Bristol Old Vic Theatre School Inclusivity Policy and Protocols: Sexuality and Sexual Orientation

Contents

The Policy

1. About Bristol Old Vic Theatre School's Inclusivity Policy & Protocols

1.1 The School's Inclusivity Policy and Protocols is designed to embed and support an inclusive environment for all members of the School, from staff to students and beyond. There are several sections to the Inclusivity Policy and Protocols, including:

- Allyship & Being an Active Bystander
- Bereavement Support
- Disabilities
- Gender Identity
- Health and Wellbeing
- Religious Belief and Religious Observance
- Sexuality and Sexual Orientation
- Tackling Racial Inequality

2. About this section of the Inclusivity Policy and Protocols: Sexuality and Sexual Orientation

2.1 The School is committed to the inclusivity of the entire LGBTQIA+ community. This particular section of the Policy and Protocols explicitly covers sexuality and sexual orientation. Matters relating more directly to gender identity are addressed in the School's Inclusivity Policy and Protocols: Gender Identity.

2.2 This is section of the Policy and Protocols is intended to support and facilitate a student's ability to engage positively and fully with their programme of study and to fulfil the expectations of the training and course regardless of their sexuality. It also aims to support and facilitate the experience of current and prospective staff of the School.

3. Context and terminology[1]

3.1 The School has adapted the following list of definitions, developed by Stonewall, related to sexuality and sexual orientation to highlight the wide spectrum of sexualities and sexual orientation. As our understanding grows, language will change and so it is important to remember that this list is neither exhaustive nor static.

3.2 For some people finding a definition or label that they identify with is an important aspect of understanding and feeling comfortable in their identity. Other people may not wish to label themselves. It is important to respect how people wish to self-define and to understand that, for some people, whether and how they choose to label themselves may change overtime.

3.3 Some definitions below will have the words 'sexual and romantic' in brackets. This is because people may experience both sexual attraction and romantic, only one of these, or neither. Therefore, this policy will decouple sexual from romantic orientation to emphasise the breadth and diversity of human romantic and sexual experience.

3.3.1 **Abro** (sexual and romantic)- Abrosexual or Abroromantic people have a fluid sexual and/or romantic orientation which changes over time or over the course of their life. They may use different terms to describe themselves over time.

3.3.2 **Ace**- Ace is an umbrella term used to describe a lack of, varying, or occasional experiences of sexual attraction This encompasses:

- **Asexual** people who do not experience sexual attraction. While some asexual people may

experience romantic attraction, others do not.

- **Demisexual** people who may only feel sexually attracted to people with whom they have formed an emotional bond.

- **Grey-sexual** people who experience sexual attraction occasionally, rarely, or only under certain conditions.

Ace people who experience romantic attraction or occasional sexual attraction might also use terms such as gay, bi, lesbian, straight, and queer in conjunction with asexual to describe the direction of their romantic or sexual attraction. For example, an ace woman who is romantically, or occasionally sexually, attracted to women may consider herself to be both a lesbian and asexual simultaneously.

3.3.3   **Allo** (sexual and romantic) - Allo people experience sexual and romantic attraction, and do not identify as ace or aro. Allo is to ace and aro spectrum identities, as straight is to LGB+ spectrum identities. It is important to use words that equalise experience, otherwise the opposite to ace and aro becomes 'normal' which is stigmatising.

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[1] This section heavily informed by Stonewall website: https://www.stonewall.org.uk/help-advice/faqs-and-glossary/list-lgbtq-terms

3.3.4   **Aro** – Aro is an umbrella term used specifically to describe a lack of, varying, or occasional experiences of romantic attraction. This encompasses:

- **Aromantic** people who do not experience romantic attraction. While some aromantic people may experience sexual attraction, others do not.

- **Demiromantic** people who may only romantically attracted to people with whom they have formed an emotional bond.

- **Grey-romantic** people who experience romantic attraction occasionally, rarely, or only under certain conditions.

Like ace people, aro people who experience sexual attraction or occasional romantic attraction might also use terms such as gay, bi, lesbian, straight and queer in conjunction with aromantic to describe the direction of their attraction.

3.3.5   **Bi** - Bi is an umbrella term used to describe a romantic and/or sexual orientation towards more than one gender.

3.3.6   **Biphobia** – Biphobia is the fear or dislike of someone who identifies as bi based on prejudice or negative attitudes, beliefs or views about bi people. Biphobic bullying may be targeted at both people who are bi and those who are perceived to be bi.

3.3.7   **Butch -** Butch is a term used by some people in the LBGTQIA+ community to describe someone who expresses themselves in a typically masculine way. There are other identities within the scope of butch, such as 'soft butch' and 'stone butch'. These terms should not be used to describe someone unless you are sure this is how they identify.

