

Contact details

Your name (Proposer of the policy)	William Styles
Your email	william.styles@students.plymouth.ac.uk
The name of a person who supports the policy (Seconder of the policy)	Saffron Deemer Daniella Marley Isabel Saxby
Seconder's email	philippa.deemer@students.plymouth.ac.uk daniella.marley@students.plymouth.ac.uk isabel.saxby@students.plymouth.ac.uk

Student Impact

Have you consulted students about your proposal? Please explain how many students you have engaged with and how.	-Feedback from a Herald survey showed ~80% of ~6,000 people were opposed to the Unions stance (though not necessarily all students). -Verbal consultations took place in 2019 while gathering ~200 signatures showing a clear disgust at the stance.
How does your proposal impact the students at the University of Plymouth, what difference will it make to students?	Bring about a renewed campus landscape which would recognise Men's applicability for equal treatment under the law would make a world of difference to Men's Welfare and bring in an awareness to Men that their issues matter to their SU.

Policy Proposal

The Union Notes (Facts) This section should include facts, not reflection or opinions. Please provide references where possible.

1. In 2017, it was highlighted to the Board of Trustees that the provision of a Part-Time men's role was required under the UPSU Equal Opportunities Policy and Equality Act (2010) upon which it is based.
2. The response gave "*The UPSU Trustee Board noted that references in the UPSU Constitution to equal opportunities and the UPSU Equal Opportunities policy must be read in the context of the relevant equal opportunities legislation. That legislation, both in its initial form and as subsequently amended is specifically designed to address equal opportunities for groups which have suffered historic and ongoing discrimination. Those groups did not, and do not, include men (other than in the context of equal pay, which is a qualitatively different issue.)*" as the reasoning why this was not the case.

3. The suggestion that the Equality Act is not applicable to male(s) (students) caused national and cross campus outrage.
4. In 2022, the Women’s Officer, Men’s Welfare Officer, and Welfare Officer supported a letter to the Board of Trustees requesting a redaction of this stance.
5. The CEO issued a response clarifying the original statement was “factually accurate” and would therefore not be redacted. This was refuted immediately by the Men’s Welfare Officer.

The Union Believes (Opinions/Beliefs) This section requires reflection on the facts stated in ‘The Union Notes’

1. In equality under the law.
2. In supporting and representing all students.
3. In being a champion for equality and representation.

The Union Resolves (Actions) Here you will describe the action you want to be taken, be specific.

1. To issue an independent statement outlining that the Union Council does support equal treatment under the law.
-and does recognise and support the applicability of the Equality Act to male students.

Appendices/supporting information Please include any supporting information relevant to your motion, this could include; consideration of how you would achieve any points in ‘The Union Resolves’, links to news articles or online publications

Excerpt from Union Council meeting of 31st March

Union Equalities Stance Proposal
<p>Will Styles – PT Men’ Welfare Officer, gave an overview of the proposal</p> <p>Owain Gullam – PT Societies Officer pointed out that the letter to the Board of Trustees and their response are not included as appendices to the proposal. Will noted that they are currently on the Men’s Welfare Facebook page.</p> <p>Owain added that as they have not been submitted, they cannot be assumed to be facts.</p>

Will asked Tracy Priestman – Representation and Democracy Manager, to confirm that the Union Notes points are true, as they have seen those correspondences. Tracy responded that, as a supporting staff member to the meeting, they not able to verify the legitimacy of the evidence presented. Will reiterated that the letter can be found on the Facebook page

Owain pointed out that the page has the letter which Will wrote to the UPSU Board of Trustees but that the response is not included so it cannot be assumed that it is factually correct. Daniella Marley - Part-time Welfare Officer confirmed that they had seen the letter and response and that the quote in the proposal was factually accurate.

Owain added that there was no detail around the response. Will explained that the response was that the comment was factually accurate, no reason was given. Daniella added that there was more context than that but in terms of an answer, that was what was said.

Will quoted;

“Dear Will, with reference to your letter sent to the Board of Trustees on 7 February 2022, I can confirm that Board considered your request at their recent meeting. To set the record straight, the Board would like to point out that the quotation you reference was part of a letter written to you rather than a public statement. The Board discussed your request but agreed that since the content of the quoted paragraph remains factually accurate, it will not be issuing a retraction.”

Will suggested that it was perhaps a conflict of interest that members of the Board were present at the meeting. Mads Morton - VP Activities explained that the Sabbs did not attend Union Council as Trustees but as Sabbatical Officers.

Owain clarified that Will wanted a statement from Union Council, not the SU, to say that Union Council supports equal treatment under the law and recognise and support the applicability of the Equality Act to male students.

Owain suggested that that might be inappropriate, in certain instances, following the debate that was just had regarding the Men’s Officer role. However, it can be taken from what is said in the original statement to Will, not publicly, that the roles that are in place to protect individuals that might be more prone to suffering discrimination and are designed as they are historically prone to suffering in certain areas in higher education. Men are not prone to suffering in higher education, men are prone to suffering in education and healthcare.

Will thought that was an interesting stance and wanted to clarify why the statement that “we believe in equality under the law and that it applies to males”, would be bad to say.

Owain questioned why this proposal specifically mentions men and why it does not mention everybody. Will noted that it was men that were the subject of the conversation with Board. Owain pointed out that was in a correspondence directly with Will, it was not a public statement.

