

LGBTQ+ and the International Exchange Community

Ian Loumos, Senior Participant Support Specialist, AFS-USA

Introductions

**Hello
my name is**

Ian Loumos
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"LGBTQ Inclusion"

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Session Goals

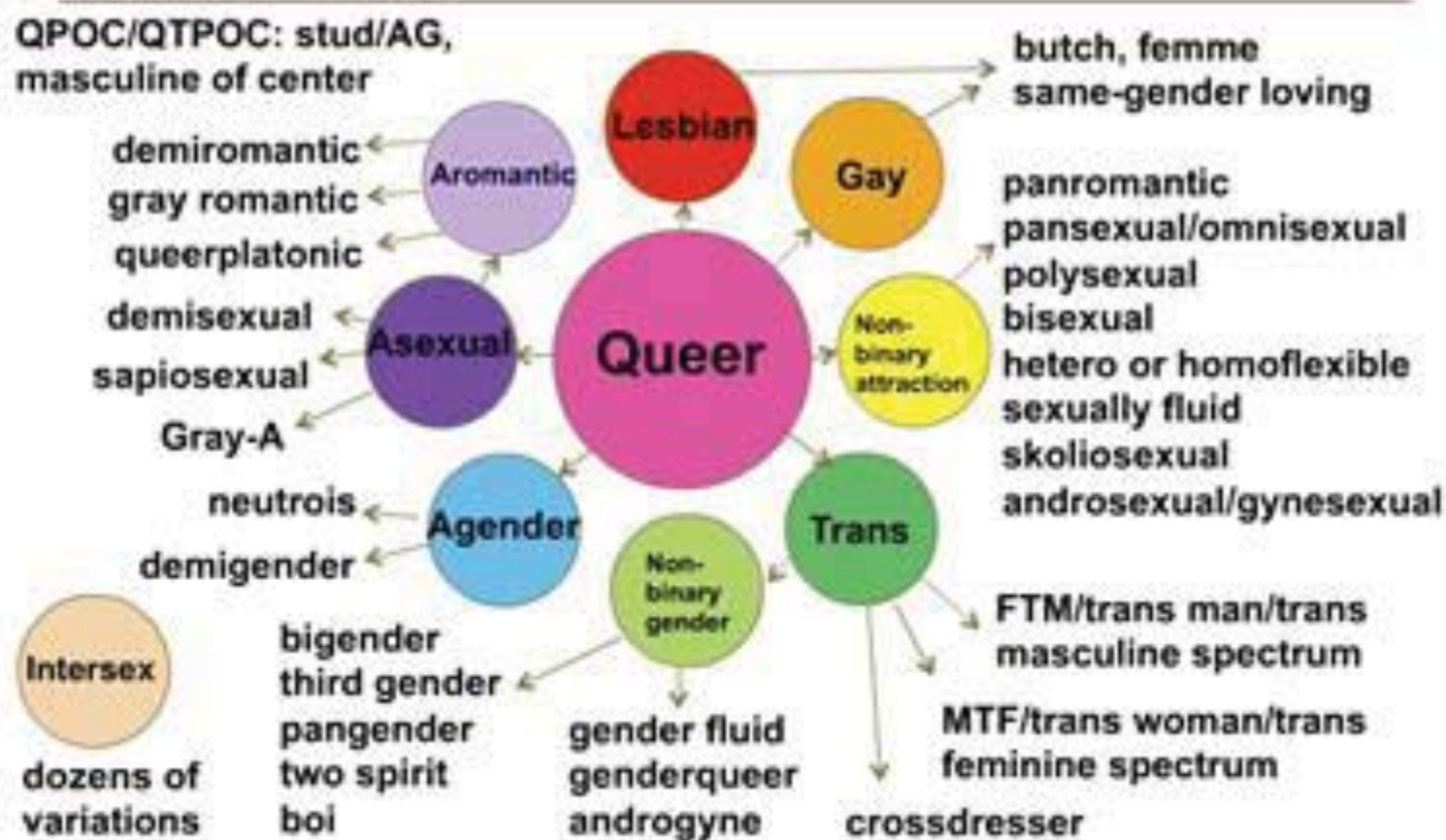
- Familiarize attendees with general LGBTQ+ concepts and terminology
- Share AFS initiatives designed to support inbound and outbound students who identify with the LGBTQ+ community
- Learn about similar initiatives within other exchange organizations and share related resources

Terminology

- LGBTQ+ (IA)
- In the Closet
- Coming Out
- Outing/being Outed
- Sex vs. Gender
- Gender Identity vs. Gender Expression
- Gender vs. Sexual Orientation
- Trans / Transgender
- Cisgender

Supportive Terminology

LGBTQIA+ Term Chart



AFS Initiatives

- **Webinars and Staff Training:**
 - Bi-yearly webinars to AFS sending (outbound) applicants and families
 - Develop training for staff and volunteers to provide a high level of customer service and support for LGBTQI community
- **Resource Collection:**
 - Identifying International and local resources for all participants (inbound and outbound)
- **Staff and Volunteer Recruitment:**
 - Identify potential volunteers and staff across AFS-USA to assist with local support on inbound side.
- **Partner and outreach:**
 - Identify like minded organizations to collaborate with
 - Time to THRIVE Conference
- **Adapting Materials:**
 - Modifying AFS materials to promote inclusion and diversity

Ongoing AFS Initiatives and Groups

Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Group (DIAG)

