

# Celebrating Diversity: Showcasing the LGBTQ+ Photo Bank at the University of Edinburgh

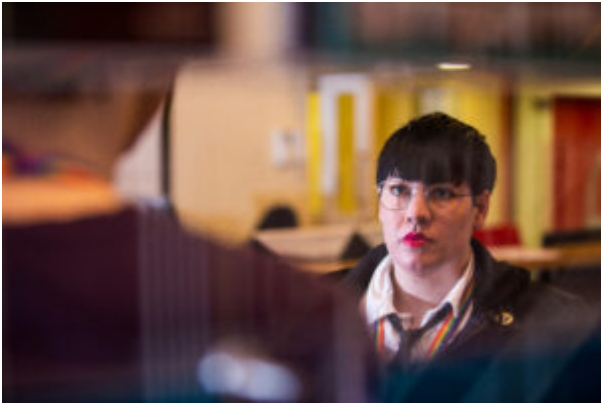
The University of Edinburgh has always been committed to promoting diversity and inclusion. Back in 2018, a special photo shoot led by Gina Gwenffrewi was organised to create a collection of images representing the LGBTQ+ community within our university, including trans and non-binary individuals. These images deserve greater publicity and can be viewed at the LGBTQ+ Students and Staff Image Gallery (Password: edinburghgallery).

This photo bank captures various aspects of staff and student life, highlighting how LGBTQ+ individuals contribute significantly to the university community. As Kat Deuchars, a fellow staff member, remarked, “they demonstrate how LGBTQ+ people look just like straight cis people.”

We are currently working on an exciting new project to update these images and feature the inclusive Progress Pride Rainbow Lanyards. If you're interested in helping with this project, please contact us at [staffpridenetwork@ed.ac.uk](mailto:staffpridenetwork@ed.ac.uk).

We value your feedback on the existing images and how they can be improved. Please share your thoughts with us to help us create better representations of our diverse community and secure funding for more photos. [Provide a link for feedback here]

Thank you for supporting our efforts to foster a more inclusive environment at the University of Edinburgh.





**Note:** The images included in the blog post are just a few examples and can be downloaded full size from the gallery mentioned above, featuring a mix of close-ups, group photos, and various activities that demonstrate the diversity and contributions of the LGBTQ+ community within the university, including trans and non-binary individuals.

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# Allyship in Informatics

by Jonathan MacBride (he/him) IGS Administrative Assistant

Today (Monday the 27th March 2023) the School of Informatics emphasised their allyship of trans and non-binary people at the University of Edinburgh. It's not often as a cis gay man that I see inclusion at a high level. Today I felt that little bit more valued, motivated, inspired, more proud to work in Informatics. Allyship is usually seen where individuals want to make a difference in ways they can achieve. Today the School of Informatics quarterly School General Meeting featured the Director of People & Culture Chris Heunen presenting the School Values, announcing a new family fund grant and then giving time for a former Staff Pride Network Trans & Non-Binary Rep to share insights about being a good ally to LGBT+ people. Dr Gina Gwenffrewi shared some of her personal story, comparing her life as an undergrad at Cardiff University 20 years ago, unable to be her true self, unable to achieve her full potential, to now at the University of Edinburgh where she has achieved her PhD, currently teaching Introduction to Trans Studies to UoE undergrads. It's quite a turnaround which she puts down to being able to live and study as Gina, focussing only on what she's here for. Gina highlighted that if we can all show respect and care to trans and non-binary colleagues and students that they will be more successful in their research and work, happier, healthier, more creative, instinctive.

How do we do that? Baby steps are a start. A Rainbow Lanyard shows others that you are a safe person to approach. Hang one from your pocket or on your office wall if you don't tend to wear it round your neck. Ask someone which pronouns they use and respect their answer. Add your own pronouns to your e-signature. Many people aren't familiar with gendered names of

cultures around the world so not only does it highlight your understanding of inclusion, it helps others know who they're replying to. After all, here in Edinburgh a 'Chris' could use he/him, she/her or they/them.

A non-binary Informatics PhD student explains how the world around them impacts their day-to-day life:

"In most scenarios, I am the first non-binary person my colleagues will have encountered. Maybe English is not their first language, and they have never learned that it is grammatically acceptable and correct to use "They/Them" for a single person. Maybe English is their first language and they have just never had to think in this way before. There is nothing wrong with learning, and making mistakes. However, there is a huge mental load on being everyone's first learning experience, that could be reduced by faculty members and staff simply by showing support in their actions and using the right etiquette.

It takes a significant amount of energy (and quite honestly courage) to persevere through conversations where someone is knowingly and consistently using the wrong pronouns for me. All anyone needs to do is ask if they forget, and correct themselves and others when they make a mistake."

