



UCL

Review of data, statistics and research on sex and gender

Report 2: Barriers to research on sex and gender

Published 2nd July 2025

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Executive Summary

The Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) commissioned this independent review of data, statistics and research on sex and gender. The review presents findings in two final reports. Report one concerned data and statistics and was published in March 2025 (Sullivan, 2025). Report two (the current report) examines barriers to research.

This report sets out to investigate and describe barriers to research on sex and gender identity, and to make recommendations to assist in addressing such barriers.

Free speech, academic freedom, and scientific and scholarly rigour have all come under attack by those who believe that treating sex as an important category ‘denies the existence’ of trans people¹. This ‘denial of existence’ is claimed to be an act of violence which in turn may be taken to justify harassment. Yet sex is a fundamental category across all of the disciplines which take human beings as their subjects, from the human sciences to the arts, humanities and social sciences.

In a climate where wider public discussion has been constrained, it is particularly important that universities provide a space where critical analysis, dialogue and the pursuit of knowledge can occur without fear. This matters for science and scholarship, for education, for public trust in universities, and for democracy. Academia must tolerate and encourage diverse viewpoints. But the university cannot fulfil its proper function if it permits behaviours which threaten the norms which are essential to the pursuit of truth and the dissemination of knowledge as a public good.

This report comes at a time of grave financial difficulty for universities. We have sought to provide recommendations which, wherever possible, would tend to reduce rather than increase costs.

We have reviewed information in the public domain and carried out an open call for evidence.

¹ For example, Judith Butler states that ‘...TERFs are denying the existence of people who have had quite a hard time gaining social recognition, legal protection from discrimination, and adequate and affirming health care’. (p.150) Butler, J. (2024), *Who’s Afraid of Gender*. Farrar, Strauss and Giroux.

Terminology and definitions

A note on terminology. Gender-critical beliefs are defined in UK law as the belief ‘that biological sex is real, important, immutable and not to be conflated with gender identity’ (Forstater vs CGD Europe and Others, 2021).² We use the term gender critical in this sense in this report. Gender-critical beliefs encompass and are compatible with a wide range of views. The belief ‘that biological sex is real, important, immutable and not to be conflated with gender identity’ was taken for granted until very recently, and did not require a special label (Sullivan and Todd, 2023). Neither does it imply belief in any particular theoretical or political perspective. Examples of gender-critical positions in substantive policy debates include the view that males should not be entitled to compete in the women’s category in sports and that males should not be entitled to access to women-only spaces, such as women’s prisons or women’s rape crisis centres. These are mainstream views,³ many people taking such positions may not use the term ‘gender critical’ to describe themselves and many may be unfamiliar with the term. Some may actively reject the term ‘gender critical’. Nevertheless, it has become necessary to have a term to refer to a belief in the reality of sex.

We define a belief in gender-identity theory as the negation of at least one of the four aspects of gender-critical belief: in other words, the assertion that biological sex is not real and/or not important and/or not immutable, and/or that gender identity and sex cannot be clearly distinguished. Some advocates of gender-identity theory adopt

² *Forstater vs CGD Europe and Others* (2021).

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/60c1cce1d3bf7f4bd9814e39/Maya_Forstater_v_CGD_Europe_and_others_UKEAT0105_20_JOJ.pdf

³ A range of UK polling shows that those supporting positions such as allowing transwomen in women’s sports have been in a minority from 2018 onwards. For example, Fair Play for Women (2020), *The British public knows males can’t become female and wants public policies to reflect that*. <https://fairplayforwomen.com/polldata/>

Public opinion has shifted towards increased support for gender-critical positions. YouGov polling shows that in 2024, only 11% of respondents thought that ‘transgender women’ should be allowed to take part in women’s sporting events. See: Sex Matters (2025), *YouGov poll shows support for sex meaning biological sex in the Equality Act*, 7 January 2025.

<https://sex-matters.org/posts/updates/poll-shows-support-for-sex-meaning-sex-in-equality-act/>

The 2022 British Social Attitudes survey showed that most respondents (64%) said they were not prejudiced against transgender people, but only 30% agreed that a transgender person should be able to change the sex on their birth certificate ‘if they want’. See: Natcen (2023), *A liberalisation in attitudes?* <https://natcen.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2023-09/BSA%2040%20Moral%20issues.pdf>

This latter figure fell further to 24% in 2023. See: Natcen (2024), *Five years of unprecedented challenges The impact of the 2019-2024 Parliament on public opinion*.

<https://natcen.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2024-06/BSA%2041%20Five%20years%20of%20unprecedented%20challenges.pdf>

all four claims, either explicitly or implicitly. We acknowledge that belief in gender-identity theory encompasses a range of positions, some more nuanced than others, and that advocates for gender-identity views may describe themselves and their views in diverse ways and may not use the term gender-identity theory. However, for the purposes of this report, it is useful to have clear terms for those who, broadly speaking, either accept or reject gender-critical beliefs as they are defined in UK law.

Review of information in the public domain

It is clear that academics and students who have insisted that sex is a real and socially significant category have experienced barriers to research, broadly defined. This includes campaigns of harassment and intimidation. In the introduction to this report, we document cases of no-platforming and disruption of events, and discrimination at various points in the research system, including by ethics committees and academic publishers and journals.⁴ We refer to legal cases, notably the judgment in the employment tribunal case of Jo Phoenix vs The Open University. The tribunal found that Professor Phoenix was discriminated against, harassed, constructively unfairly dismissed and victimised by the Open University (OU), due to her belief in the reality and importance of sex.⁵ Employment Tribunals are matters of public record; no case equivalent to that of Professor Phoenix, and others mentioned below, brought by an academic who holds the opposing view, has been reported, and none was drawn to our attention during this review.

The introduction also discusses the growth of centralised bureaucracy and loss of academic autonomy within higher education, and the growth of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) departments and networks. These trends have provided levers for activists pursuing agendas which are not compatible with the truth-seeking mission of universities. The use of external policy schemes has exacerbated these trends, contributing to a lack of critical examination of policy and practice within institutions.

Campaigns to ‘cancel’ individuals and groups within academia often feature open letters and statements circulated via social media and/or messages sent to large groups via internal email. Sometimes they have included physical leafleting. We

⁴ A log of news reports relating to incidents in higher education covering the period 2015 to 2023 has been compiled by the charity Sex Matters. See: Sex Matters (online), *Log of academics targeted*. <https://sex-matters.org/about-us/what-we-are-up-against/academics-targeted/>

The articles listed are further available here (we do not include all of these cases in this report): <https://sex-matters.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/gender-critical-at-work-1.pdf>

⁵ *Phoenix vs The Open University* (2024).