3.3.8   **Femme** - Femme is a term used by some people in the LBGTQIA+ community to describe someone who expresses themselves in a typically feminine way. There are other identities within the scope of femme, such as 'low femme', 'high femme', and 'hard femme'. These terms should not be used to describe someone unless you are sure this is how they identify.

3.3.9   **Gay** – Gay refers to a man who has a romantic and/or sexual orientation towards men. It is

also a generic term for lesbian and gay sexuality: some women define themselves as gay rather than lesbian. Some non-binary people may also identify with this term.

3.3.10 **Gender expression** – Gender expression is a person's outward expression of their gender. This is usually informed by societal expectations of gender. Gender expression is not the same as gender identity. A person who does not conform to societal expectations of gender may not identify as trans.

3.3.11 **Heterosexual/straight** – Heterosexual or straight refers to a man who has a romantic and/or sexual orientation towards women or to a woman who has a romantic and/or sexual orientation towards men.

3.3.12 **Homosexual** – Homosexual is a more medical term used to describe someone who has a romantic and/or sexual orientation towards someone of the same gender. The term 'gay' is now more generally used.

3.3.13 **Homophobia** – Homophobia is the fear or dislike of someone, based on prejudice or negative attitudes, beliefs or views about lesbian, gay or bi people. Homophobic bullying may be targeted at people who are lesbian, gay or bi or who are perceived to be lesbian, gay or bi.

3.3.14 **Lesbian** – Lesbian usually refer to a woman who has a romantic and/or sexual orientation towards women. Some non-binary people may also identify with this term.

3.3.15 **Lesbophobia** – Lesbophobia is the fear or dislike of someone because they are or are perceived to be a lesbian.

3.3.16 **Outing/ Outed** – Outing a lesbian, gay, bi, or trans person means disclosing their sexual orientation or gender identity to someone else without their consent. This is a form of harassment and bullying and can carry serious consequences for both an individual who is outed and a person who has outed them.

3.3.17 **Pan/Pansexual** – Pan/pansexual refers to a person whose romantic and/or sexual attraction towards others is not limited by sex or gender.

3.3.18 **Platonic partnerships** – Platonic partnerships are relationships where there is a high amount of mutual commitment such as shared life choices, living arrangement and co-parenting, which may not involve sexual or romantic orientation. People who are on the ace and/or aro spectrum may have platonic partnerships. These partnerships can include more than two people.

3.3.19 **Queer** - Queer is a term used by those wanting to reject specific labels of romantic orientation, sexual orientation and/or gender identity. It can also be a way of rejecting the perceived norms of the LGBTQIA+ community (racism, sizeism, ableism etc). The term was reclaimed in the late 80s by the queer community who have embraced it. However, some people may still consider it a slur and so it is important to be sensitive to the experiences and feelings of those around you.

3.3.20 **Questioning** – Question is the process of exploring your own sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Many people will be questioning at one point or another. This should never invalidate them.

3.3.21 **Romantic / Sexual orientation** - A person's romantic or sexual attraction to other people, or lack thereof. In combination this forms a person's orientation identity.

3.4 It is important to be considerate about the language you use. Being sensitive to language can reaffirm and support the identities of people who are oppressed by or erased within a heteronormative society. As a community, we should take opportunities to learn with grace and humility.

4. Purpose of the Policy: Scope and Principles

4.1   This policy applies to students studying on a course of Higher Education who are registered students at the School. This policy also applies to staff employed by the School particularly those who manage staff or support or teach students.

4.2   While the aim of the Policy and Protocols is to be inclusive, this section is particularly relevant to sexuality and sexual orientation. This policy covers only those aspects of sexual orientation directly related to learning, teaching, assessment, and employment at the School.

4.3   Whatever the individual circumstances, the School is committed to being flexible, and supportive, and making clear that discrimination and harassment on the grounds of a person's actual or perceived sexual orientation will not be tolerated.

5. Legislative Context

5.1   There are four pieces of legislation that are relevant to sexuality and sexual orientation in a Higher Education setting:

-     Equality Act 2010

-     Data Protection Act 2018 (UK)

-     General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) (UK) 2018

-     Human Rights Act 1998

5.2   Equality Act 2010

5.2.1   Sexual orientation is listed under the nine protected characterises of the Equality Act. This prohibits discrimination and victimisation against a person on grounds of their actual or perceived sexual orientation or their connection to someone who has a particular sexual orientation.

5.2.2   Public bodies are required to integrate consideration of equality and good relations into their day-to-day business and to consider how a function can affect different groups in different ways. This enables a higher education provider to reasonably anticipate the needs of all staff, students, and visitors and to address the potential impacts of any proposed changes to ensure they do not have an adverse effect.