▪ Persie Rolley-Parnell, RAS PhD


What do I hope was achieved today? Perhaps a few people hearing a trans woman speak in person for the first time, personalising a message which they have only heard in the media. Maybe a message they haven't heard before, particular to their role in the School, relating it to how they teach, how they interact. A fellow trans and/or non-binary staff member or student could have been sitting there feeling hope, that things in life will get better. Or simply that one person tells another that a trans woman spoke at their School General Meeting. Visibility makes a difference. Personalisation of an

issue.

The Informatics Forum reception has a small stock of the latest design of UoE Rainbow Lanyards, featuring a more inclusive Progress Pride flag. Anyone with a staff card can also get them free from Card Services at the Main Library. They are available to everyone from the Visitor Shop who sell them with a card holder for £2.

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## Staff Pride Network Members' Newsletter February 2023


Staff Pride Network Members' Newsletter February 2023
<a href="#">Go to this Sway</a>

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## Join us at Edinburgh Pride 2022

**SPN at Pride Edinburgh**

We invite members, allies and students to join us for the Pride Edinburgh March on Saturday 25 June!

The SPN marching troupe will be meeting at 11:30 on the day at Levels Café on Holyrood Road. Speeches start at 12:30 and the march moves off at 13:00.

If you can't make it to Levels beforehand but still want to join in, just look for our marching banner – it will be 3 metres wide and looks like the image above!

### **For a quiet space after marching:**

Members are invited to meet at the Informatics Forum from 14:00 – 17:00. Join us for refreshments and a marching troupe debrief! Please note that this private space is being facilitated for University of Edinburgh staff and students only. Entry will be via Robbie on the march, through the side entrance and building sign-in. Call/TXT/iMessage/WhatsApp (07905517428) or even teams message Robert (Robbie) Court to access later in the afternoon.

**Note: We will keep this post up to date throughout the day and I'll try and share our location during the march.**

### **Live updates:**

Live location: <https://maps.app.goo.gl/d8d45uCRVSKGdAi67>

14:00 we're meeting by the rino head / gift shop by informatics





12:40 were by the traffic lights





10:20 myself and the banner are now in levels cafe having breakfast so feel free if you want to be fashionably early.





8:44 Prepping for meeting at levels cafe. The refreshments are all ready at the informatics forum at the end of the Parade route. The banner has poles this year so wind permitting

should be above the crowd. [fingers crossed].

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# Rainbow background images for video conferencing or slides

The designs taking inspiration from our Flags Survey results, we are delighted to present new Teams backgrounds which are available on the University website and saved in the Staff Pride Network Members SharePoint for you to download. Please add to your Teams (now!) and consider using these as backgrounds for lectures and meetings, both internal and external meetings.

“We are really pleased that these backgrounds play a small but welcome part in emphasising the importance of diversity and inclusivity at our University.”

**Niall Bradley, Deputy Director of Marketing, The University of Edinburgh**

As we continue to work with the University to increase awareness of the importance of Equality, Diversity & Inclusion, tools for all staff and students to show support and allyship are key to that journey.

In this digital age where Rainbow Lanyards are less visible, rainbow lanyard Teams backgrounds were proposed by **Melissa Highton**, Director of Learning, Teaching and Web Services and Assistant Principal Online Learning at ISG, which became a (*lengthy, multiple emails*) very senior management collaboration between Katie & I for the Staff Pride Network, ISG graphic designer and SPN graphic design volunteer

Gill Kidd, HR's Head of EDI Caroline Wallace, with final designs and corporate approval by University Communications & Marketing, including Head of Brand, Head of Marketing, Deepthi de Silva-Williams and Deputy Director of Marketing Niall Bradley.

Available to download “(Virtual backgrounds (zip)” from [https://ue.sharepoint.com/sites/Brand/SitePages/Branded-environment-\(digital-&-virtual\).aspx](https://ue.sharepoint.com/sites/Brand/SitePages/Branded-environment-(digital-&-virtual).aspx)

Mark Pace has also kindly shared his two PowerPoint templates masters using these designs:

SPN Powerpoint

SPN Powerpoint2

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# **Studying and working in physics and astronomy**

Original Article: 6TH OCTOBER 2020 BY CKIR

## **In Conversation with Rosalyn Pearson**

While many students may never venture south of the Meadows to the King's Buildings, some might say that the same inequalities in academia persist or are even greater on Edinburgh University's second biggest campus. In this interview with Rosalyn Pearson, a 3<sup>rd</sup> year PhD student in the

School of Physics and Astronomy, I discuss what it's like to be a non-binary woman in a department comprised of (almost) solely cisgender heterosexual white men.