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65ae82d58bbe95000e5eb1f7/Ms_J_Pheonix_v_The_Open_University_3322700.2021_other_FMH_Reserved_Judgement.pdf

have compiled a selection of 58 statements and messages from the period between 2015 and 2024, which document this phenomenon in Appendix 1. These open messages typically include false, defamatory and hyperbolic smears, such as comparing people who believe that sex is binary to eugenicists, racists, colonialists, anti-Semites, fascists or ‘hate groups’, and accusations of bigotry and transphobia. In some cases, such messages have been produced and/or disseminated by university staff LGBTQ+ networks. We have also included examples of messages from university managers which promote the idea that the view that sex is real and important is hateful, or that the presence of such views on campus is distressing. There is no public record of equivalent campaigns from within the academy directed at those who contest that sex is binary, immutable and often significant, and no analogous material to that described above was shared with us during the review.⁶

We document materials from the ‘Stock Out’ campaign against Kathleen Stock during her tenure as Professor of Philosophy at the University of Sussex separately in Appendix 3. We are not aware of any equivalent campaign against an academic who disagrees with the gender-critical perspective.

⁶ As a further check, we undertook an additional online search of the public record for examples of incidents of interference with their work related to their perspective on this issue, for a list of academics based in the UK prominently associated with disagreeing with the gender-critical position. This did not yield any specific examples of barriers to conducting research, such as complaints raised or other action taken within institutions by or against individuals based on their stance, interference with events they were organising or attending, or problems with ethics committees or publication. One person was found to have stated that complaints had been made to their employer by other named academics in relation to their public engagement but gave no indication of the institutional response.

We found one description of positive institutional support. In evidence to the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill, Professor Whittle stated: “I have never ever felt so unsafe that I was not able to speak. I have never felt that I could not run an event because it was so unsafe. I have never felt that my speakers are threatened. [...] I have never personally felt that Manchester Metropolitan has not supported me in what I have done, what I have organised or the events that we have had, some of which have been potentially quite contentious.” See: UK Parliament (2021) *Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill (Second sitting)*, Hansard. [https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2021-09-07/debates/8afc9afb-4a55-4aef-a364-5686c34ccf29/HigherEducation\(FreedomOfSpeech\)Bill\(SecondSitting\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2021-09-07/debates/8afc9afb-4a55-4aef-a364-5686c34ccf29/HigherEducation(FreedomOfSpeech)Bill(SecondSitting))

Call for evidence

A call for evidence to the review was hosted on a University College London (UCL) project page⁷ and publicised through a piece in Times Higher Education,⁸ the leading periodical aimed at higher education professionals in the UK, through the X/Twitter account set up for the Review, and via the lead researcher's X/Twitter account. The call made clear that responses were welcome from any perspective.

The call for evidence presented an opportunity to gain insights from the experiences of researchers from any perspective on sex and gender, including those who have not gone public with their stories. The evidence gathered is largely qualitative and not intended to quantify the extent of the problems raised, but rather to provide an understanding of the processes involved with a view to informing potential solutions.

We are not interested only in the sorts of cases that generate headlines in the press, but also in examples that might seem mundane, but which have nevertheless affected the researcher and their research. Respondents were asked to provide evidence under the following headings: 1. Research ethics processes; 2. Barriers to research funding; 3. Barriers to data collection; 4. Barriers to publication; 5. Self-censorship and chilling effects; 6. No-platforming; 7. Barriers to holding events; 8. Disinvitations from projects or collaborations; 9. Discrimination by university administrators or services; 10. Bullying, harassment and ostracism; 11. Complaints, including coordinated complaints; 12. Management behaviour; 13. Compelled speech; 14. Barriers to career progression; 15. Institutional policies and training; 16. Barriers affecting students; 17. Other.

As noted further below, the call was also shared by the Feminist Gender Equality Network (FGEN), which describes itself as 'a major new global movement, dedicated to countering anti-trans propaganda at home and abroad, and spear-headed by academics in UK universities.' FGEN emailed its membership providing a 'Guide to completing the survey' including template responses. The email and guide are provided in Appendix 2. The template responses express hostility to gender-critical views, for example likening these views to fascism.

⁷ Sullivan, A. *Review of data, statistics and research on sex and gender*, UCL.
<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/ioe/departments-and-centres/departments/social-research-institute/research/review-data-statistics-and-research-sex-and-gender>

⁸ Sullivan, A. (2024), *Post-Cass, promoting accurate data should never be seen as partisan*, Times Higher Education.
<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/blog/post-cass-promoting-accurate-data-should-never-be-seen-partisan>

Overview of submissions

We received 130 completed submissions to the review via an online portal. We also received a further ten responses directly via email. All of the email responses were from gender-critical academics. 73 (56%) of the online respondents expressed agreement with gender-critical views, 52 (40%) expressed disagreement, and in the remaining six cases no view was expressed or could be inferred.

Gender-critical respondents testified in detail to a range of barriers that they had faced across the research system. Some of these respondents had faced repeated discrimination and abuse. Others had their research blocked or delayed by ethics committees imposing criteria which in our view go beyond their proper remit. Some had faced severe personal consequences to their careers, mental health and wellbeing. Others had self-censored in order to avoid such consequences. This 'chilling effect' is strongly evidenced in the responses. Management responses to the problems respondents faced were typically perceived as inadequate.

Responses from individuals who disagreed with gender-critical views were typically less detailed. A strong theme that emerged from these responses was general fearfulness, fragility and a sense of threat at the idea of exposure to gender-critical views, or simply at the presence of people with such views within universities. Illustrative of this, a number of respondents raised fears about holding 'trans inclusive' events, but did not provide any examples of a specific event that had faced an attempt to prevent it from taking place, or physical protest or disruption. We are also not aware of any such incident ever being reported.

Respondents who agreed with gender-critical views were all concerned with hostility based on their research standpoint; those who disagreed with gender-critical views were as likely to use their response to express concern about hostility to transgender people as to relate responses to their research standpoint. A few asserted that problems such as securing funding or getting published must have been due to prejudice. All the gender-critical responses concerned behaviour within their professional community. Those who disagreed with the gender-critical position more often identified the main location of a hostile environment for their work as being outside the academy, for example in the media or on social media. A few respondents in this group emphasised the supportiveness of their working environment and contested the premiss of this review, namely that barriers to research on sex and gender are a problem.

Summary

The evidence we have reviewed does not support a narrative of a 'polarised' 'toxic debate' where 'both sides' have behaved badly. Rather, there is evidence of some university staff who disagree with gender-critical views behaving in ways that are

outside the norms of the scientific and scholarly community, and which challenge these norms. The toxicity is generated by behaviours rather than by conflicting viewpoints as such. The staff involved in such behaviours constitute a small minority of university staff, yet the effects of tolerating and encouraging these behaviours are serious.

