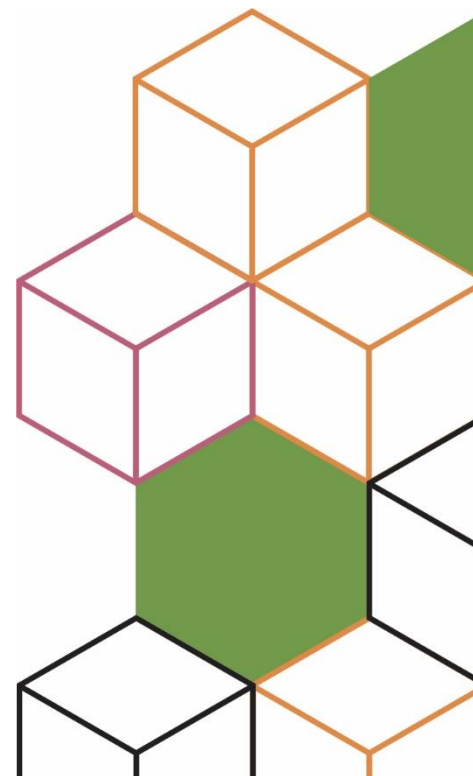


November

2021

Graduate Student
Association

**Graduate LGBTQIA+
Inclusion Survey
Findings**



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Introduction

The Graduate Student Association (GSA) is the independent representative organisation for all graduate coursework and research students at the University of Melbourne. We are led by 8 GSA Board members and 10 Representative Council members who are all elected University of Melbourne graduate students. On behalf of over 29,000 constituents, we represent graduate student interests to the University and wider community, provide student engagement events, activities, and information to the graduate student community, and support 150 affiliated graduate student groups.

GSA's vision is for inclusive, empowered graduate student communities that achieve meaningful and holistic university experiences. Our objectives are to achieve and support representation, academic support, transition to work, engaged and healthy communities, and organisational sustainability.

GSA advocates for a community that champions inclusion, safety, and respect for our Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual/Aromantic plus (LGBTQIA+) graduate students. We undertook this survey to identify opportunities to support the LGBTQIA+ graduate community at the University of Melbourne. Student feedback identified the need for expanding LGBTQIA+ initiatives within the University of Melbourne to foster social connectedness, increase awareness/promotion of LGBTQIA+ support services, resulting in increased student safety.

Method

GSA surveyed graduate students to identify perspectives towards LGBTQIA+ inclusion in the University of Melbourne community. The survey ran from 11 October to 11 November 2021 and was promoted extensively across many University faculty newsletters and online noticeboards, as well as GSA's newsletter, social media channels, and networks of student representatives. The survey was anonymous to ensure confidentiality, however, students could elect to share their contact details to enter a random prize draw to win one of four vouchers. Quantitative analysis was performed SPSS and qualitative analysis with Excel.

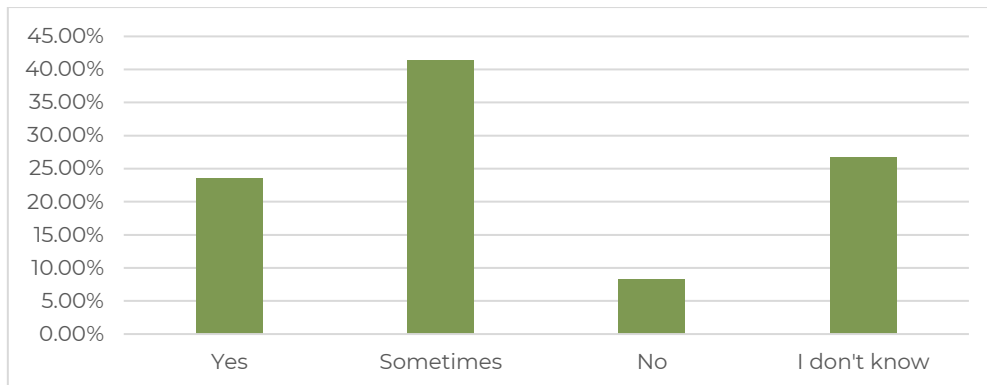
The survey received 330 responses. Of those, 173 graduate student respondents identified as a member of the LGBTQIA+ community. 122 students did not identify as LGBTQIA+, 19 indicated that they were unsure, and 14 preferred not to disclose this information. All the University faculties were represented, with the faculties of Arts and Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences yielding the most responses.