5.2.3   It is important to note that terminology and understanding about the vast spectrum of sexual orientations has progressed rapidly since 2010 and that the Equality Act uses a dated and restricted definition of sexual orientation limited to attraction towards people of the same, opposite, or either sex.

5.2.4   The School acknowledges that there are many identities that do not fall into these neat categories and this policy will include everyone who identifies with a non-normative sexual orientation and who is therefore subject to similar forms of prejudice and discrimination.

5.3   Data Protection Act 2018 (UK) and General Data Protection Regulations 2018 (UK)

5.3.1   The Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018) complements the EU's General Data Protection Regulation 2018 (GDPR) and adds provisions specific to the UK. It has brought stricter rules and tighter controls on personal data. Information about a person's sexual orientation is considered 'special category data' under the Data Protection Act 2018. This data is subject to tighter controls than other personal data. Explicit consent is required before it can be collected, used, and shared.

5.3.2   Personal data must be looked after properly following the seven data protection principles,

which include ensuring personal data is accurate, secure, and processed fairly and lawfully.

5.3.3   Under the DPA and GDPR, 'special category data' is afforded an extra level of confidentiality and will nearly always require explicit consent from the individual concerned prior to disclosure to another party. The School also has a responsibility under the DPA and GPDR to ensure that personal information is accurate and up to date.

5.4   Human Rights Act (1998)

5.4.1 Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights, as enacted under the Human Rights Act 1998, protects a person's rights to respect your private and family. This includes your right to determine your sexual orientation.

6. Protection Against Harassment and Bullying

6.1   All staff, students and other stakeholders should expect to be treated with respect at all times. All complaints of harassment or bullying will be treated seriously and thoroughly investigated. Disciplinary action can be taken in cases where bullying/harassment have been proved.

6.2   Any act of harassment or bullying toward a person based on their sexuality will normally, in first instances, be dealt with under UWE's Policy for Bullying and Harassment of or by Students

The Protocols

Protocol Aim	Protocol	How this might be achieved	Supporting guidance and information
Supporting Coming Out	**Person-Centred Support**	• **Use the School's Inclusivity Protocol: Sexuality and Sexual Identity to support individuals to support others.** • **Use the School's Inclusivity Protocol: Gender Identity for more advice on person-centred support.** • **Include LGBTQIA+ allyship in any allyship training.**	It is important to respect how an individual wants to 'come out'. They may choose to come out in some areas in their life, for example at school, and not others, for example at home. There is no wrong or right way to come out. It is imperative that the person's confidentiality is respected. It is a sign of trust when someone comes out to you and you might be the first person, or amongst the first people, they tell. Everyone's journey is different and different people will need differing levels of support. You should take the responsibility of supporting someone who has come out to you very seriously. The School is committed to providing a supportive environment for students and staff who wish to publicly come out. However, individuals have the right to choose whether they wish to be open about their sexual orientation. To 'out' someone without their permission is a form of harassment, it will be treated as such and may result in disciplinary action. More advice and guidance on person-centred support and responding to a person coming out can be found in the School's Inclusivity Protocol: Gender Identity.
Fostering Inclusion	**Inclusive Language and Behaviours**	• **Hold an awareness campaign on terminology and context to enable staff and students to communicate confidently.**	Derogatory and homophobic language has no place in the School. This type of language is not only levelled as people who identify as LGBTQIA+ but also at anyone considered 'different'. This type of language should never be excused as banter. Regardless of intention, it causes harm to the individual and to society more broadly.

Fostering Inclusion	Inclusive Language and Behaviours	• **Use the School's Inclusivity Protocol: Allyship and Bystander Intervention to embed a supportive culture in our community.**
		
		• **Normalise the use of inclusive language by avoiding heteronormativity and gender stereotypes:**
		  o Do not assume someone's sexuality or sexual orientation based on factors such as appearance or mannerisms.
		
		• **Set expectations for appropriate behaviour in the School's Code of Behaviour.**
		
		• **Ensure there is space with kindness and understanding for students and staff to learn.**
		
		• **Support the development of pride alliances or similar groups.**
			It is important to avoid gender stereotypes and heteronormative language and assumptions. For example:
			  o Avoid associating strength, violence, or aggressive with masculinity and demureness, fragility, and gentleness with femininity
			  o Avoid gender specific language when discussing relationships and families- say partners or significant others rather than boyfriend/girlfriend or husband/wife or parents/guardians rather than mother and father.
			  o Avoid assumptions such as: gay men don't like sports, lesbian women dress masculinely, or bi people are promiscuous
			  o Finally, do not assume that everyone experiences emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction. This can be extremely harmful asexual and aromantic people's sense of self.

