



Hannah Dormor

Alumni Engagement Coordinator (SEF and Law)

What initially drew you to Queen Mary, and what were your expectations before you arrived?

Universities have a reputation of being really diverse, open and accepting, both in terms of the ideas they research and teach and in terms of their population. Queen Mary has an even stronger reputation than most universities, and were open to hiring someone who had worked outside Higher Education so it seemed like a great fit. Diversity and inclusion have always been close to my heart, so it's important to me to work somewhere which fits with my values.

Your experience of Queen Mary as a bi+ staff member

I'm a person who carries a lot of privilege so my experiences have generally been on the more positive end throughout my life. Even with that considered, my experiences at Queen Mary so far have been good. In previous places, I've had people refer to me as a lesbian or as gay because they remembered I had a female partner, and once was cornered at lunchtime by someone who had some more inappropriate questions about being bi, but my colleagues here seem to have actually met bi people before!

How you feel supported by Queen Mary and what we should be doing to improve this - Is there anything else that Queen Mary could do to further support our LGBTQ+ community?

I feel that Queen Mary is definitely a supportive place, with a strong and active network – the rainbow lanyards and pronoun badges were great when we were on campus. Having only been here since January, I can't speak much to what it's like outside of the current strangeness, but it would be nice to see things like Pride and LGBTQ+ History Month marked more. I also don't have any sense of what the experience is like for trans/non-binary colleagues, or LGBTQ+ colleagues of colour, so I'm sure we could be doing more – as Maya Angelou said 'the truth is, no one of us can be free, until everybody is free'.

Projects or studies you are working you would like to share with us/ something interesting about yourself

Through lockdown I've got really into making clay sculptures, mostly small heads, but a few hands and torsos too. Even before lockdown I liked trying new hobbies, so that was just amplified by being at home all the time and therefore unable to access my usual hobbies like improv theatre/comedy or pole dancing.

Why you want to be an LGBTQ+ role model? Why is it important? Why is visibility important?

For bi people in particular, visibility is important because unless you know something exists, it's hard to know that's what you are. Growing up in a very liberal

Christian household, I knew about gay men at age five, but I didn't encounter the word or concept of 'bisexual' until my teens and that wasn't framed quite so positively. Through my teens I mostly just found it confusing so I neatly categorised my feelings as 'friendship' for girls and 'romance' for boys, causing problems for friendships with both. And even once I came out to myself, the stigma around the word 'bisexual' made it a hard word to use for a long time. Having role models would have been so useful in understanding and destigmatizing my experience, but despite a number of public figures being very open about it, the media continues to present bi people as straight or gay depending on their current relationship, and sometimes still refers to women in relationships as being good friends.

So hopefully my experiences will resonate with someone and help them in their journey. If anyone wants to talk directly, just drop me a message on email or Teams.

Thinking now about Queen Mary's LGBTQ+ community, what would be your advice to students wanting to be more visible or active?

University is the perfect time to get involved in things that are going on, to meet new people and explore new ideas and activities. I would highly recommend getting involved in the LGBTQ+ society and what they're up to – from socials to campaigning, it's great experience. Even if you feel 'not queer enough' (as I did at that point in my life), go along, make friends, no one is going to interrogate you about your definitive

orientation or past relationships (and if they do, they're the problem, not you).