org/ A province-wide group that provides forums for the trans community and its allies; promotes knowledge and understanding of trans culture and community and maintains a comprehensive list of community resources

TRANSGENDER HEALTH PROGRAM – 604-734-1514, 1-866-999-1514, www.vch.ca/transhealth An anonymous and confidential free service for transgender people, their loved ones and service providers in BC who have transgender health questions or need help finding resources or navigating health and social services

YOUTHQUEST! LESBIAN AND GAY YOUTH SOCIETY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA – 604-523-9115, 250-869-7834, 1-866-NOT-ALONE, www.youthquest.bc.ca/ A province-wide organization that provides social, support, referral and advocacy services for LGBTQTTI youth and allies through drop-ins, peer youth support and community development services and programs

How to Reach Us

If you have questions about how to incorporate anti-heterosexist practices into your work, study or living space, or if you experience or witness discrimination or harassment on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity, contact the Equity Office and Human Rights & Equity Services (HES) for assistance.

THE EQUITY OFFICE

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Vancouver
Room 2306 Brock Hall
1874 East Mall
Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z1
Tel: 604-822-6353
Fax: 604-822-3260
Web: www.equity.ubc.ca
Email: equity@equity.ubc.ca

HUMAN RIGHTS & EQUITY SERVICES (HES)

University of British Columbia —
Okanagan
3333 University Way, SSC 119F
Kelowna, BC V1V 1V7
Tel: 250-807-9291
Web: www.ubc.ca/okanagan/hes

The UBC community speaks many languages. We encourage students, staff, and faculty requiring English translation assistance to bring translators with them when visiting the Equity Office and HES.