Report structure

The report presents recommendations, aimed at addressing barriers to research on sex and gender identity. As noted above, these are directed primarily at government and the higher education sector. The recommendations are also relevant for organisations outside higher education that are involved in research, in particular the NHS.

Thereafter the main body of the report is structured in three parts. Part one introduces the key issues and discusses some of the trends that have contributed to the suppression of research and critical discussion of sex and gender in our universities. These include the interaction of an authoritarian strand of activism with an increasingly bureaucratic higher education sector, compounded by the failure of university management and sector organisations to acknowledge or address the issue.

Part two describes the review methodology and describes the profile of respondents, drawing principally on quantitative responses to the occupational, demographic, occupational, and attitudinal questions asked in the survey instrument.

Part three presents and discusses qualitative evidence submitted to the review, under the respective headings/barriers. In each section, the evidence is structured according to respondent views on gender-critical beliefs (agreement or disagreement).

Appendix 1 documents a wide range of open letters, circulars, and statements published between 2015 and 2024, denouncing gender-critical individuals and views.

Appendix 2 reproduces material distributed by the Feminist Gender Equality Network, in response to this review.

Appendix 3 shows a range of material which was published online by activists as part of the 'Stock Out' campaign against Professor Kathleen Stock at the University of Sussex.

Appendix 4 shows the review survey instrument.

Taking forward the recommendations of this review

These recommendations are directed at government, the higher education sector, and organisations which are part of the research ecosystem, including funders and academic publishers. The recommendations are also relevant for organisations outside higher education which are involved in research, notably the National Health Service (NHS), as some of the evidence submitted to us relates to the NHS.

Senior managers within higher education including Vice Chancellors are responsible for upholding academic freedom and scientific and scholarly values within higher education institutions. Government, including the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT); the Department for Education (DfE); the Office for Students (OfS) is responsible for ensuring that the incentives facing universities and other research organisations favour this outcome.

Review team

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Acknowledgements

The review team are grateful to those who submitted evidence. We acknowledge support from the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), grant reference ES/X004627/1.

Recommendations

1. Universities must prioritise the pursuit of truth as the core principle underlying university education and research. Universities should resist practices which may deter staff or students from asking pertinent questions, stating material facts or collecting salient data. This principle underpins the subsequent recommendations.
2. Universities must uphold the scientific and scholarly norms which are essential to the production of knowledge. This report presents evidence on challenges to these norms. Understanding the nature of these challenges is essential to addressing them. We recommend that university leaders and managers and higher education policymakers read this report, and we hope that it will assist them in tackling the problems that we have documented.
3. Academics and others who have questioned gender-identity theory have faced *freedom-restricting harassment* (Khan 2024), with severe personal and professional consequences. This is not a question of ‘both sides’ behaving badly in a ‘toxic debate’, as we have no documented evidence of gender-critical staff or students advocating for or engaging in behaviours such as attempts to de-platform academics with opposing views. An important first step for senior managers in higher education and the organisations that represent them would be to acknowledge the reality of bullying and harassment by internal activists and take on board the lessons of the Phoenix judgment. Staff and students taking part in freedom-restricting harassment should face consequences commensurate with the seriousness of the offence.
4. Some staff and students express feeling unsafe because of the existence of people with gender-critical views. Universities must help students to develop the ability to deal with robust disagreement as an opportunity for intellectual growth rather than a threat. They should further explain to students that we can respect one another as people without necessarily respecting each other’s opinions.⁹ Academics in all disciplines should see it as a core responsibility to

⁹ As Salman Rushdie puts it, ‘At Cambridge University I was taught a laudable method of argument: you never personalise, but you have absolutely no respect for people’s opinions. You are never rude to the person, but you can be savagely rude about what the person thinks. That seems to me a crucial distinction: people must be protected from discrimination by virtue of their race, but you cannot ring-fence their ideas. The moment you say that any idea system is sacred, whether it’s a religious belief system or a secular ideology, the moment you declare a set of ideas to be immune from criticism, satire, derision, or contempt, freedom of thought becomes impossible.’

See: Rushdie, S. (2005), *Defend the right to be offended*, Open Democracy.
https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/article_2331jsp/

support and encourage students and early career researchers to learn to deal with exposure to viewpoints different from their own, to avoid conflating disagreement with personal threat, and to develop the ability to 'disagree well'. Induction into the principles and practical implications of free speech, academic freedom, and productive disagreement should be provided for all students. Where university staff, whether in academic or professional services roles, express the view that disagreement is a threat, this should be robustly countered by managers as inappropriate to academic life. Managers should avoid signalling that they expect staff or students to be psychologically fragile in the face of disagreement. For example, managers should avoid directing staff or students to mental health support resources in response to the presence of views with which they disagree. They should instead use objections to events as an opportunity to make positive statements on the value of debate and challenge.

5. It is widely acknowledged that universities have become increasingly bureaucratic, and that this has a high opportunity cost in terms of staff time and resources (Tickell 2022). Increased bureaucracy reduces academic autonomy and academic freedom both in general and in the specific case of sex and gender. Excessive bureaucracy provides levers for activist influence. There is an opportunity to reverse the trend towards centralised bureaucratisation in higher education in order to increase efficiency and remove barriers to research. We provide specific examples below relating to ethics committees, events, and the Research Excellence Framework (REF).
6. Evidence submitted to this review suggests that internal complaints procedures have not provided an adequate means for academics to uphold their rights, and in some cases have added to the burden on individuals who have faced discrimination and/or harassment. It has become apparent that an external mechanism is needed to uphold the rights of researchers in the area of sex and gender and beyond. The Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act (HEFSA) will provide such a mechanism in England. Consideration should be given to how academic freedom can similarly be protected within the other UK jurisdictions by the relevant legislatures. The complaints scheme will provide a practical and low-cost mechanism to enforce the existing duties of universities, and it is essential that this scheme should be commenced in a timely way and in a form that is robust enough to provide redress and incentivise higher education institutions to uphold the law. The current director for freedom of speech and academic freedom at the Office for Students (OfS) provides credible, principled and non-partisan leadership, and it will be vital to maintain this under future directors.
7. Many of the barriers described in this report will be addressed if universities robustly implement the recommendations from the Office for Students

'Regulatory advice 24: Guidance related to freedom of speech' (Office for Students, 2025). Particularly relevant points from the OfS guidance include:

- (143) *We would generally expect providers and constituent institutions, as promptly as is reasonably practicable and consistent with due process, and where appropriate publicly:*

to reject public campaigns to punish a student or member of staff for lawful expression of an idea or viewpoint that does not violate any lawful internal regulations

to affirm students' and staff members' rights to make such statements regardless of any institutional position on the matter.

These campaigns may take the form of organised petitions or open letters, an accumulation of spontaneous or organised social media posts, or long-running, focused media campaigns.

