



## **Dr Paul Jordan**

### **Faculty Communications Manager (HSS)**

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

I had been working over in Amsterdam for a few years and for me the draw was the sector. I knew I wanted to return to working in higher education. When I saw the job advert I gave my friend a call who had previously worked for Queen Mary as a lecturer, she recommended it as a good place to work.

To be honest I didn't really have any expectations. I had previously worked for universities in Glasgow and Cardiff and imagined it would be similar to those. If I look back I guess I would have expected it to be an open and welcoming place to work, which in my experience so far, it has been.

#### **Your experience of Queen Mary as an LGBTQ+ staff member**

I've been out as gay since I was a teen, and throughout my whole working life. So far, I haven't really experienced any issues and this is true of my time at Queen Mary. There are a lot of LGBTQ+ people who work here and are out. I think the 'challenge' for lack of a better word is the initial introductions with people when you're settling in. It's not like on TV where you come out, everyone knows and then you get on with things. We come out every day, to different people, new staff. At Queen Mary people tend not to assume things, so that's refreshing – in previous jobs I had people ask me about the name of my girlfriend. Sometimes it can be a bit tiring, and there have been occasions at other places I've worked when I've not specifically said "he" when referring to my partner because I didn't feel comfortable, and didn't want to risk a negative reaction.

On the whole here I would say that I feel fully supported here and that my sexual orientation has never really been an issue. I appreciate that this may not be the case for everyone though – everyone has different experiences.

**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 there is a good atmosphere at Queen Mary. Things have changed so much in a short space of time. Whereas previously if you come out it might be something that's shared as gossip, now it's not really news as such. I hope not anyway.

I think visibility is important as is a culture of openness. I personally don't mind questions being asked, I would much rather someone was open then tip-toeing around. That doesn't really help anyone. Initiatives like the lanyards are great as are educational initiatives like LGBTQ+ History Month and Pride Month.

Where we could improve perhaps is educating others on the everyday lived experiences of LGBTQ+ people. I remember a colleague (and friend) commenting that I gave my partner a very brief hug goodbye. He was shocked when I told him that each time many of us do something like that we look around, "check ourselves" and so a mental calculation to see if it's "safe". I think sharing experiences like this, in a more formalised way might help others to understand. Similarly there are other experiences about other people that I

perhaps don't understand and would like to know more.

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

Whilst I used to be a researcher I now work in Professional Services. I am the Communications Manager for the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences which is a very varied job. One week I might be work on a press release about coastal erosion and the next about Catholic women and their experiences of contraception.

Previously I did a lot of research on nation branding and Eurovision – this was an interesting area and took me to some really fascinating places. In my spare time I like running and have done quite a few marathons. In fact at school I was a really good runner but sadly I never kept this up competitively – one of the main reasons being that my PE teacher was only interested nurturing in those who were good at football, and I wasn't one of them!

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

This sounds corny but I'd like to help others if I can. When I was growing up, and in the earlier stages of my career there were really any role models or anyone to support me, who knew what I was going through or had been through. Visibility is really important – when I was a kid I used to think I was literally the only one who felt that way I did.

When I entered the workplace I was apprehensive about being out, but I was determined that I didn't want to go back into the closet. If there were people who I knew were out then this would have allayed my fears. I hope to be able to help if there's someone who perhaps isn't comfortable being out, or is struggling.

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

There are some practical ways that can help. If you feel comfortable, don't shy away from using the correct pronoun for your partner for example. The more this becomes normalised the quicker it becomes a non-issue. There is a network here at the university – and they're always looking for ideas for activities etc – feel free to get stuck in, share ideas and help make Queen Mary a more vibrant place to be!