



# Thriving Together: Creating more inclusive research communities through the research management relationship

15th September 1-4pm



Dr Jessica  
Gagnon



Dr Marco  
Reggiani

# Today's Workshop



1. Systemic inequalities faced by doctoral and postdoctoral researchers (including findings from the STEM Equals Project).
2. Benefits and challenges of creating more inclusive policies and practices.
3. Sharing best practices from your own experiences
4. Strategies for embedding inclusion.

# STEM Equals Project

The STEM Equals project is a four year research and impact project focused on women and LGBT+ people in STEM in both academia and in industry.

Through an intersectional lens, the project focuses on working cultures, including better understanding the experiences of and addressing systemic inequalities faced by women and LGBT+ staff in STEM disciplines.

# Research-Informed Change



# STEM Equals Initiatives & Events



International Women's Day 2021

Celebrating Women Researchers Focused on Sustainable Development  
10 March 2021 - 3:30 pm

Ms Jenala Chipungu  
Dr Tosin Somorin  
Dr Tracy Morse




LGBTSTEM DAY  
18 NOVEMBER 2020




**CONNECTING  
BUILDING NETWORKS  
VISIBILITY  
POLICY vs PRACTICE  
INTERSECTIONALITY  
SOLIDARITY  
ADVICE  
MAKING CHANGE**

LGBT+ in higher education:  
Building networks, making change  
@STEMEquals

21 October - 1pm  
Free Online Event  
@LGBTQILives



**1. Systemic inequalities  
faced by doctoral and  
postdoctoral researchers  
(including findings from  
the STEM Equals Project).**



# Inequalities in the Doctoral & Postdoctoral Experience

- More than one in five PhD students indicated that they have experienced discrimination or harassment ([Woolston, 2019](#)). One in four PhD students indicated that they have been bullied ([Cornell, 2020](#)). Nearly two-thirds of postdoctoral researchers (61%) have witnessed bullying or harassment, and 43% have experienced it themselves ([Wellcome Trust, 2020](#)).
- Just one in three postdoctoral researchers (37%) feel comfortable speaking up about bullying and harassment, with many doubting appropriate action will be taken ([Wellcome Trust, 2020](#)).
- More than one in three PhD students have sought help for anxiety or depression caused by their PhD ([Cornell, 2020](#)). More than half (53%) of postdoctoral researchers have sought, or have wanted to seek, help for anxiety or depression ([Wellcome Trust, 2020](#)). In fact, only 14% of postgraduate research students reported having low anxiety, compared with 41% of the general population ([Neves, 2019](#)).

# Inequalities in the Doctoral & Postdoctoral Experience

- Nearly one in four BIPoC/BAME students reported experiencing racial harassment in UK universities ([Weale, 2020](#)). White applicants are more likely to be offered a PhD place in the UK ([Khan & Cowell, 2020](#)). Concern has been raised that the process for selecting UKRI funded PhD students discriminates against applicants from underrepresented backgrounds (including BAME applicants, disabled applicants, and applicants from low socio-economic backgrounds) ([Inge, 2020](#)).
- Some studies show that women are more likely to withdraw from their doctoral studies and take longer to complete than men ([Robin et al., 2018](#)). The gender gap in completion rates is worse in programmes where a woman is the only or one of only a few women in a PhD cohort ([Langin, 2018](#)).
- In a survey of LGBTQ+ doctoral researchers in the UK, only 33% of respondents indicated that they were out to their whole supervisory team. More than half of respondents also reported experiencing aggression or microaggression because of their sexual and/or gender identity ([English & Fenby-Hulse, 2019](#)).



# Inequalities in the Doctoral & Postdoctoral Experience

- Disabled researchers face discrimination and additional burdens in the workplace ([Carli, 2020](#); [Hannam-Swain, 2017](#); [Grigley, 2017](#))
- Doctoral and postdoctoral researchers engaged in teaching are subjected to biased student evaluations ([Heffernan, 2021](#)).
- 78% of postdoctoral researchers think that high levels of competition have created unkind and aggressive working conditions ([Wellcome Trust, 2020](#)).
- More than three out of four PhD researchers indicated that they are working 41 or more hours a week on their PhD ([Woolston, 2019](#)). We know that [overwork](#) and [burnout](#) have become commonplace in academia, but not everyone can (for example, PhD students with [caring responsibilities](#) or [disabled PhD students](#)) and no one should have to work hours that are not conducive to good health and wellbeing.
- Nearly one in four PhD students would change their supervisor if they could go back and start again ([Cornell, 2020](#)).