- (146) *Each provider and constituent institution must take reasonably practicable steps to secure the academic freedom of their academic staff. This means that those staff are free to question and test received wisdom and to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions without placing themselves at risk of being adversely affected by losing their jobs or privileges or reducing their likelihood of securing promotion or different jobs at the provider or constituent institution.*
- (151) *Providers and constituent institutions should not require applicants for academic promotion to commit (or give evidence of commitment) to values, beliefs or ideas, if that may disadvantage any candidate for exercising their academic freedom within the law.*
- (195) *Staff and students should be free to undertake academic research within the law. This freedom should not be restricted or compromised in any way because of a perceived or actual tension between: a. any conclusions that the research may reach or has reached or the viewpoint it supports, and b. the organisation's policies or values.*

Nor should it be restricted or compromised in any way because of any external pressure connected with a. If funding bodies exert pressure on researchers to reach or to avoid particular results, amending or terminating these funding arrangements is likely to be a reasonably practicable step for providers and constituent institutions to take.

- (196) *Reasonably practicable steps for providers and constituent institutions to take, in relation to research ethics committees, may include:*

- a. ensuring that ethical review and requirements are focused on ethical issues and do not impose requirements related to the quality of the proposed research or reputational concerns;*
- b. ensuring that ethics review committees have particular regard to the importance of academic freedom and to the risks to academic freedom of any decision;*
- c. ensuring that the ethical review process is transparent; and*
- d. closely monitoring the ethics review process for evidence of unnecessary suppression of research.*

8. In order to provide a forum for discussion and research on contentious matters, universities must aim to be institutionally neutral, refraining from taking a substantive position wherever possible. Taking a substantive political stance includes not only overt statements but also: the provision of training for staff or students espousing particular ideological viewpoints; adopting particular political viewpoints into hiring and promotion processes; unbalanced messaging from communications teams and managers; the adoption of political symbols and the flying of flags. In effect, universities have taken an extreme and contentious stance on sex and gender without necessarily recognising that this is the implication of a range of organisational policies and practices. Universities should critically review their policies and practices across the board with a view to removing partisan policies and messaging on questions of sex and gender.
9. Universities should review their Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) structures and policies with a view to tackling EDI overreach and ensuring that policies and training are legally compliant and reflect the rights of all protected characteristics, including sex and belief. Policies and training should accurately reflect the 2010 Equality Act (EA2010), taking into account recent case law, alongside the right to academic freedom enshrined in section 43 of the Education (No 2) Act 1986, and the freedom of expression principles enshrined in Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights. Training for staff and students should be factual and should not promote contested political viewpoints.
10. Universities have a responsibility to ensure that individuals in HR and EDI roles have an accurate and up to date understanding of the responsibilities of the university in relation to both academic freedom and employment law. Steps should be taken, including training where appropriate, to ensure this, and specifically to ensure that the lessons of the Forstater and Phoenix judgments are understood and taken on board.

11. Staff equalities networks were originally conceived as a welcoming space for staff sharing the relevant protected characteristics but are increasingly involved in internal lobbying and university policymaking, in a way that excludes and sometimes harasses some individuals who they ostensibly represent. In recent years LGBTQ+ networks have played an important part in calls for the no-platforming of individuals with gender-critical views, and the targets of these campaigns have disproportionately been lesbians. In effect, these networks typically promote a particular political viewpoint and are not inclusive of those who disagree. Activist networks have a place within the university, but they must be independent of the university administration. Such networks should not be embedded within university structures, including EDI structures. To address this:
 - a. EDI staff networks should represent the protected characteristics defined by EA2010 and should be inclusive of everyone with a shared characteristic (other than belief) regardless of their beliefs.
 - b. Belief is a protected characteristic. However, if universities provide support for staff networks which promote gender-identity beliefs (as they currently do) this should be explicit and should be balanced by providing parity to networks supporting 1/ sex-based rights and 2/ academic freedom.
 - c. The role of some EDI staff and staff networks in generating harassment must be tackled.
12. Universities should not publish or circulate any guidance which seeks to discourage or de-prioritise data collection on sex or the use of sex-based language and concepts. University EDI departments should not issue guidance on research or data collection but should restrict their remit to human resources (HR) matters.
13. The expansion and politicisation of ethics committees poses serious risks to research, including research on sex and gender, potentially affecting researchers working from any perspective on this issue. To address this:
 - a. The terms of reference of ethics committees should state that it is not within their remit to prevent researchers from using the concept of sex, collecting data on sex, or using sex-based language.
 - b. Ethics committees should not refer researchers to ask advice from EDI committees.
 - c. Universities should consider paring back the scope and power of ethics committees, including removing the requirement for low-risk research which does not involve any medical or other experimental intervention or contact with children or vulnerable populations or genuine risk of harm to

research participants or researchers or potentially unlawful acts to undergo formal ethical review by default.

- d. Ethics committees must ensure that ethical review does not lead to onerous delays, in particular in the case of time-sensitive research. By default, ethics committees should approve research proposals and should do so promptly.
 - e. Ethical review is continually expanding, for example to cover undergraduate students, and to cover secondary data analysis. This expansion should be halted.
 - f. Ethics committees must explicitly distinguish between ethical risk and reputational risk, and not conflate the two. Reputational risk should never be treated as an ethical consideration, let alone a reason to treat a proposal as 'high risk' by an ethics committee.
 - g. The centralisation of ethics committees should be reconsidered. Paradoxically, review by a centralised committee can lead to projects deemed 'high risk' being judged by academics lacking in relevant expertise, whereas 'low risk' projects are more likely to be judged by disciplinary peers.
 - h. ESRC should review its guidance for research organisations and research ethics committees with a view to reducing the burden on research organisations, reducing risks to academic freedom, and acknowledging the risk of politicisation of ethics processes. Guidance should highlight the value of academic freedom as a value which underpins the ability of researchers to deliver knowledge as a public good which benefits society as a whole. The risk that research ethics committees may prevent valuable research from being carried out in a timely way should be noted. ESRC should engage with academic experts on research ethics and ensure transparency in the process of reviewing its guidance.
14. Universities should actively seek to encourage the expression of a wide range of views and should ensure that both gender-critical and gender-identity speakers are enabled to speak on campus. This implies providing reasonable support to staff and students who seek to organise events, rather than erecting barriers at any stage of the process, from room bookings to publicity and security. Some universities pre-vet speakers before an invitation is issued: this practice hides no-platforming rather than tackling it and should be eliminated. University risk assessments and 'equalities impact assessments' of gender-critical speakers can effectively punish the speaker for the fact that they have previously been no-platformed or deemed 'controversial'. Where credible threats of serious disruption and/or violence are received, it should not be assumed that the appropriate solution is to disinvite the speaker or to impose

'mitigations' such as moving the talk online or failing to advertise the talk widely or placing restrictions on attendance. These tactics may seem the easiest solution on a case-by-case basis, but they generate perverse incentives, ceding power to those who wish to silence discussion.¹⁰ Serious threats should be dealt with appropriately by campus security and, where necessary, the police. There should be full transparency with speakers and event organisers as to any threats, complaints, or attempts to prevent an event going ahead. Universities should consider reducing the bureaucracy and reputation management culture around events in order to return autonomy to academics and students organising events. Managers should not make statements suggesting that gender-critical speakers are platformed under institutional duress or may cause harm. Managers should instead consider supportive actions such as attending the event in question and making a positive statement about the value of pluralism and debate.