By Justin White

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**Justin: Hi Rosalyn! Thanks so much for meeting with me. Please introduce yourself.**

Rosalyn: Yea of course! I'm a 3<sup>rd</sup> year PhD student in Particle Theory, and the Postgrad Rep on the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion panel, I've been a tutor for Gauge Theory, Quantum Field Theory, and Problem Solving in Theoretical Physics, which are all master's courses. I enjoy doing dancing and performing with the Edinburgh Bhangra Crew, which is an Indian folk dance, and I've also taken up Olympic weightlifting but that isn't happening much in lockdown of course.

**J: Olympic weightlifting wow, that's really impressive!**

R: It's work in progress: you start very bad and you get a little bit better. I also like going for walks and climbing trees and stuff, I'm trying to do a bit more of that now.

**J: As a child I always climbed trees, my parents would always have to get me down. \*laughs\***

R: My parents got upset at me because I would climb trees with

a broken arm!

**J: All that aside, when did you become postgrad rep for the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) committee?**

R: Only about a year ago, so I had a friend in the group, Izzy, who was the previous postgrad rep, so when she left, she sent an email asking people to take over, and Andres and I were both interested so we both became postgrad rep.

**J: What could you suggest the EDI committee should do to encourage EDI across the School?**

R: EDI has a lot of aspects to it. I've noticed there's a lot of focus on the Athena Swan Award, which is a good thing, but that is only one facet of a lot of stuff that could be done, and it's not something that people see the results of that easily when they're students in the school.

For those that don't know, the Athena Swan is an award established and managed by Advance HE (previously the Equality Challenge Unit) that recognises and celebrates good practices in higher education and research institutions towards the advancement of gender equality: representation, progression and success for all staff.

*"On a basic level we need to have more frequent social events across non-academic and academic staff and students to try and build a sense of community and inclusion and have a better communal space for that."*



**J: I was asking this because if you  
If you could change one thing about  
the James Clerk Maxwell Building  
(JCMB), would it be something along  
these lines?**

R: If I were to change one thing, the JCMB has a problem architecturally. It should have a big canteen or communal space where the food is cheap and people want to go there, and everyone would go there. There's this problem that there're these little floors and corridors and little nooks and crannies and there's no communal area. We have the Magnet Café inside but it's crap because there isn't enough space for everyone. There's no diverse and cheap food option. We just need a space where people have the ability to meet each other and talk.

But then again where are you going to put a canteen in JCMB?



Above: The James Clerk Maxwell Building on the King's Building Campus

**Rosalyn and I then changed topics to talk about her research in the School of Physics and Astronomy, and what it's like to be a non-binary woman in a department full of cis-men.**

**J: Would it be alright if we talked about your research a bit? Could you explain your research so a fresher could understand it?**

R: Basically, I am looking at the internal structure of protons. We use quantum field theory to try and explain particle physics, but the internal structure of a proton is something we can't explain using current perturbative techniques because the dynamics are just so complicated.

When you collide protons, like at the Large Hadron Collider (LHC), you don't know what parton (part of the proton) in one is interacting with what parton in the other and we bridge the gulf between the parton level and proton level using parton distribution functions which tell you, 'what's the probability in this collision that there will be a certain parton with a certain momentum that will do the interacting in each proton'.

**J: In essence, this goes along with the idea of creating a new form of physics that goes past the standard model, is that what the future holds for your research?**

The weird thing about particle physics is that you have the standard model that holds up to extremely high levels of precision in a lot of ways but there are many indications that it isn't quite complete. There's neutrinos and dark matter and dark energy and all this messed up stuff that doesn't fit!

*"I would describe it as the black swan analogy. In European science in the Middle Ages they only thought there were white*

*swans because every time they looked at a swan it was a white swan. But then they went to Australia and found a black swan. So, there are black swans, they just don't live in Europe. The black swans are what the new physics is trying to find [without the colonisation]."*

**J: This is all well and good and you seem to be enjoying your research...**

R: ...well a PhD has been a bit of mental struggle because of the imposter syndrome which makes it hard day to day.

**J: I'm sorry to hear that. You talk about imposter syndrome now but before your PhD, were there any barriers to your entry into the School?**

R: There haven't been any formal barriers that I've experienced, but I did a [UG] degree that was in natural sciences not just physics.

I told my director of studies that I wanted to do Physics in the second year, and he was like 'no, you should definitely do geology, that's your path'.

I think that was a barrier because a lot of the time throughout my UG degree I just felt like dropping physics and feeling like I couldn't do it, and a lot of that was perpetuated by me being a woman. I didn't want to be the only woman that was really, really, bad.

"I wanted to be bad because I was bad, not bad because I was a woman, and that's something I still have a problem with."

**J: Do you feel like there was a pressure that if you were a woman in physics you couldn't just be okay, you had to be this role model for all women?**

R: A lot of people feel like that – you have to prove yourself a bit more because you don't want to let other people down. That was a barrier because I felt like dropping physics on and off for a long time. I have experienced this issue in my PhD as well because it's very male dominated [and]...you just feel like everyone is viewing you in this context of being a minority.