Findings

The findings below present perspectives from graduate students in support of strengthening the LGBTQIA+ University student experience. All statistics below are from students who self-identified as LGBTQIA+ unless indicated otherwise. Not all participants answered all questions. A small number of students selected "other, please describe" for the quantitative questions. These responses have been excluded from the graphs below and have instead been included in the analysis of written responses.

Services for LGBTQIA+ students

Figure 1: Does the University offer services and opportunities that meet the needs of LGBTQIA+ students?

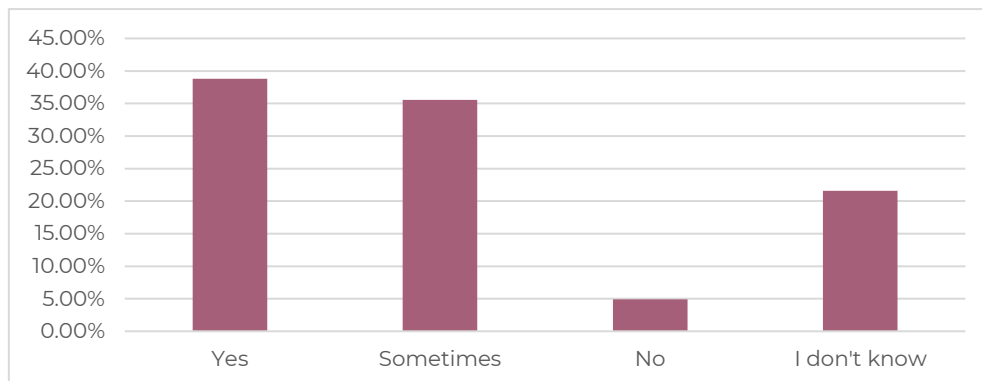


Note. LGBTQIA+ identifying students (n=157).

- Of the 157 LGBTQIA+ students who responded to this question, 24% agreed that their needs were met by University services.
- 41% expressed that the University services and opportunities only sometimes met their needs.
- Only 8% of students reported the University does not meet their needs.
- 27% stated they were unsure if the University provided services that met their needs.

Access and equity of University policies regarding LGBTQIA+ issues

Figure 2: Are the University's diversity and equity policies inclusive of LGBTQIA+ students?

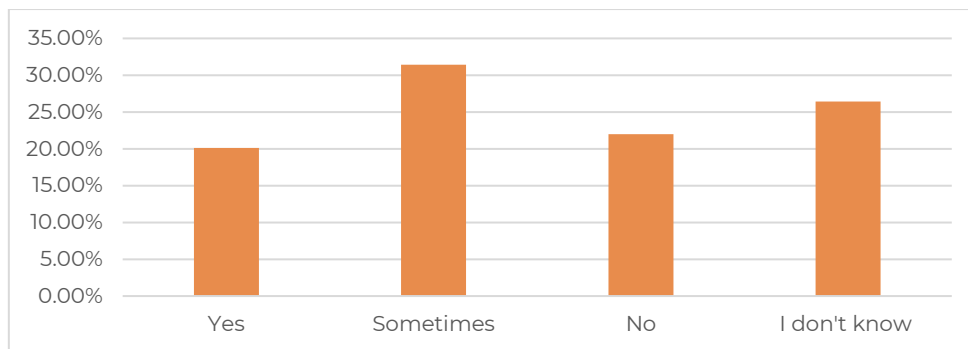


Note. LGBTQIA+ identifying students (n=162).

- 39% of the 162 LGBTQIA+ respondents to this question agreed that the University policies are inclusive.
- 36% responded that the University policies are only sometimes inclusive.
- Only 5% of students reported that the University policies were not inclusive.
- 22% responded that they are unsure if the University policies are inclusive of LGBTQIA+ students.

LGBTQIA+ representation at the University

Figure 3: Does the University community provide appropriate representation for LGBTQIA+ identifying graduate students?



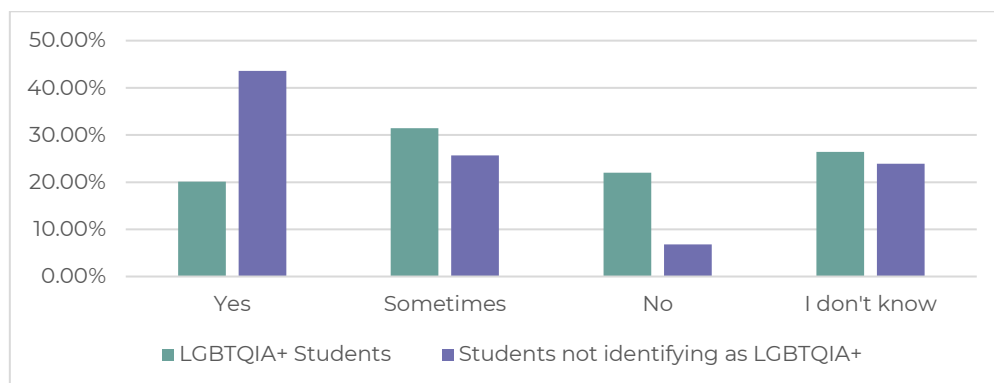
Note. LGBTQIA+ identifying students (n=159).