15. In some instances, a 'heckler's veto' has been afforded to protesters who have been able to disrupt events or even prevent events from going ahead. University managers must recognise the distinction between peaceful protest and aggressive disruption which is intended to silence. Universities should communicate this distinction to staff and students. Campus security staff are restricted in their ability to physically intervene to remove miscreants. Therefore, particularly where the scale of the disruption means that campus security cannot ensure an event can safely go ahead, there should be proportionate consequences for those responsible, according to clear, pre-established, viewpoint-neutral rules. Cancelled events should be rescheduled in a timely way.
16. Universities encourage academics to use social media to disseminate their research, and as such should provide support to help academics and research students to deal with social media, including the possibility of abuse and threats. Universities should consider issuing public statements in support of targeted academics or students, and/or offering private support as appropriate. If academics or students are engaged in unlawful speech on social media, this should be addressed by their institutions.

¹⁰ As Michael Rainsborough has put it 'Frequently university authorities will cite the intimidation tactics of political activists as constituting their right to protest while allowing those individuals or groups that wish only to engage in debate to swing in the wind. The result is an un-level playing field tilted in favour of those who seek to constrict the discussion of different viewpoints.'

See: Smith, M. (2020), *University of Fear: The Paradox of Modern Higher Education*, CIEO.
<https://www.cieo.org.uk/research/university-of-fear/>

17. It is vital that academic publishing is seen as trustworthy and unbiased. To this end:
- a. Publishers and editors should avoid guidance which discourages or disallows the use of sex-based language, concepts and data collection.
 - b. Consideration should be given by the publishing industry to developing ethics guidelines which address contemporary threats to academic integrity, including obstacles to publishing using sex-based concepts, language and variables. This should be developed with input from scholars who have been affected by these issues.
 - c. Journals should consider including a statement of good practice in their guidelines, to the effect that articles will be judged solely on their scientific and scholarly merits.¹¹
18. Universities should carefully consider the balance of risks in submitting their policies to external policy scoring schemes which issue rankings or awards according to the external body's goals and values, which may not accord with the principles of academic enquiry or with the applicable equality law. This outsourcing of university policy has contributed to a number of problems, both in terms of discrimination against individuals based on their protected characteristics, including sex and belief, and in terms of erecting barriers to discussion and research regarding sex and gender by promoting a particular viewpoint as university policy. Funding bodies should not incentivise or mandate membership of policy scoring schemes.
19. Funding bodies should consider how they can ensure that research funding is centred on the pursuit of truth and that peer-review processes and funding decisions are neither prejudiced by activist agendas, nor constrained by excessive risk-aversion and fear of criticism, nor driven by fashionable agendas. They should also consider how they can counter 'chilling effects' whereby academics assume that it is not worth submitting grant applications for research deemed 'controversial'. Universities should also consider these points in relation to internal funding streams.

¹¹ For example the journal *Physiological Measurement* guidelines for authors: 'All articles are judged solely on their scientific merits. Unbiased consideration is given to all manuscripts offered for publication, regardless of whether or not the authors request publication on a gold open access basis and regardless of the race, gender, religious belief, ethnic origin, citizenship, political philosophy, sexual orientation, age or reputation of the authors.'

See: *Physiological Measurement*, *Author guidelines*.

<https://publishingsupport.iopscience.iop.org/journals/physiological-measurement/>

20. The demands of Research Excellence Framework (REF) have become more onerous with each cycle, and consideration should be given to the risks and costs that this entails. Proposals have been put forward to expand the scope of the REF to encompass 'people, culture and environment' (PCE). This poses risks to science and scholarship, including on sex and gender, and is likely to disincentivise universities from scaling back EDI activities even where these have no proven benefit and may promote discrimination, including discrimination against staff and students with gender-critical beliefs. The proposed 25% weighting for PCE will inevitably lead to a reduced focus on research excellence and is likely to lead to political bias in the research activities which are supported. Dropping the PCE element entirely would avert the risk of REF incentives leading to a reduction in UK research quality. The risks entailed in the PCE element could alternatively be somewhat mitigated by including academic freedom as an important plank of PCE.

Part 1. Introduction

Sex is a fundamental category, not just in biology, but across the human and social sciences and humanities. Attempts to disallow the use of sexed categories, concepts and language therefore constrains research across the disciplines and threatens to undermine the foundations of science and scholarship.

There are distinct dangers to the mental and physical health of vulnerable people when professional standards of scrutiny are abandoned in the face of ideological demands. Dr Hilary Cass's 'Independent review of gender identity services for children and young people' has decisively exposed the dearth of evidence in the field of youth transition and gender medicine. Cass notes that 'Throughout the course of the Review, it has been evident that there has been a failure to reliably collect even the most basic data and information in a consistent and comprehensive manner; data have often not been shared or have been unavailable' (Cass, 2024).

Conversations on sex and gender have been heavily constrained outside universities as well as within them. Venues have been targeted by activists seeking to prevent discussions from occurring;¹² women have been assaulted by activists;¹³ the police have pursued citizens for the expression of gender-critical views;¹⁴ employers have

¹² Kirkup, J. (2018), *Why Are Women Who Discuss Gender Getting Bomb Threats*, The Spectator. <https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/why-are-women-who-discuss-gender-getting-bomb-threats->

¹³ Coulter, M. (2018), *Transgender Activist Tara Wolf Fined £150 for Assaulting 'Exclusionary' Radical Feminist in Hyde Park*. Evening Standard. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/crime/transgender-activist-tara-wolf-fined-ps150-for-assaulting-exclusionary-radical-feminist-in-hyde-park-a3813856.html>

¹⁴ See *Miller vs College of Policing 2020*: <https://www.judiciary.uk/judgments/miller-v-college-of-policing/>

And *Miller vs College of Policing 2022*: <https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Miller-v-College-of-Policing-judgment-201221.pdf>.