# Systemic Inequalities in STEM

- Evidence suggests women face discrimination and exclusion in STEM disciplines in academia and in industry (WISE, 2019; Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2019; Choo, Byington, Johnson, and Jagsi, 2019; Society for Women Engineers, 2018; Blackburn, 2017).
- Albeit significantly understudied, research on the experiences of LGBT+ people in STEM also reveals patterns of discrimination and exclusion (Bilimoria & Stewart, 2009; Cech & Waidzunus, 2011; Freeman, 2020; Mattheis et al., 2019; Yoder & Mattheis, 2016).
- Students and staff who are BIPoC (Black, Indigenous, and other People of Colour), disabled, first-generation, or working class also face inequities and barriers to inclusion (Grineski et al., 2018; Ireland et al., 2018; Sukhai & Mohler, 2016).

# The illusion of inclusion

“I have suggested that diversity can work as a branding exercise, a way of reimagining the organization as “being diverse” through the inclusion of those who embody diversity. An inclusion can become a happy sign of the overcoming of exclusion. ... If your arrival is a sign of diversity, then your arrival can be incorporated as good practice. Bodies of color provide organizations with tools, ways of turning action points into outcomes. We become the tools in their kit. We are ticks in the boxes; we tick their boxes.”

*Ahmed, 2012:153*

# Policies vs Practices

“Universities have a commitment to equality of opportunity. However, the mere existence of equality and diversity policies does not suggest that good practice is taking place and many universities may simply conform to a tick box exercise which gives the illusion that they are tackling racial inequality. Simply asserting a commitment to equality is different from demonstrating how equality and inclusion are practised.”

*Bhopal, 2018:54*



**Prof Kalwant Bhopal**

@KalwantBhopal

Following



Call me cynical, but sometimes I think I am a 'token'. Just asked because I am a woman of colour, so that the box can safely be ticked  
[#power](#) [#privilege](#)

12:10 AM - 8 Jun 2019

8 Retweets 52 Likes



9



8



52



Tweet your reply



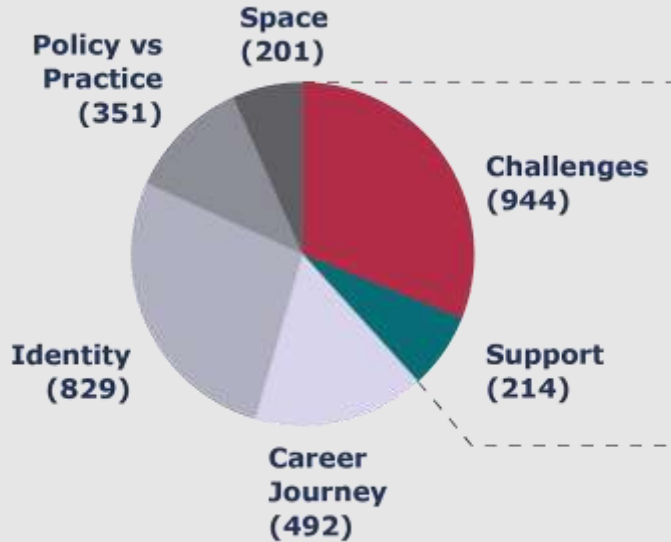
**Prof Vanita Sundaram** ⚡ @VanitaSundaram · Jun 8



Replying to [@KalwantBhopal](#)

I worry about this a lot too 😞

# Phase One: Key Themes



Six key themes that have emerged from the data:

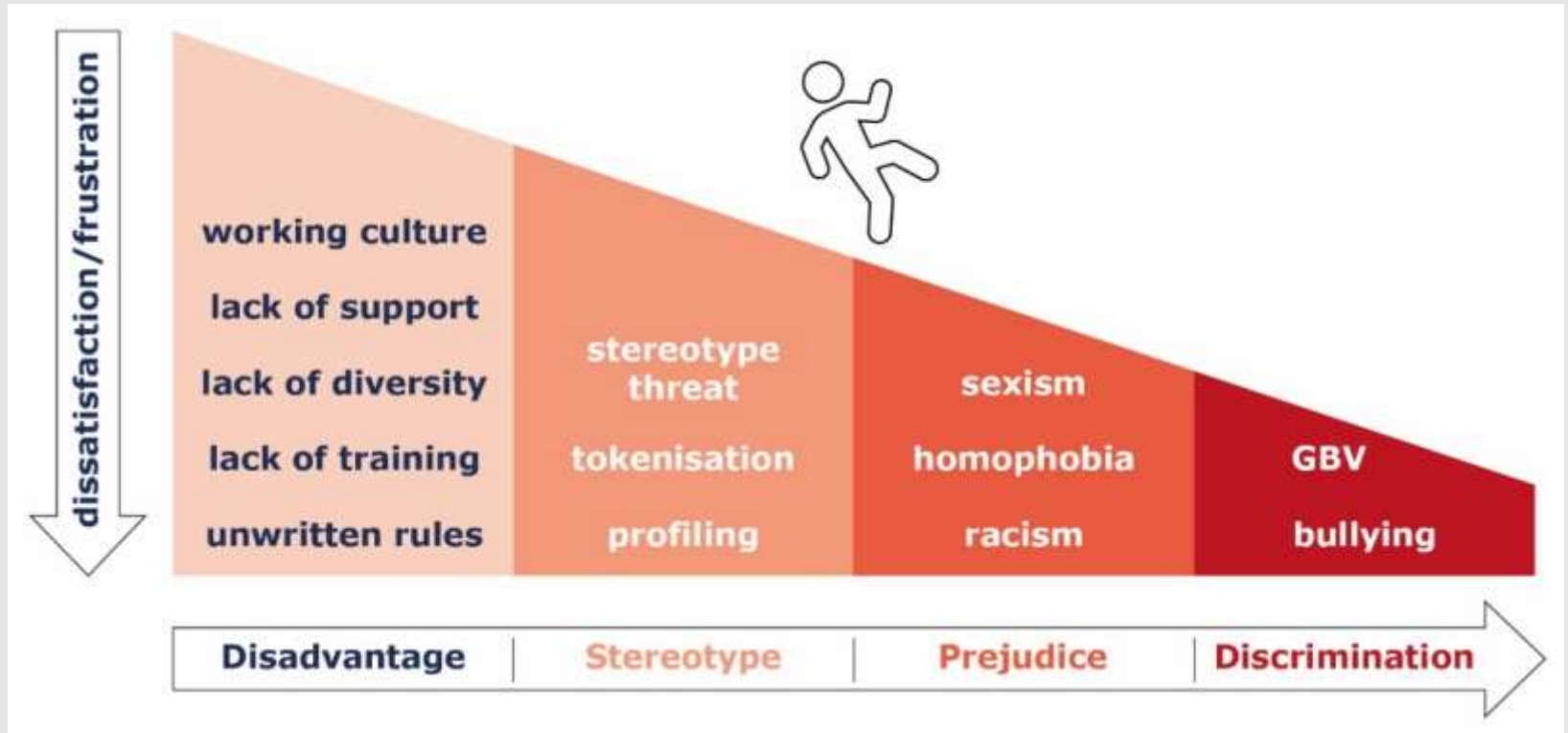
- **Challenges**
- **Support**
- **Policy/Practice**
- **Identity**
- **Space**
- **Career**

Within this workshop, we highlight just some of the data from two of the key themes Challenges and Support.

# Challenges

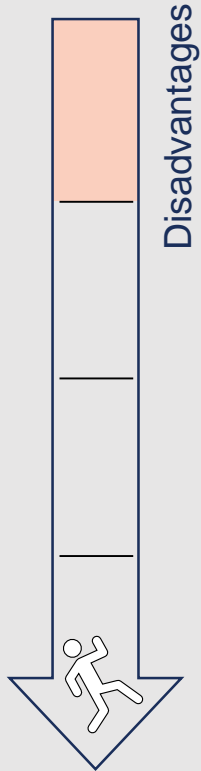
- **Disadvantage** – policies/practices in which particular groups benefit from, or are hindered by, opportunities and expectations.
- **Stereotyping** - oversimplified generalizations about groups of people that may be positive or negative.
- **Prejudice** - negative feelings, attitudes, and behaviours someone might hold against female and/or LGBT+ individuals.
- **Discrimination** - unfair treatment someone receives because of being a Woman and/or LGBT+. These might be direct, when one is treated worse than another person, or indirect when discrimination is the result of biased and unfair policies and arrangements.

# Slippery Slope to Discrimination





# Evidence of Challenges

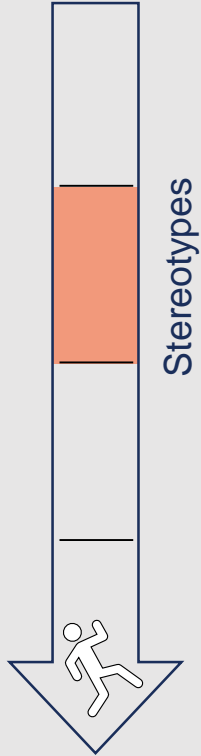


Disadvantages

*You're the only woman in the midst of men. I'm used to that because I've been like that for a very long time. (Woman, PhD student).*

*We only had two female members of staff, academic staff, and there, if you weren't just a cis, straight man, you kind of felt a bit: Oh ok, maybe I shouldn't do anything or like say anything because like you're not even accepting of women by not employing any, why would you be accepting of anyone gay? (LGBT+, staff).*

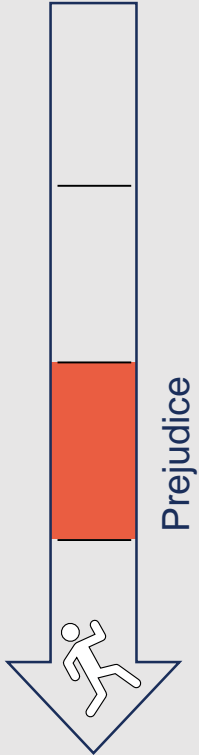
# Evidence of Challenges



*The one thing that makes me feel like oh yes, so I'm a young woman working in [NAME of department in Science], I often get approached for photoshoots by the university to advertise things. ... you definitely wouldn't have approached my male colleagues for that. (Woman, staff)*

