

Don't Filter Me Out

Many further education (FE) colleges and institutions use web filtering software to block students' access to inappropriate content, such as pornography and gambling sites.

Unfortunately, these filters sometimes block websites containing information about LGBT+ issues and organisations, even when they are not sexually explicit.

Why this is a problem

When web filters block LGBT+ sites, they prevent students from accessing important information about sexual health services, LGBT+ welfare and LGBT+ rights campaigns.

Blocking LGBT+ websites seriously limits students' resources and obstructs LGBT+ activism on campus.

For some students, college computers may be the only place they feel comfortable accessing the sexuality and gender guidance they need.

For these reasons, it's crucial that you ensure your college does not filter LGBT+ content.

What You Can Do

Find out if LGBT+ websites are blocked to students on your college computers:

- Using a student log-in, search terms such as 'LGBT', 'Lesbian' and

'Transsexual' and find out if the results are blocked.

- See if you can access positive LGBT+ websites, such as the International Gay and Lesbian Youth Organisation (www.iglyo.com) and Queer Youth UK (www.queeryouth.org.uk/community), by typing the address into the URL bar.

If you are unable to access LGBT+ content on your institution's computers, contact a student representative or a member of staff to discuss the problem and ask the college to change its internet filter settings.

- Your students' union or student representatives may be able to raise the issue with college management.
- If you decide to approach a staff member yourself, you should contact the person you feel most comfortable approaching. Alternatively, you could go directly to the college's IT services.
- Ask your college to 'white-list' important LGBT+ websites – see our information on white-listing below.

You can contact student representatives or staff members in person or by e-mail. When you do so, you should explain what websites have been blocked and why you think it is important that they are made available to students. You could use the information at the top of this page.

White-listing

One way to ensure that students have access to LGBT+ advice and guidance online is to approve individual websites. This is called 'white-listing'.

The college's System Administrator can authorize access to a list of domain names (websites) through the filter software's settings dialogue box.

For more information on how to create a white-list, please contact your web filter provider or your institution's IT Manager.

Below is a list of websites that NUS LGBT recommends are made available to all students:

NUS LGBT Campaign
<http://www.nus.org.uk/Campaigns/LGBT/>
<http://www.nusconnect.org.uk/winning-for-students/lgbt>

Stonewall
<http://www.stonewall.org.uk/>

The Lesbian and Gay Foundation
<http://www.lgf.org.uk/>

International Gay and Lesbian Youth Organisation
<http://www.iglyo.com/>

Gay Youth UK
<http://www.gayyouth.org.uk/>

Queer Youth UK
<http://www.queeryouth.org.uk/community/>

Educational Action Challenging Homophobia
<http://www.eachaction.org.uk>

Equal Marriage
<http://www.equalmarriage.org.uk>

Equality Challenge Unit
<http://www.ecu.ac.uk>

Gender Identity Research and Education Society (GIRES)
<http://www.gires.org.uk>

Broken Rainbow
<http://www.broken-rainbow.org.uk>

Gendered Intelligence
<http://www.genderedintelligence.co.uk>

International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA)
<http://www.ilga.org>

LGBT Consortium
<http://www.lgbtconsortium.org.uk>

LGBT History Month
<http://www.lgbthistorymonth.org.uk>
Press for Change
<http://www.pfc.org.uk>

National AIDS Trust
<http://www.nat.org.uk>

Terrence Higgins Trust
<http://www.tht.org.uk>

UK Lesbian and Gay Immigration Group
<http://www.uklgig.org.uk>

World AIDS Day
<http://www.worldaidsday.org>

The Equality Network
<http://www.equality-network.org/>

LGBT Youth Scotland
<http://www.lgbtyouth.org.uk/>

If you would like any further support or advice on these issues or on how to approach your college, please e-mail LGBT@NUS.org.uk