From the summary of the 2022 High Court judgment: 'Mr Justice Julian Knowles concludes that the Claimant's tweets were lawful and that there was not the slightest risk that he would commit a criminal offence by continuing to tweet ([271]). He finds the combination of the police visiting the Claimant's place of work, and their subsequent statements in relation to the possibility of prosecution, were a disproportionate interference with the Claimant's right to freedom of expression because of their potential chilling effect. In response to the Defendants' submissions that any interference with the Claimant's rights was trivial and justifiable, at [259] of his judgment the judge concludes that these arguments impermissibly minimise what occurred and do not properly reflect the value of free speech in a democracy. He writes: "The effect of the police turning up at [the Claimant's] place of work because of his political opinions must not be underestimated. To do so would be to undervalue a

discriminated against gender-critical workers;¹⁵ gender-critical artists have been hounded out;¹⁶ social media has censored gender-critical views;¹⁷ and parliamentarians have been reported to be afraid to speak their minds.¹⁸ None of this is healthy in a democracy, particularly in the context of ongoing policy debates. Universities should see it as their role to provide a space for discussion and research on difficult issues, especially when these conversations cannot easily be held elsewhere.

In the UK, the suppression of discussion on sex and gender became highly visible in 2017-2018, when Conservative prime Minister Theresa May announced proposals to reform the 2004 Gender Recognition Act (GRA) to allow gender self-identification (self-id).¹⁹ Grassroots feminist organisations faced extraordinary obstacles in attempting to provide a space for women's voices to be heard. Woman's Place UK (WPUK) have documented the challenges faced at each of their meetings, including bomb threats.²⁰ Dr Michael Biggs has further documented some of the tactics used, and the involvement of university students.²¹ Plans to reform GRA (2004) were

cardinal democratic freedom. In this country we have never had a Cheka, a Gestapo or a Stasi. We have never lived in an Orwellian society.”

<https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/miller-v-college-of-police-summary-1.pdf>

Further incidents have been reported in the press subsequent to and in spite of the Miller judgment. For example, Beale, J. (2024), *Police log hate incident for refusal to shake hands in gender row*, 22 November 2024, The Times. <https://www.thetimes.com/uk/crime/article/police-log-non-crime-hate-incident-refusal-shake-hands-6h7tzpf6d>;

Hymans, C. (2024), *Police drop 'terrifying' hate crime investigation into Maya Forstater*, 15 November 2024, The Telegraph.

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/11/15/police-drop-hate-crime-investigation-maya-forstater/>

¹⁵ For example: BBC (2023), *Maya Forstater: Woman gets payout for discrimination over trans tweets*, 1 July 2023. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-66076021>.

Other cases are summarised in Birchall, R. and Phoenix, J. (2024), *Don't get caught out: A Summary of Gender Critical Belief Discrimination Employment Tribunal Judgments*. <https://centaur.reading.ac.uk/118472/8/Dont%20Get%20Caught%20Out%20final%20%28002%29.pdf>

¹⁶ Lindsay, J. (2024), *Hounded: Women, harms and the gender wars*, Polity.

¹⁷ BBC News (2018), *Twitter 'bans women against trans ideology', say feminists*, 30 May 2018. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-44288431>

¹⁸ Kirkup, J. (2018), *Even our MPs are Afraid of the Transgender Mob*, 15 October 2018, The Spectator. <https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/even-our-mps-are-afraid-of-the-transgender-mob-15-october-2018>

¹⁹ UK Government (2018), *Government announces plans to reform process of changing legal gender*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-announces-plans-to-reform-process-of-changing-legal-gender>

²⁰ Woman's Place UK (2021) *A record of Woman's Place UK meetings*. <https://womansplaceuk.org/2021/10/27/record-womans-place-uk-meetings/>

²¹ Biggs, M. (2018), *Free speech at Oxford: Do women have the right to meet to discuss legislation?* <https://users.ox.ac.uk/~sfos0060/FreeSpeechOxford.pdf>

dropped in 2020,²² and the UK government blocked a Bill to bring in gender-self id in law in Scotland based on its expected impact on reserved matters.²³ In 2025, the Supreme Court in the case of *For Women Scotland vs The Scottish Ministers* ruled that the protected characteristic of sex in the Equality Act 2010 refers to biological sex²⁴. Nevertheless, gender self-id is still a matter of live and contested policy debate in a wide range of areas, including data collection, sports and single-sex services and provisions.

Barriers to research and discussion in the field of sex and gender have been extensively documented (Favaro, 2024; Singer et al., 2023; Suissa and Sullivan, 2021; Suissa and Sullivan, 2022).²⁵ Polling of UK academics on behalf of the Office for Students (OfS) has shown that, of those academics who do not feel free to discuss challenging or controversial topics in their teaching and research and in other contexts, sex and gender is the most common topic where academics feel restricted. The same research shows that female academics are substantially more likely to feel restricted than males (Yougov, 2025). The trend of attacks on scholars who accept that sex is a material reality or who challenge any tenet of gender-identity theory is international and originates in the US (Dreger, 2008; Hooven, 2023). The silencing tactics used became prominent in the confluence of cancel culture and identity politics observed in elite US universities, particularly from around 2014 (Haidt and Lukianoff, 2018; Lukianoff and Schlott, 2023).²⁶ Confidence in higher education in the US is highly politically polarised and has declined across the board.²⁷ It is now surely evident that a loss of public confidence in universities makes higher education vulnerable to political backlash, with severe consequences. The

²² UK Government (2020), *Written Ministerial Statement: Response to Gender Recognition Act (2004) consultation*, 22 September 2020. <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/response-to-gender-recognition-act-2004-consultation>

²³ Paun, A. and Allen, B. (2023), *The use of Section 35 of the Scotland Act to block the Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill*, Institute for Government. <https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/explainer/section-35-scotland-gender-recognition-bill>

²⁴ *For Women Scotland v The Scottish Ministers* (2025) https://supremecourt.uk/uploads/uksc_2024_0042_judgment_aea6c48cee.pdf

²⁵ Stock, K. (2019), *Are academics freely able to criticise the idea of 'gender identity' in UK Universities?*, Medium. This was removed from Medium following suspension of Kathleen Stock's account. An archived copy is available here: <https://web.archive.org/web/20230404215456/https://medium.com/@kathleenstock/are-academics-freely-able-to-criticise-the-idea-of-gender-identity-in-uk-universities-67b97c6e04be>

²⁶ 2014 has also been described as 'The year the philosophy profession went mad (at least on social media)'. See: Leiter, B. (2014), *Leiter Reports: A Philosophy Blog*. <https://leiterreports.typepad.com/blog/2014/12/2014-the-year-the-philosophy-profession-went-mad-at-least-on-social-media.html>

²⁷ Jones, J. (2024), *U.S. Confidence in Higher Education Now Closely Divided*, Gallup. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/646880/confidence-higher-education-closely-divided.aspx>

situation in the UK is not as extreme as in the US, but higher education policy makers would do well to study the lessons of the US experience. By 2015, some were calling on UK universities to ‘stand up to attempts at intimidation and affirm their support for the basic principles of democratic political exchange.’²⁸ Ten years later, the UK higher education sector has yet to grasp this nettle.