*I'm a bit iffy with the idea that you're known for something just because you're gay. ... because when people see things like this, they get insights into your personal life ... and they'll judge you on all the stereotypes that surround a certain label. I suppose that's kind of the double-edged sword. (LGBT+, PhD Student)*

# Evidence of Challenges

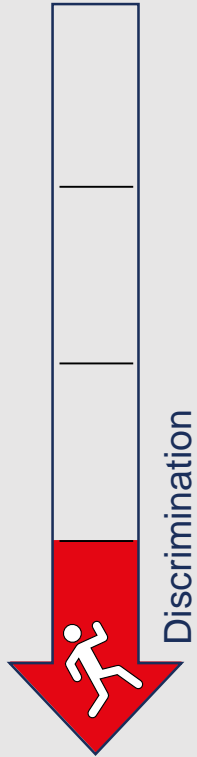


*I have been asked to make the tea. Then followed up by I'm not asking you because you're the only girl in the room, but because I was the most junior. (Woman, staff)*

*Them telling me, 'Oh, just hide that you're gay'. (LGBT+, staff)*

*It's a very male environment, very cave environment in reality, probably I would say primitive ... you would see that people were surprised: "Oh! Gay? Oh my god" (LGBT+, staff)*

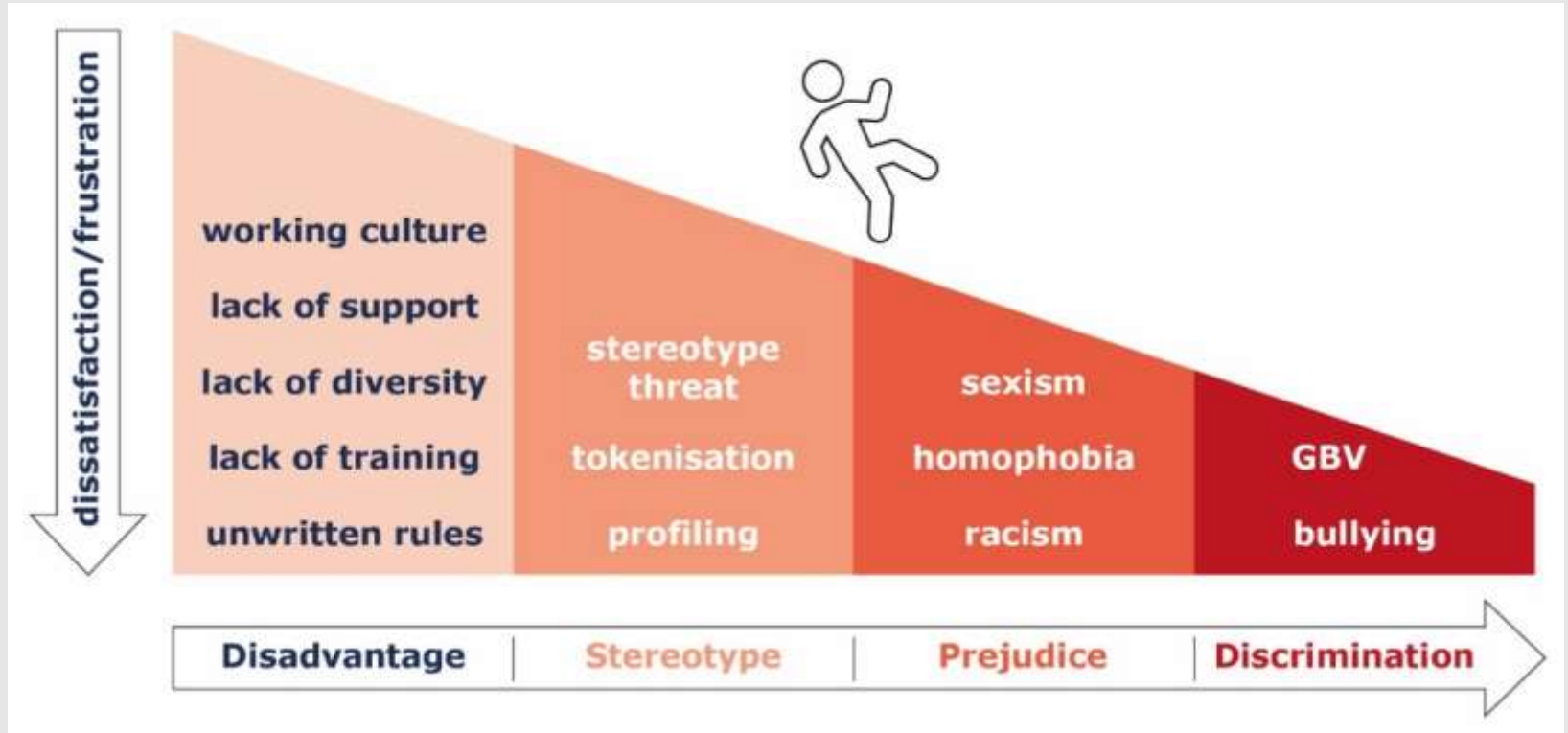
# Evidence of Challenges



*I was the only woman for quite some time, and ... from the get-go, I didn't integrate into the group fully. That was apparent in my first week. I got a red flag, and I got verbal abuse in my first week that nobody else got, and I got isolation, and I got full-on aggression then, and I got blamed and set up for something, and made to look stupid. (Woman, PhD student)*