Will commented that it was trending story nationally.

Owain clarified that it was the letter Will sent several years ago, had a response to and then more recently there was another response saying that the previous response was a statement made to Will in a letter. So, the public outrage and subsequent articles came about as Will shared the letter and statement. Will agreed that was the case.

Owain suggested that it could be argued that Will sharing the letters in question with the public, could have brought the SU into disrepute. Will responded that that was not the issue in question.

Owain added that he did not see the need for the proposal and if there is an issue, it was one created by Will. Owain added that if Will would like Union Council to recognise and support the applicability of the Equalities Act, it should be for everyone.

Will suggested that Owain might like to suggest an amendment. Owain declined an amendment as, in his view, to amend it to that, rendered the whole statement toothless and pointless because everyone, he hoped, believes in equality.

Will noted that if that was the case then there would be no problem stating it but that it was important, in this context to say that that included men. Owain thought that this context is only being discussed as Will brought it up. That the letter was sent to Will personally and no-one else.

Will queried what point Owain was making, Owain suggested that it would not have been in the national spotlight if it had not been shared and now Will was asking for the SU to redact the statement. Will questioned if Owain was blaming the whistle-blower, Owain said he was.

Owain continued that in the past few years there have been campaigns about women's safety, since this year started, in the city of Plymouth there has been a commission started for the protection of women and girls. That Will is asking Union Council to make a statement on behalf of students talking about the equality of men. Owain queried why that can't that be about the equality of everyone's rights.

Will agreed that it can be about everyone rights and welcomed the opportunity to clarify that

Michael Riley- Wallace – School of Computing, Engineering and Maths Rep, noted that the quote that is currently in the UPSU constitution regarding equal opportunities says that it is designed to address equal opportunities for groups which have suffered historic and ongoing discrimination. Unless you are a man, there have been numerous case throughout history of there being discrimination in some way, shape or form. Equal opportunities stems from the need to give everyone the equal opportunities that have been given to men.

Therefore, Michael did not consider that there was a need to suggest that there is not equal opportunity for men because they have not been discriminated against in a derogatory sense in that they suffer with their opportunities.

Michael added that if looked at in the same way as independence days, countries have independence days from us [the British empire/Commonwealth], that does not give us the right to have our own days for the days that they became independent from us. Under this notion, there is no need for men to be considered as not having equal opportunities. They exist because everyone was not getting them except men. The term equal opportunities exists because there had to be a baseline and that was the opportunities that men were getting, that none else was.

Michael asked for clarification on where there is disproportionate inequality for men, what is the need for the constitution to be changed to include men. Will clarified that it is not the constitution that is being discussed. Will noted that this is not an argument of whether male equality is an issue and whether or not the Board statement is or is not true. The latest figures suggest that domestic abuse rates are 40/60% in terms of victims where there is single shelter for men and close to 400 for women.

Michael noted that there is not enough information about things like that within the proposal. What the proposal implies is that men are still here, why are we not included. Michael added that that comment

was not intended to sound comedic and suggested that perhaps an amendment could be included to better demonstrate what inequality men are actually suffering from.

Will reiterated that the policy is only seeking to make statement that the equalities act is applicable to all, including men.

Charlie Atkinson -VP Education questioned what consultation was undertaken with students recently. Will responded that students have been consulted throughout and invited all to read to comment on the Herald, Huffpost, the Mail Online, the Telegraph, the Guardian, ?? student chat room. Will reported that students are shocked and outraged.

Owain pointed out that the example Will gave was not an example of an inequality that men face within the SU, that it is not an issue that the SU has a stake in. The issues that the SU has a stake in are historically issues where men are not discriminated against and in the areas where they are, there are people that try and stop it, for example, the School Reps for education and health.

Owain reiterated that the SU made that statement to Will in the context of the work that the SU does, i.e. representing students and men are not historically underrepresented in that arena.

Will commented that men have been underrepresented at the University of Plymouth since 1982 with a 60/40 split. Owain replied to say that not being 50/50 is not being underrepresented.

Owain added that if the discussion was regarding the teaching profession, it would be accurate to say but in a university setting the balance is quite liberal and has been since it has been the university started.

Will noted that it is not true to say that the equality act does not apply to men. Owain argued that it is true as the equality acts applies to places where people aren't equal, men do not need a leg up at university, that is the context in which the SU made the statement.

Will commented that it is fine to make a statement in context but is not okay to say that the act does not apply. Whether or not the SU choose to apply it is up to them, whether or not it does or does not apply is a statement of fact.

Owain pointed out that the SU is not going to talk about something that it does not have a stake in. That the paragraph in question has been taken out of a wider letter that was sent to an individual and only that paragraph was shared. Within the context that the statement was made, it is factually correct as it was made about students at university.

Will concluded by saying that the Board has said something that has upset many students, not just those at the University of Plymouth. What was then the collective liberation Officers wrote a letter to try and clarify this and were told that, no, that it not their stance so now this proposal is going forward from the expanded group of liberation reps to say that no, we disagree and that the Equality Act is applicable to all persons, including men and that they would like to make a stand and clarify that. This should be clarified so that students don't feel that their union is against them.

For: 3

Against:1

Abstentions: 6

Lucy Metaj left the meeting

Final voting numbers, including email votes

For: 7

Against: 4

Abstentions: 8