For some academics, the line between activism and research has been completely blurred, so that ‘research’ ceases to be a truth-seeking activity. As we will discuss below, some adherents of gender-identity theory also believe that disagreement can constitute violence towards people they see as having marginalised identities.

This conflict extends into resisting research into how this development is affecting universities, if this research is perceived to be from the ‘wrong’ perspective. The announcement of this review itself led to objections from some academics antagonistic to the gender-critical position. Some responses to the call for evidence questioned the legitimacy of this research.

Polling of undergraduates has shown that the proportion of students with illiberal views regarding free speech increased between 2016 and 2022.²⁹ When asked what rights students and staff should have to respond to an event they dislike, in 2022, 20% said they should be able to ‘stop the event from happening’ (up from 8% in 2016) and 12% said they should be able to ‘disrupt the event’ (up from 5% in 2016). Thirty-six percent of students agreed that academics should be fired if they ‘teach material that heavily offends some students’ (over double the 15% of students saying this in 2016). This increasing intolerance of the expression of diverse viewpoints poses challenges for universities, particularly in conjunction with a view of students as customers.

Threats to academic freedom and to science are not restricted to the question of sex and gender. While barriers to research on sex and gender are the subject of this review, many of the themes we discuss will have wider resonance. The case of sex and gender is remarkable in part because the view which some activists have sought to silence is the simple fact that humans come in two sexes, male and female, and that differences are real and biological and have meaningful consequences

²⁸ Multi-signatory letter (2015), *We cannot allow censorship and silencing of individuals*, 15 February 2015, The Observer.
https://www.theguardian.com/theobserver/2015/feb/14/letters-censorship?CMP=tw_tgu&utm_content=bufferfe266&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=buffer

²⁹ Hillman, N. (2022), *‘You can’t say that!’ What students really think of free speech on campus*. Higher Education Policy Institute, Policy Note 35.
<https://www.hepi.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/You-cant-say-that-What-students-really-think-of-free-speech-on-campus.pdf>

(Dawkins, 2025 ; Hilton and Wright, 2023). The main arguments that have been made against the acknowledgement of the reality of sex are: that 'sex is a spectrum', that sex is no more than a social construct, and that the sex binary is an imposition of European colonialism (Jones, 2023). Those who express these views have every right to do so, but should not expect to be insulated from disagreement.

When research is curtailed, there are serious social harms. If we are constrained from addressing issues of sex and gender in a clear-sighted way, the range of research potentially affected is huge. It is recognised that women have long been under-researched compared to men, leading to a data gap with real consequences for women's lives (Perez, 2019). Good policy development demands accurate data and rigorous research for all, including women and girls and people with trans and gender-diverse identities. When academics are frightened away from addressing particular topics or issues, vulnerable people suffer.³⁰

This introduction provides background and context. We draw on our own prior published research and experiences where appropriate.

Bullying and harassment

Bullying and harassment are actions which have the effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.³¹ The Khan Review into 'Threats to Social Cohesion and Democratic Resilience' (Khan, 2024) coined the term *freedom-restricting harassment* to describe a climate of threatening and intimidatory harassment leading to censorship and undermining democracy. Khan notes this is a problem across the professions, including academia. As Khan states regarding the academics she spoke to, 'In the cases we heard, the institutional response to threats and censorship was either entirely lacking or too slow to be of any real effect. Academics repeatedly reported feeling left on their own by their employers due to weak leadership, a lack of support from their institution and no knowledge of where to turn for support. Instead, they were often left to deal with the

³⁰ Chronic Fatigue Syndrome provides a different example of research affected by extremist activism purporting to represent the interests of a particular group.

See for example: McKie, R. (2011), *Chronic fatigue syndrome researchers face death threats from militants*, 21 August 2011, The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2011/aug/21/chronic-fatigue-syndrome-myalgic-encephalomyelitis>

³¹ Harassment is defined in the Equality Act 2010 as "unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic ... [that] has the purpose or effect of violating [a person's] dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for [that person]." It also includes "unwanted conduct of a sexual nature" that has that purpose or effect.

See: Equality Act 2010, Part 2, Chapter 2, Section 26.
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/26>

consequences of finding themselves being cancelled or harassed... In contrast, when leadership was demonstrated, it had a significant impact in reducing tensions and allowing academic debate to continue' (Khan, 2024; 58).

The concept of freedom-restricting harassment aptly describes the climate in which discussion of sex and gender has been curtailed in public life, in medicine, and in higher education and research.

Several respondents to this Review have suffered extreme personal consequences, both to their careers and to their physical and mental health, including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and extensive sick leave as a result of bullying, harassment and discrimination. The failure to adequately support and defend these individuals is a stain on the higher education sector.

The most widely reported example of victimisation in this field is that of philosopher Kathleen Stock,³² who was Professor of Philosophy at the University of Sussex until October 2021. Stock faced a long campaign of calls for her dismissal by activists, including students, academics and others, angered by her articulation of concerns about the conceptual assumptions behind the slogan 'Trans Women Are Women', and about the potential effects of allowing males to claim the status of women based on self-declaration (Stock, 2019; Stock, 2021; Stock, 2022; Stock, 2023). She has described the experience as three-and-a-half years of 'bullying, harassment and reputation trashing from colleagues'.³³ Stock received credible threats to her safety and was advised by police to avoid campus and to install CCTV at her home.

In January 2021, Stock was awarded an OBE in recognition of services to higher education. An international group of philosophy academics and students organised

³² See for example: Stock, S. (2021), *KATHLEEN STOCK reveals what it's really like to be vilified for your beliefs after being driven out of Sussex University by trans hate mob*, 6 November 2021, Mail on Sunday. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10172813/KATHLEEN-STOCK-reveals-really-like-vilified-beliefs.html>

Ball, T. (2021), *Inside the 'cloak and dagger' campaign against Kathleen Stock*, 16 October 2021, The Times. <https://www.thetimes.com/article/inside-the-cloak-and-dagger-campaign-against-kathleen-stock-6rcdpm855>; and

Turner, J. (2021), *The silent majority must stand up to student bullies*, 8 October 2021, The Times. <https://www.thetimes.com/article/the-silent-majority-must-stand-up-to-student-bullies-h6q8w0mxr>

³³ BBC Radio 4 (2021), *Woman's Hour*, 3 November 2021, BBC. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m001153q>

an open letter opposing the award,³⁴ stating that ‘Discourse like that Stock is producing and amplifying contributes to these harms, serving to restrict trans people’s access to life-saving medical treatments, encourage the harassment of gender-non-conforming people, and otherwise reinforce the patriarchal status quo. We are dismayed that the British government has chosen to honour her for this harmful rhetoric’,³⁵ (see also Appendix 1: 2021-1). A group of UK philosophers responded in support of Stock’s right to participate in open scholarly debate.³⁶

In 2021, activists plastered the entrance to Stock’s building on the Sussex University campus with posters denouncing her and stated on social media: ‘Our demand is simple; Fire Kathleen Stock. Until then, you’ll see us around’. This was accompanied by images of the activists in black balaclavas letting off flares.

