

## Women's Forum Policy Proposal

### Contact details

Your name (Proposer of the policy)	Adrienne Solon
The name of a person who supports the policy (Secunder of the policy)	Tamsyn Hudson-Rose

### Student Impact

Have you consulted students about your proposal? Please explain how many students you have engaged with and how.	<p>We have consulted students through the Women's Forum and the LGBT+ Forum to assess their opinions.</p> <p>We have also spoken to societies such as UPAD and Sexpression where there are also NB students...</p>
How does your proposal impact the students at the University of Plymouth, what difference will it make to students?	<p>This will impact non-binary students at Plymouth University as it will give them a voice and a mode of representation they do not currently have. It is very important to provide validation for minority genders which this will provide.</p>

### Policy Proposal

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

- The UPSU Safe Space policy states:

**Freedom from intimidation of harassment.**

"We believe everyone should be free from intimidation of harassment.

This includes protection from prejudice or discrimination on the grounds of [...] gender identity, trans status, [...] appearance of any other form of distinction."

**Membership: Academic and political debates**

"We will arrange mitigation to ensure the safety of our members and ensure a balance of opinions at any academic discussion or debate."
- There are students attending Plymouth university who identify as Non-Binary.

3. Harrison et al. (2012) found that over 40% of non-binary people had attempted suicide at some point, a third had experienced physical assault, and a sixth sexual assault based on their gender.

Specific detriments found in non-binary people include:

- Inability to access education, work, housing, or healthcare without misgendering oneself (54%).
- Inability to have gender recorded correctly on medical, legal, educational, and other records (41%).
- Lack of accessible public facilities (toilets, changing rooms, sports facilities, etc.) (32%).
- Facing constant misgendering by others in relation to pronouns, titles, and everyday terms (32%).
- Feeling forced to present as male/female to be accepted, access work and make a living (18%).
- Intense school and/or workplace bullying due to gender expression (13%).
- Being labelled as 'difficult', 'dangerous' or 'unprofessional' when being open about gender, and the negative impact of this on employment, salary, childcare and/or accessing services (6%).

Being forbidden in school or work settings from presenting as non-binary -no legal recourse (4%).

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

1. The university states that under the Safe Space policy people of the non-binary gender should have protection. Currently, non-binary people do not have any representation or spokesperson in the SU, despite being a minority gender.
2. As non-binary students currently have no representation within the SU or otherwise, it is important to implement this as soon as possible. This is because, as stated above by non-binary students, this lack of voice for non-binary students can be harmful and even cause dysphoria for students.
3. The Women's Forum already considers looks at issues that are circumstantial to being non-male. By including non-binary people in the forum we will be still looking at the issues that affect gender minorities.
4. Since last year the Women's Forum has unofficially represented both female and non-binary students.

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

1. Create a space for the non-binary students of Plymouth University.
2. Make the Women's Forum officially the Women and Non-Binary forum.
3. Propose considerations for a separate Non-Binary liberation Forum in the future.
4. As there may be a democratic review in process we understand that by absorbing non-binary students into the Women's Forum, this will be the quickest and most effective process to implement. This will allow a temporary solution to allow a space and voice for non-binary students and, whether or not the democratic review passes, a more permanent solution can be resolved.

**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

<http://www.allabouttrans.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/non-binary-gender-factsheet.pdf>

#### EXTRACT FROM MEETING MINUTES – 30TH NOVEMBER 2017

##### Women's Forum Policy Proposal (see appendix 3)

Tamsyn Hudson-Rose gave an overview of the proposal and explained that currently, non-binary students don't have any representation. The purpose of this proposal is to include a space for non-binary students at the Women's Forum.

The speech against was waived.

James Warren – VP Welfare, questioned if it would not be better to have a Gender Forum instead.

Adrienne Solon – Part-time Women's Officer, explained that issues affecting both women and those identifying as non-binary overlap, whereas gender encompasses lots of other issues.

James added that there are trans students, currently part of LGBT+ who also don't have a specific place.

Tamsyn explained that they did consult with both non-binary and trans students and the feedback from them was that a forum that is a Women's and Non-binary space can represent

any femme presenting or gender neutral person, whereas masculine presenting students did not necessarily feel that they would be able to attend a space with women in the name. Whilst they all experience gender oppression, it is going to be different.