	Staff and Student Recruitment and Progression	• **Ensure that all relevant policies and procedures refer to partners and significant others rather than spouses.** • **Ensure that any parental leave policies are gender neutral and inclusive for all families.**	Under the Equality Act, the recruitment, selection and promotion of staff, and the recruitment, selection and progression of students must be based on relevant criteria only, which do not include sexual orientation. Similarly, under the Equality Act, all benefits and conditions of service will apply equally to all staff (and students where applicable), and same sex partners should be considered in the same way as partners of heterosexual staff.

| Fostering Inclusion | The Effects of Historic Bullying | • **Recognise that some people may have had negative experiences when coming out or expressing their sexual orientation.**
    o Due to societal expectation, boys and men who pursue the creative and performing arts may have experienced bullying and harassment, regardless of their sexual orientation or whether or not they have 'come out' publicly.

• **Ensure staff responsible for student support and line-managers are briefed and trained on how to response to trauma caused by historic bullying.**

• **Provide specific mental health support for those who have been bullied due to their sexual orientation.** | It is essential to recognise that before students or staff join the School, they may have experienced significant levels of bullying and harassment that has left them with significant trauma. This can be particularly true for LGBTQIA+ people. The 2017 Stonewall School report showed that nearly half of bullied LGBTQIA+ learners in sixth form colleges (47%) and nearly two in three bullied LGBTQIA+ learners in FE colleges (63%) said this bullying had a negative effect on their plans for future education.[2]

The report goes on to say that LGBTQIA+ children and young people 'experience particularly high rates of poor mental health'. 60% of LGB young people and 84% of trans young people have deliberately harmed themselves at some point. More than 20% of LGB young people and more than 40% trans young people have attempted to take their own life. One in three non-binary young people and nearly half of disabled LGBT young people have tried to take their own life. |
| | Curriculum | • **Audit materials to ensure that they discuss and recognise diversity sexuality and sexual orientation.**

• **Audit material and other course item to ensure they do not uphold any harmful stereotypes of the LGBTQIA+ community.**

• **Use the School's Inclusivity Protocol: Tackling Racial Inequality for support in developing and inclusive curriculum.** | It is important that Schools ensure that their curriculum in inclusive of a wide range of sexualities and does not fall into stereotypes. Caricatures are unacceptable and only serve to uphold constraining and damaging heteronormative structures.

Informed academic debates about sexual orientation within the context of learning and teaching should be encouraged to take place within a culture of dignity and respect for all individuals. |

[2] Stonewall, *School Report (2017) The experiences of lesbian, gay, bi and trans pupils in Britain's schools,* (June 2017): https://www.stonewall.org.uk/school-report-2017

Fostering Inclusion	**Intersectionality**	• **Ensure staff and students understand the concept of intersectionality and how a person's various identities may create various forms of disadvantage, underrepresentation, or oppression.** • **Use all of the School's Inclusivity Protocol together holistically to support the whole individual, not just one aspect of their identity.**	Individuals are never just one thing- we are a combination of all our various identities and this affects how we walk through the world. Two women, for example, will experience misogyny very differently dependent on their ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender history, socio-economic background, religion, disability status etc. As a consequence, people may experience multiple linked forms of discrimination and therefore everyone has their own unique experiences with discrimination and oppression. These unique experiences should be respected, acknowledged, and validated.
Healthy Relationships	**Consent**	• **Display and signpost to the School's 'What is Consent' poster** • **Incorporate open discussions and training about consent and healthy relationships into student and staff induction** • **Ensure students are aware of, and understand,** UWE's Policy for Bullying and Harassment of or by Stude	Consent is important in all relationships. Unwanted advances or similar behaviours constitute sexual harassment and are equally unacceptable irrespective of the sexual orientation of the victim or the perpetrator. Students and staff, due to life experiences, may have different understandings of consent and so it is important to highlight a collective definition. Careful consideration should be taken as to what the right support might be for the individual person. People may wish to be supported in different ways and it is important to be led by this.
	Creating a Supportive Space	• **Consider organising training or guidance for differentiating between healthy and unhealthy relationships.**	People who are forced to hide their sexuality orientation, for personal, cultural, or societal reasons, can be at increased risk of experiencing toxic or otherwise unhealthy behaviour in their relationships. This can be for many reasons such as:

| Healthy Relationships | Creating a Supportive Space | • Ensure that discussions about healthy relationships are inclusive of all types of relationship.

• Provide training and support to ensure that student support and line-managers are able to identify signs of potentially unhealthy relationships and address these situations sensitively.

• Always ensure the feelings and wishes of the person in question is at the heart of any action undertaken. | - Lack of confidence in seeking external support
- Internalised homophobia
- A lack of healthy relationship modelling and advice due to a heteronormative media, sex and relationships education, and ultimately, society.

It is therefore important to be vigilant and sensitive to those around you. When people feel that they are in an inclusive and supportive environment, they are more likely to have the confidence to seek support. |