*He knows that I don't use binary pronouns, so to my face he will use no pronouns at all to refer to me. I get misgendered when I'm out of earshot. (LGBT+, PhD student)*

# Slippery Slope to Discrimination





# Group activity

- Work in small groups:
  - Introduce yourself
  - Prompts for discussion: What impact do you believe these inequalities have on the individuals? On the research group? On the university?
- Back in the main workshop:
  - If you are comfortable, share something from your discussion.



**Take a Break**  
**~ 5 min**



## **2. Benefits and challenges of creating more inclusive policies and practices**





# Benefits of Inclusive Working Cultures

- Studies have shown that increased diversity and inclusion in the workforce has a positive impact on innovation and economic growth (Hofstra et al. 2020; AlShebli et al. 2018; Ruiz-Jiménez et al. 2016; Apfelbaum et al. 2014; Østergaard et al. 2011).
- Studies have also found that inclusive working cultures can result in higher productivity of underrepresented staff. In engineering, for example, this is true amongst engineers who are LGBT+ (House of Commons 2015), women, and BAME (Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic) (RAE, 2017).

# Consequences of Not Creating Inclusive Working Cultures

Reframing the narrative: creating more inclusive working cultures is not something ‘nice’ our universities do as some sort of ‘favour’ for underrepresented or marginalised doctoral and postdoctoral researchers. Inclusion is essential for innovation ([Gagnon & Reggiani, 2020](#))

Our institutions should be embedding inclusion into policies and practices because the consequences for not doing so can be detrimental, including:

- The loss of the innovative contributions that could have been made by underrepresented and/or marginalised researchers
- Reputational damage from headlines like [this one](#)
- Financial losses from legal settlements like [this one](#)

# Challenges to Creating Change

There are a lot of evidenced inequalities in the doctoral and postdoctoral experiences. As supervisors and line managers, we take some responsibility for creating more inclusive working cultures, but our time is limited, and we cannot solve systemic inequalities single-handedly.

We are also working within the same unequal system that we are trying to change, where overwork has become the norm and ever-increasing expectations keep moving our own career goalposts. There are also disproportionate burdens and unequal demands made on some supervisors' time depending on identities.

# Unequal Burdens

- There are disproportionate burdens and unequal demands made on some academic staff members' time, especially women (El-Alayli, Hansen-Brown, Ceynar, 2018; Guarino & Borden, 2017) and BIPoC academics (Trejo, 2020; Hirshfield & Joseph, 2011), including administrative tasks, pastoral care, hiring panels, service work, committee work, and 'diversity' work for the university.
- With limited intersectional awareness, institutional diversity initiatives rarely account for multiple discriminations (Equate Scotland, 2020), which can lead to the creation of competing hierarchies amongst marginalised and underrepresented groups where, for example, gender equity can be prioritised to the detriment of race, sexuality, disability (Bhopal, 2020).



# Group activity

- Work in small groups:
  - Introduce yourself
  - Prompts for discussion: What are the challenges to doing the work to create inclusion? What can be done even within our limitations?
- Back in the main workshop:
  - If you are comfortable, share something from your discussion.

### **3. Sharing best practices from your own experiences**



# Group activity

- Work in four groups:
  - Introduce yourself
  - Read the [vignette](#) assigned for your group
  - Discuss: If you were supervising or line managing this researcher, how would you support them?
  - Also Discuss: What are you already doing in your everyday practices to create more inclusive working cultures?
- Back in the main workshop:
  - If you are comfortable, share something from your discussion.