- 20% indicated that levels of representation at the University community are suitable.
- 31% indicated that the University sometimes facilitates suitable representation.
- 22% stated that the University does not provide suitable representation for the LGBTQIA+ community.
- 26% indicated that they were unsure if the University adequately represents LGBTQIA+ graduate students.

Responses from students who did not identify as LGBTQIA+

This survey also received responses from those who did not identify as LGBTQIA+. Overall the participants shared similar responses about the inclusivity of University policies. The following section analyses the responses of students who did not self-identify as LGBTQIA+.

Figure 4: Does the University community provide appropriate representation for LGBTQIA+ identifying graduate students?



Note. LGBTQIA+ identifying students (n=159), students who did not identify as LGBTQIA+ (n=117).

- Of students who did not identify as LGBTQIA+, 44% answered that there is appropriate LGBTQIA+ representation. This is more than double the percentage of LGBTQIA+ identifying students who believe that there is suitable representation.

- This suggests that students in the LGBTQIA+ community do not share the impression that the University offers meaningful representation.

Recommendations for additional support identified

Apart from the data presented above, students provided anecdotes and statements that identified that there was a need to increase additional support services at the University of Melbourne. These include:

1. Raise awareness about LGBTQIA+ University services and resources

63 students identified the need for increased awareness of support services for LGBTQIA+ students. For example, nine students were unaware that the University offers counsellors that specialise in LGBTQIA+ mental health support.

“Seems like the support is there but you have to really go hunting for it.”

-Domestic Coursework Student, LGBTQIA+ community

“We wish we can communicate and get support from all corners of the world especially as members of the LGBTQIA+ community.”

-International Coursework Student, LGBTQIA+ community

2. Increase social connectedness for LGBTQIA+ graduate students

50 students highlighted the need for safe spaces to increase LGBTQIA+ community socialisation opportunities. Many students expressed that clubs, events, and autonomous collectives would facilitate greater connectedness for LGBTQIA+ identifying students. Some students expressed the need for mainstream services, events, and activities to be accessible for LGBTQIA+ students.

“The University could improve our experience by organizing more events, clubs and gatherings to support LGBTQIA+ students.”

-International Coursework Student, LGBTQIA+ community

3. Include LGBTQIA+ community’s needs and awareness in course curriculums

Ten students identified that the University curriculum does not adequately prepare them to work with LGBTQIA+ patients, families, communities, or individuals.

“It might be good to have more opportunities to take placements in gender clinics and sexual health clinics to improve understanding and skills in medical care for LGBTQIA+ patients.”

-Domestic Coursework Student

4. Enhance intersectional representation

Seven students highlighted the need to include cultural diversity frameworks, needs of students with different abilities, and the experiences of mature-aged students within the LGBTQIA+ representation at the University.

“[The University should offer an] introduction to LGBTQIA+ culture in Melbourne for students whose countries do not allow public expression of LGBTQIA+ movements.”

-International Research Student, LGBTQIA+ community

5. Ensure LGBTQIA+ safety

Six students highlighted that LGBTQIA+ safety at the University is undermined by transphobic statements made by academics. Students advocated for the University to clearly state how University policies will be implemented to prioritise LGBTQIA+ safety while balancing academic freedom.

“[There should be] more clear directions from the University about how they are going to tackle transphobia.”

-Domestic Coursework Student, LGBTQIA+ community

6. Develop awareness of LGBTQIA+ issues in the University community

25 students identified the need for cohesion between LGBTQIA+ students and allies. The comments from the survey highlighted the needs for increasing awareness of the LGBTQIA+ community’s needs. It is important to ensure there is meaningful dialogue and initiatives across the University to promote social connectedness and raise awareness of LGBTQIA+ experiences and issues. These events and programs should be open to all members of the University community to ensure appreciation and understanding of the needs of diverse cohorts.

“In my opinion we focus on too much of what is diverse and not celebrating what is the same.”

-Domestic Coursework Student, LGBTQIA+ community