**J: The fact that you pass as a woman is always attached to the things you say, and people are always going to interpret you differently...**

Rosalyn then goes into a personal experience in relation to this statement, which she wished to be redacted from the final interview.

**J: Would you say then the School has a bias against women that still**

**needs to be broken down? How could the School better answer to the needs of women scientists?**

R: I think it's difficult because my department has a particular issue with there not being many women. I don't think I've really experienced any direct sexism from male academics, but rather it comes from an environment that is not diverse, and it's not just in terms of men/women ratio. There are few visible LGBT+ members or ethnic minorities. People [just] want a sense of community.

**Rosalyn and I switched conversation here to recognise our privilege in being in such a position.**

R: I would like to emphasise here that I am non-male, but I fit in perfectly with the demographic of particle physics students, I'm white, come from an affluent background, I did my UG at Cambridge where half the department came from, and yet I have had a such an intense feeling of alienation. And I don't know what it must be like if you come from other backgrounds – it must be horrendous.

*“To feel like a minority here as a white non-male really demonstrates how un-diverse the School is.”*

**J: I couldn't agree more. As a**



**final comment on this, would you have any advice you might give a first year, or someone that wants to onto a PhD who could experience the same things you did?**

R: Realise that if you are doubting yourself and thinking you're too stupid and not good enough to do a PhD then that is a really normal thing to think. You are often around a lot of people who try and sound like they're confident and know loads of stuff and they'll try and put you down with these mind games.

A lot of these people are just flouting their long words to sound clever. They are just trying to appear brash and confident, and it's really easy for someone to do that if they feel entitled to do that and come from a history of privilege.

The whole way through when I have met PhD interview candidates that are worried, as soon as you start saying 'don't worry, I have no idea what I'm doing, I feel like a complete moron' they'll be like 'oh my god thank goodness it's not just me', and there are so many people out there that think that. I barely believe in myself, but I've gotten a lot better at just trusting myself, if they've taken you onto the PhD programme then you deserve to be there. We need to feel more honest and have a change in attitude about what you do or don't know.

**J: I think that's really important, because I've definitely been there as an UG student and I**

**don't even know what I'm doing half the time \*laughs\*.**

R: The other thing is make sure you have a good life outside your PhD. It's not worth sacrificing being happy to do PhD work. At the end of the day you need to work to earn the money to live so it's good to do work that you enjoy, but your life is the most important thing to focus on.

**J: That's really important for everyone, not just PhD students but academic and non-academic staff and even students.**

**In our final part of the interview, we switched topics to talk about Rosalyn's identity and belonging in the LGBT+ community.**

**J: You said you self-identified as non-binary, do you feel like you have anything to say about LGBT+ issues?**

R: I've always been on the fringe of LGBT+ because I've never felt that confident.

*"At the start of my UG, I would say I was genderfluid and in a more masculine time than I was now. I felt the trans community was a bit ostracised in the LGBTQ+ group there. They didn't really fit in, and I was massively questioning everything, so I didn't even really feel like I fitted in."*

I've always felt reluctant to engage with that community so much. I identify with it still even though I haven't been that involved, if I feel if there was somewhere really encouraged, I would have gone to that.

But I have noticed people wearing these rainbow lanyards, that got introduced at some point, I thought that was really nice. That gives you a little boost, like 'oh that's nice, that's friendly.' It creates a nice atmosphere that is accepting.

It's nothing big and promotes the idea of an accepting atmosphere, in contradiction to the department which is kind of strait-laced and where people wouldn't talk about emotional matters, which I struggled with big time.

**J: Change is slow moving and it can be disheartening at times. Small things can make a big difference, like staff wearing the lanyards as you said. Although there is a fine line between performative activism and actual change, is there something else you'd like to see?**

R: Pronouns! When people do that that's really nice. If we could encourage more people to do it that would be good.

**J: And I mean it's so simple... That brings us to the end of our interview, if you have anything else to add you can always email it over to me!**

R: Thanks for having me, see you at our next meeting!

## **About this interview**

This interview was conducted by Justin White as part of an initiative by the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee in the School of Physics and Astronomy to highlight the research and experiences of staff and students of underrepresented communities, and was published with the written permission of the School, Interviewee, and Interviewer. Check out all the EDI interviews.

View the efforts of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion committee at the School of Physics and Astronomy.

This opportunity was part of a Careers Service Employ.ed on Campus internship.

Justin is currently studying for a BSc in Ecological and Environmental Sciences at the University of Edinburgh.

Original Article: 6TH OCTOBER 2020 BY CKIR

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# **Welcome new LGBT+ students: wave for 10 secs**

Did you bring home your Rainbow Lanyard? Can you wave to your phone camera for 10 seconds? Could there be anything more important in welcoming new LGBT+ students than seeing LGBT+ people in the new students welcome video?