**Take a Break**  
**~ 5 min**





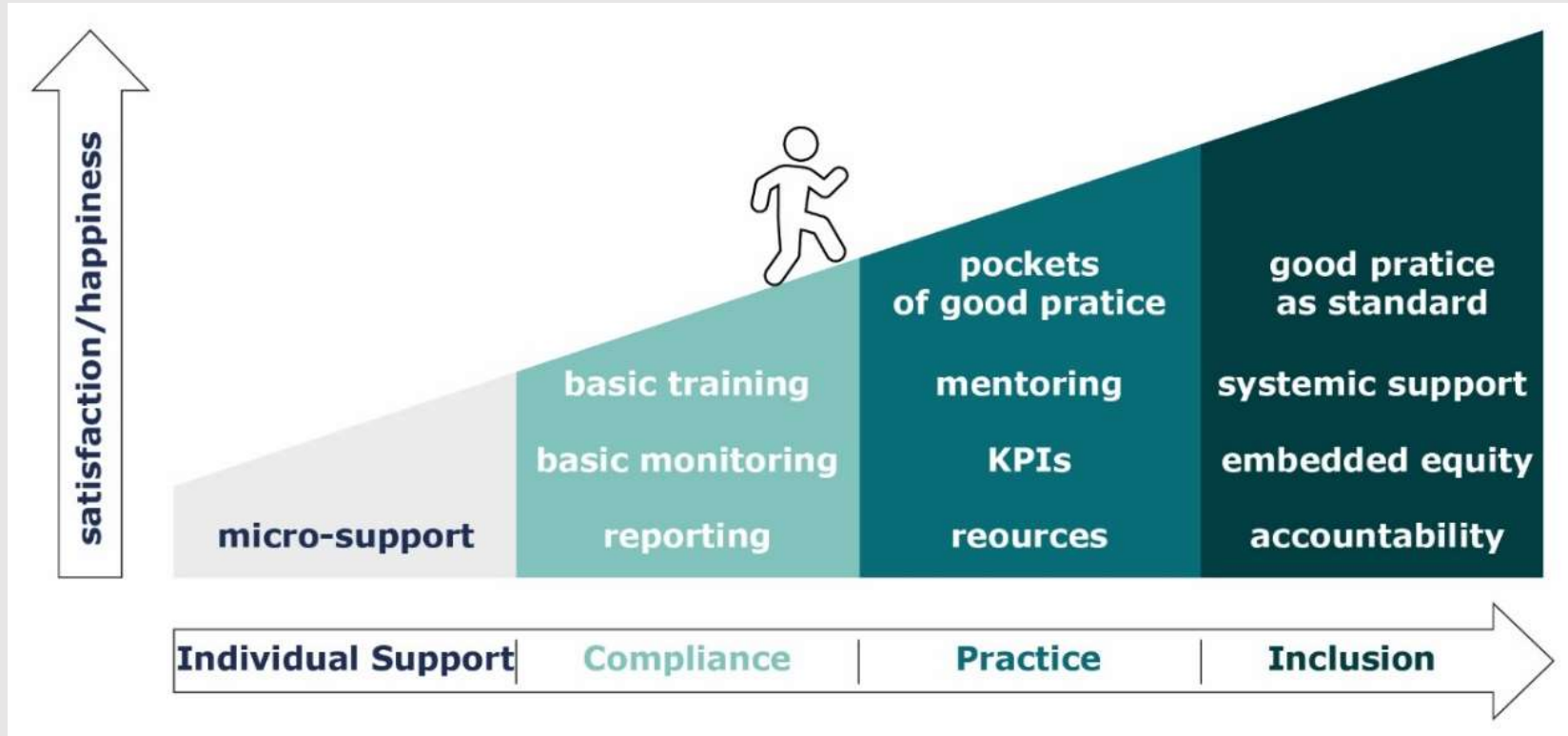
## **4. Strategies for embedding inclusion**



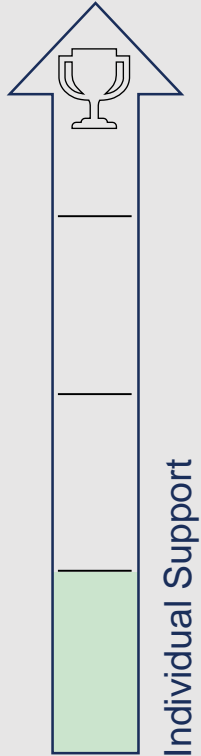
# Support

- **Individual Support**, defined as individual, subtle, and often unconscious behaviour enacted by supervisors, colleagues, and peers that create support.
- **Compliance**, that represents forms of support across the University that are basic, such as raising a rainbow flag on campus during LGBT+ history month and actions in fulfilment of requirements set out by EDI legislation.
- **Practice**, a form of support that, albeit not fully embedded at the institutional level, is systemic enough to produce a more equitable, diverse, and inclusive work environment in certain departments and/or laboratories.
- **Inclusion**, evidence of fully embedded, consistent equity where good practice is the standard and systemic support is in place.

# Path to Inclusion

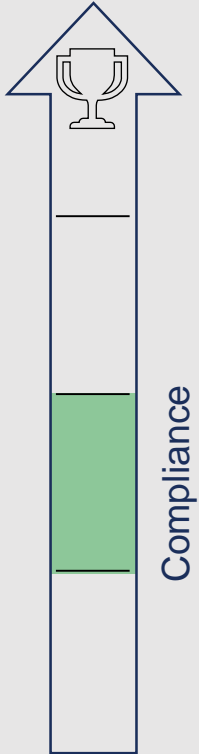


# Evidence of Support



*[I chose Strathclyde because] probably the conversations with [potential PhD supervisors], because they reaffirmed without me even having to ask. ... Just changing slight language, like using 'partner' instead of 'girlfriend or boyfriend'. ... I think that makes a huge difference. (LGBT+, PhD)*