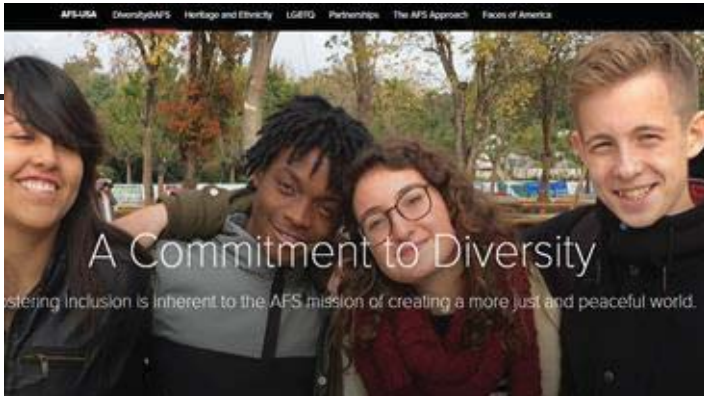
- Works to evaluate, monitor and implement diversity initiatives across the organization

Facing our Biases (FoB)

- Engaging with Volunteers and Staff to enhance diversity for AFS USA
- Making recommendations for improving under-represented communities within the network

Resources

AFS-USA Diversity page



Navigating the AFS LGBTQ



[LGBTQ Study Abroad Culture Trek resources](#)

[LGBTQ](#)

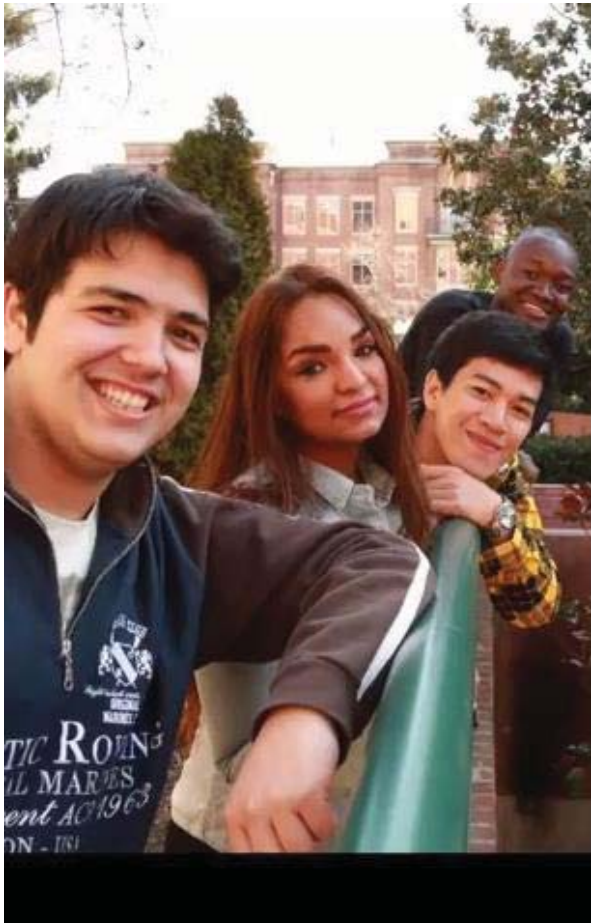
[Austria](#)

[LGBT Rights in Austria](#)

[AFS Equity and Inclusion Statement](#)

[Queer Exchange- AFS Germany](#)

AFS Webinar



HEALTH AND SAFETY

Do your research

Understand the local laws
and norms

What are your health and
safety needs?

Online safety and
community

www.afsusa.org

AFS Webinar

COMING OUT CONSIDERATIONS

Safety first!

- Focus on Settling in First
- Understanding your host environment, learning how to engage: "testing the waters"

Timeline

- Length of program

Personal identity and community affiliation

- What are you leaving behind?
- How will your identity be different in a new place?

The conversation

- What to share or leave out
- Photos and stories
- Common interests
- Have a self-care plan



Orienting/Supporting LGBTQ+ Outbound Students

- **Common challenges**
 - **Matching a Participant with an optimal country/placement**
 - **Unrealistic expectations**
 - **Comforting students and natural parents who may have concerns**
- **Best practices**
 - **Expectation management**
 - **Disclosing pertinent information upfront**
 - **Providing resources and effective strategies**

Orienting/Supporting LGBTQ+ Inbound Students

- **Common challenges**
 - **Gauging openness of local hosting environment/community**
 - **Logistics behind “spreading the word” and establishing systems of support**
- **Best practices**
 - **Identifying “allies” upfront prior to participants coming on program**
 - **Providing materials for volunteers, host family and participants on relevant support contacts**

Online Resources

- International LGBTI Association – news articles, country specific (ilga.org)
- International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (iglhrc.org)
- International Gay & Lesbian Travel Association (iglta.org)
- NAFSA Rainbow SIG (www.rainbowsig.org)
- National Center for Transgender Equality (transequality.org/Issues/travel)
- LGBTQ Peace Corps Alumni (lgbprcv.org)
- 9 Major Life Lessons I Learned Studying Abroad as an LGBT:
(<https://www.gooverseas.com/blog/what-i-learned-lgbt-studyingabroad>)
- LGBT Terms and Definitions (<https://internationalspectrum.umich.edu/life/definitions>)

Online Resources



- Somewhere Over the Rainbow is a professional development space on sexual orientation and gender identity in international education, including occasional in-person conferences as well as webinar series.
<https://sites.google.com/site/sotrconference/>
 - LGBT Responsive International Exchanges
 - Ally Training for Study Abroad Advisors
 - LGBTQ People of Color Abroad



THANKS

A 3D rendered scene featuring the word "THANKS" in large, colorful, block letters. Each letter is held by a small, white, cartoonish character with a friendly expression. The characters are standing on a light-colored, reflective surface. The letters are colored as follows: 'T' is red, 'H' is orange, 'A' is yellow, 'N' is light green, 'K' is dark green, and 'S' is blue. The background is a plain, light gray.