James suggested that the entire forum name be changed to the Gender Forum.

Tamsyn explained that they chaired the Women's Forum last year under the impression that it did encompass non-binary, lots of attendees defined as non-binary. Attendees experienced the same kinds of oppression that women experience as they were non-binary, femme presenting. Trans men also experience issues but may not feel comfortable discussing them in a space with women/non-binary femme people. There is a hierarchy of oppression within the trans umbrella and all will experience different needs and issues. Tamsyn questioned if it were the gender forum, where would issues, such as violence against women be discussed?

Maja Smith – VP Education, asked for clarity – masculine presenting non-binary people should go to the LGBT+ Forum and Femme presenting non-Binary people should go to the Women's and Non-binary forum? Also, even liberation forums should be open to anyone to attend, individuals may be asked to leave but they can attend.

Tamsyn clarified that they did not say that masculine non-binary or trans could not attend the forum, just that it is down to self-definition and people may not feel comfortable doing so. It is not the forum's place to ask/check. The intention is to expand the name of the forum to be more welcoming to non-binary students and discuss issues that affect non-binary and women students that may not be relevant at the LGBT+ Forum.

Adrienne added that there is overlap between liberation forums anyway and that doesn't mean that forums won't collaborate or discuss issues.

Tamsyn noted that ultimately, all liberation issues could fall under the welfare banner and it's up to students to decide where they feel most comfortable addressing those issues.

James reiterated that in his opinion, a gender forum would be the best place to discuss all issues to do with gender and open up more discussion around gender liberation. Adrienne pointed out that the men's forum was rejected last year and a gender forum would take away that liberation space.

James Lord- Chair of Accountability board, reported that the board had discussed this but did not recognise that they are two white males and are perhaps not qualified to comment. They agreed in principle that non-binary students should have a place to discuss their issues and have representation at Union Council. However, there was concern that the women's forum was not the best place to do this.

James Lord asked how many students were consulted on this and raised the suggestion of a referendum. Adrienne pointed out that only 0.03% of students disclosed being non-binary at enrolment. At the last women's forum, four out of ten attendees defined as non-binary. Feedback from the LGBT+ Forum was that there should be a non-binary forum.

Goda Cegialyte – Part-time LGBT+ Officer, added that there was a discussion and whilst it was agreed that there is overlap, but if enhances the offer of representation for non-binary students, then its positive. The forum acknowledged that everyone has different issues and needs.

Lowri Jones – President, was of the opinion that as this concerns a liberation forum, it's up to the forum concerned to decide if the name needs to be changed. James Lord asked if the forum would still collaborate with the LGBT+ Forum. Goda said that this would be the case and added that last year all the LGBT+ campaigns and policy proposals had been regarding gender and nothing concerning non-binary. Goda thought that as this was in relation to a liberation forum, a referendum would not be appropriate.

Hadiza Adah – VP International and Outreach, suggested having a standing item on the agenda of the Women's Forum for non-binary issues, then the issue of changing the name can be considered under the democratic review.

Tamsyn thought that unless the name changed, non-binary students would not know that they are able to attend and they wouldn't know they had voting rights.

Lowri explained that the Women's Forum is one of the forums that they support. The resolves point four was included to acknowledge that representation for non-binary students needs to be considered democratic review but there also needs to be in place in the shorter term.

Tamsyn questioned what people think will happen if the title changes, they thought that women are not going to stop attending.

Alex Doyle – VP Activities, questioned what would happen if the proposal does not pass, would non-binary students not be able to attend the forum or would they just attend anyway.

Adrienne noted that some students are gender fluid and don't necessarily always define in the same way. Adrienne added that they would also be happy to host open sessions for students that don't feel comfortable attending the forum, for whatever reason.

Tamsyn explained that non-binary students would still be welcome to attend, as others students would be, but ideally the name of the forum would change to make them feel welcome. The aim of the proposal is to be inclusive, welcoming and to provide a safe space. The name of the forum should reflect those who are able to attend and they should have voting rights. Non-binary people should have the same opportunities as other students.

**For: 19**

**Against: 1**

**Abstention: 5**

**The proposal to change the forum name to Women's and Non-Binary Forum passed**