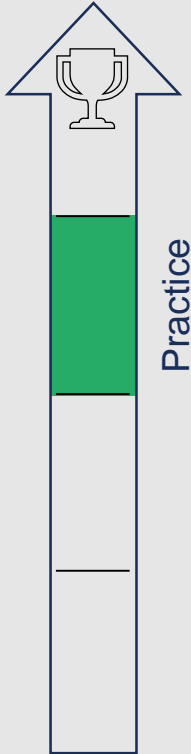
# Evidence of Support



*There was a pride flag flying in the gardens [of the University]. I thought: Wow, that's really quite amazing. ... I did my undergraduate here, so I think when I saw that I was thinking back to the ... late 1980s. Just thinking: Gosh that would never have happened before. (LGBT+, staff)*

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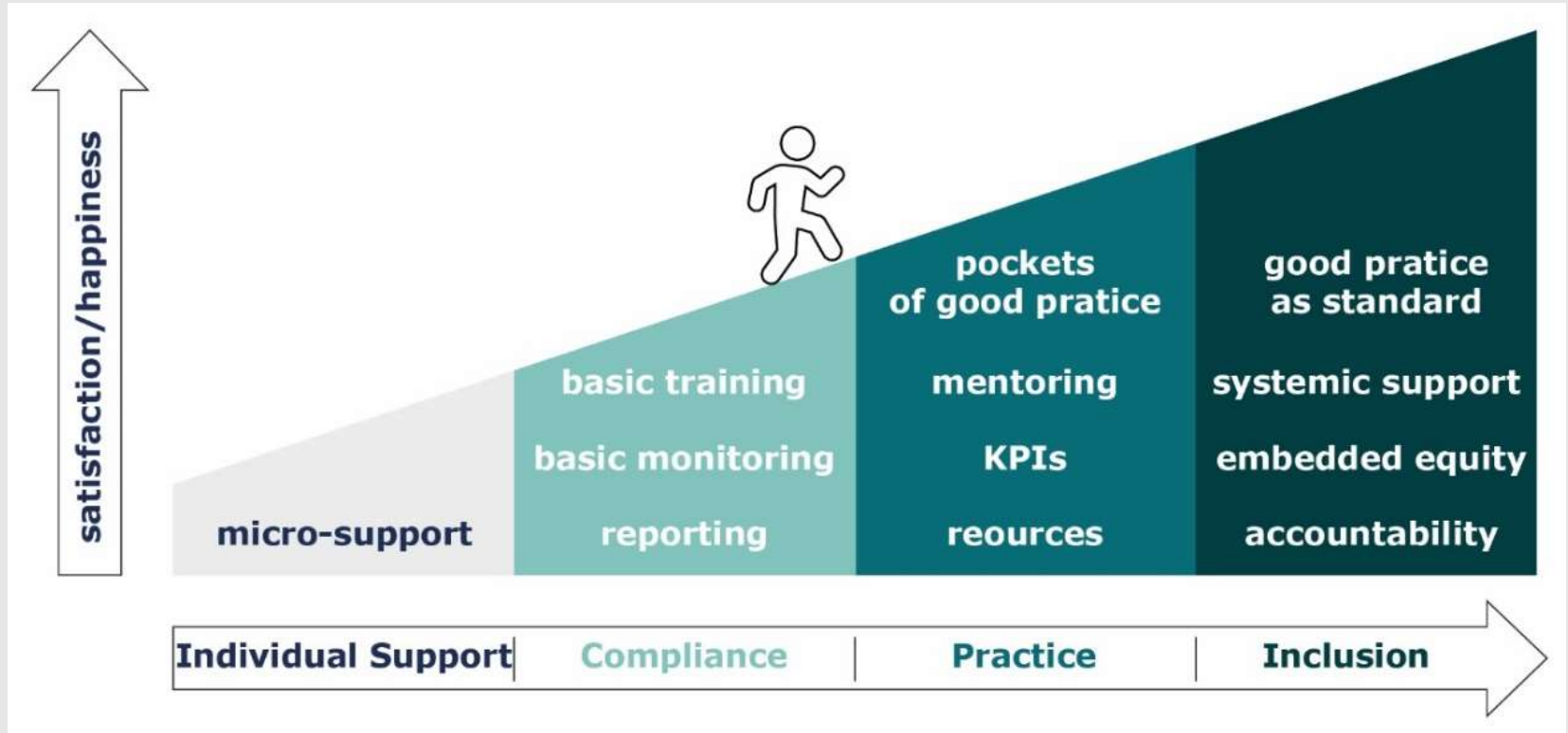


*I think one of the good things that we've done ... is having a code of conduct. ... It's not even just relevant to work-life balance, but other things like the way that people interact with each other in the group.*  
(woman, PhD)

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# Path to Inclusion





# Creating Inclusion



When we're working with new researchers to set expectations together, part of those conversations are likely to be about where they can find support at the university. However, if we're only mentioning what training and skills development are offered to them and not, for example, what they can do if they are experiencing bullying or harassment, then we are not fully supporting the researchers we line manage/supervise.

These are difficult conversations, but the more we speak openly and directly, about topics like mental health, as one example, and the more we advocate for researchers to understand that seeking support is a normal part of their research experience, then the more likely we are to change some of the statistics we discussed earlier.





# Creating Inclusion



It's important to note, though, that no matter how much work we put into building a trusting relationship with the doctoral and postdoctoral researchers we line manage/supervise, they still do not owe us (or our institutions) declarations, outness, or visibility for any of their identities. They are not obligated to declare them, and they are certainly not obligated to represent them (in marketing campaigns, on committees, or anywhere else that benefits the university). However, it is absolutely our institutions' responsibility to make those optional declarations risk free for students and staff.

Something to consider: If there were no potential risks associated with disclosure for hidden identities, no fear of consequences or retaliation for asking for support or adjustments, no fear of discrimination or bullying for any identities, then how many more people might be able to thrive in academia? How might the world benefit from an academia where everyone is welcome and included?



# Creating Inclusion: Leading by Example



Here are just a few ways we can set a good example for the researchers we line manage and supervise:

- Join and engage in support networks relevant for you, such as the Women in Academia Support Network, Black British Academics, LGBTQ+ in STEM
- Take breaks and time off and say no when you are overcommitted.
- Learn the significant dates for cultural and religious celebrations that are not given priority on university calendars.
- Add your pronouns to your email signature, social media bios, and meeting name display.
- Use gender neutral and inclusive language. For example, using they when asking about an individual's partner if their pronouns are not known to you or, when welcoming a group of people, using phrases like 'Welcome, colleagues'.
- Set up a reading and discussion group around Inclusion. Encourage supervisors/line managers and doctoral and postdoctoral researchers to attend.



# Creating Inclusion: Questions to Consider



We are often required to complete university training before serving as a line manager or supervisor, but does that cover everything that you will need to know in order to provide the best guidance and support for researchers?

- Do you know where doctoral and postdoctoral researchers can find peer support? For example, are there networks or societies especially for: doctoral researchers, postdoctoral researchers, researchers with caring responsibilities, BAME researchers, disabled researchers, LGBTQ+ researchers, first generation or working-class researchers? Are there student representatives for doctoral researchers in your department? Is there a peer mentoring programme at your university?
- Do you know the complaints procedures if a researcher experiences bullying, harassment, or gender-based violence? Are there different processes for informal and formal complaints and would it be clear to researchers you line manage/supervise what support they are entitled to when pursuing a complaint?

# Creating Inclusion: Questions to Consider

- Do you know the procedure if a doctoral or postdoctoral researcher needs to declare their disability and arrange for accommodations to be made? Do you know where there are accessible toilets? Are you aware of how accessible (or not) the classroom, labs, offices are in which researchers will be working?
- Do you know the procedure if researchers needs to change their gender in university systems? Do you know where there are gender neutral toilets?
- Do you know the procedure if a doctoral or postdoctoral researcher needs to take family/maternity/paternity leave?
- Do you know the procedure if a doctoral or postdoctoral researcher needs to take bereavement leave or long-term sick leave or suspend their studies for any reason?
- Do you know where researchers can access mental health support? Is there a long wait time to access support?

If clear policies, transparent procedures, and robust supports are not available at your university, how can changes be made? Who has the power in the university to raise these issues?

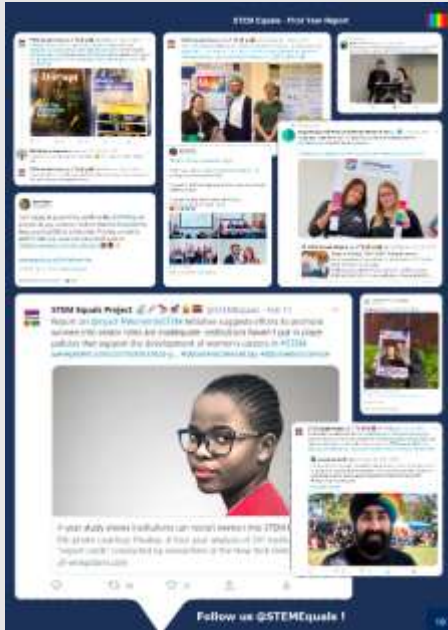


# Group activity

- Work in small groups:
  - Introduce yourself
  - Prompts for discussion: What more do you believe institutions should be doing to create more inclusive working cultures?
- Back in the main workshop:
  - If you are comfortable, share something from your discussion.

**Thank You!  
Questions?**





- Read our First Annual Report [www.stemequals.ac.uk](http://www.stemequals.ac.uk)
- Follow us on Twitter **@STEMEquals**
- Send us an email: [stemequals@strath.ac.uk](mailto:stemequals@strath.ac.uk)