The Sussex University and College Union (UCU) branch put out a ‘Statement in Support of Trans and Non-binary Communities at Sussex’ stating ‘Public discourses regularly devalue the lives of trans and nonbinary people, and appeals to both employment rights and academic freedom are often instrumentalised in this context’ (see also Appendix 1: 2021-10). The national UCU endorsed the Sussex branch’s statement.

Unable to continue to endure this treatment, Stock resigned in October 2021. She has provided detailed evidence, reported in the testimonies section of this document. The student ‘Stock Out’ campaign is documented on their Instagram page, and we reproduce this material in Appendix 3. This includes a statement announcing the campaign to remove Professor Stock from her post and a subsequent statement celebrating her removal, which stated ‘This has been a campaign to get Stock out of Sussex, for the sake of the safety and protection of trans and non-binary students. And it fucking worked’. We document these statements here in order to provide a record of the perspective, motivations and tactics of the students involved.

The Office for Students (OfS) announced an investigation ‘focused on whether or not the university has met its obligations for academic freedom and freedom of speech

³⁴ The signatories are described as ‘professional philosophers’ but did not provide information on their positions, and it has been suggested that most of them were students, including some undergraduates. Nevertheless, the lead signatories are academic staff.

See: Leiter, B. (2021), *Some sensible comments on the anti-Stock letter*, 8 January 2021. <https://leiterreports.typepad.com/blog/2021/01/some-sensible-comments-on-the-anti-stock-letter.html>

³⁵ *Open Letter Concerning Transphobia in Philosophy*, January 2021. <https://sites.google.com/view/trans-phil-letter/>

³⁶ *Open Letter of Solidarity with the University of Sussex from UK Philosophers*, 11 October 2021. <https://openlettertosussexfromukphilosophers.wordpress.com/>. Archived copy: <https://web.archive.org/web/20211204224531/https://openlettertosussexfromuklegalscholars.uk/>

within the law for all students and staff, whatever their views' in October 2021.³⁷ The OfS published its findings in March 2025.³⁸ The OfS investigation found the university's governing documents failed to uphold freedom of speech and academic freedom, and identified failings in the university's management and governance processes. A fine of £585,000 was imposed. The Vice Chancellor of the University of Sussex, Professor Sasha Roseneil, has issued a statement contesting the findings³⁹ and the University has issued a pre-action protocol for Judicial Review of the OfS decision. Writing about the case, Roseneil has stated that 'Freedom of speech cannot mean the ability to shout the loudest or to abuse and frighten less powerful opponents into silence'.⁴⁰ We strongly agree with this sentiment, yet in this context this statement suggests a strangely inverted view of the events which led to the University of Sussex being placed under investigation.

Another egregious example in the public domain is that of Professor Selina Todd, a historian at the University of Oxford. Selina Todd has faced an unremitting campaign of harassment and no-platforming. Credible threats to her safety forced the history faculty at the University of Oxford to provide security at her lectures.⁴¹

A third high profile case of victimisation is that of Jo Phoenix. We describe Phoenix's case alongside others in the section below on legal cases.

A fourth case is Professor Michele Moore, who has submitted to this review a detailed account of the decade of harassment she faced from within the health and higher education professions, culminating in her final university employer, London South Bank University, accepting that it had failed to protect her from sustained and targeted harassment related to her gender-critical views.

³⁷ See: Office for Students (2021), *Investigation into University of Sussex*, 16 November 2021, OFS. <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/news-blog-and-events/press-and-media/investigation-into-university-of-sussex/>

³⁸ OfS (2025) *Regulatory case report for University of Sussex: OfS decisions relating to breaches of conditions E1 and E2 and the imposition of monetary penalties* <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/regulatory-case-report-for-university-of-sussex/>

³⁹ Roseneil, R. (2025) *The Kafkaesque investigation into our university looks like political scapegoating* <https://www.politicshome.com/opinion/article/ofs-investigation-into-my-university-was-flawed-kathleen-stock>

⁴⁰ Roseneil, S. (2025) *OfS free-speech absolutism allows abuse, harassment, and bullying*. HEPI <https://www.hepi.ac.uk/2025/04/09/ofs-free-speech-absolutism-allows-abuse-harassment-and-bullying/>

⁴¹ BBC (2020), *Oxford professor given protection following threats from trans activists*, 25 January 2020. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-51248684>

We are not aware of any equivalent cases of sustained harassment of academics who oppose gender-critical views.

In such cases, the ‘cancellation’ of an individual can have consequences far beyond their immediate employment, as organisations and individuals they are associated with in any capacity may be targeted.

Gender-identity activists have engaged in documented co-ordinated campaigns against academics they disagree with, including campaigns of spurious complaints. For example, as reported in 2018, a lecturer at Goldsmiths co-ordinated a blacklist and ‘plotted to accuse non-compliant professors of hate crime to try to have them ousted from their jobs.’⁴²

Academics at Cardiff University who asked the university to review its membership of the Stonewall diversity champions scheme were subjected to a campaign of intimidation including violent threats.⁴³ A leaflet was distributed on campus picturing a woman holding a gun, alongside the names and pictures of the signatories. The leaflet is reproduced in Appendix 1: 2021-7. The Cardiff University LGBTQ+ society Facebook page hosted messages warning of violent repercussions for the academics.⁴⁴ This included a threat of kneecapping.⁴⁵ An open letter from staff and students stated that the letter asking for the university to review its Stonewall membership had ‘created an atmosphere of discomfort and fear among queer students and staff’.

Letters of denunciation are a common technique used as part of campaigns of harassment. We provide some examples of this prolific genre in Appendix 1,

⁴² Bannerman, L. (2018), *Trans Goldsmiths lecturer Natacha Kennedy behind smear campaign against academics*, 8 September 2018, The Times. <https://www.thetimes.com/uk/society/article/trans-goldsmiths-lecturer-natacha-kennedy-behind-smear-campaign-against-academics-f2zqbl222>

⁴³ *Open letter to the Cardiff University Vice-Chancellor, concerning the university's relationship with Stonewall*. <https://sites.google.com/view/cardiffopenletter/open-letter>

⁴⁴ These incidents are documented in detail in a letter from the Free Speech Union to Jeremy Myles MS, Minister for Education.

See: Free Speech Union (2020), *Letter to Jeremy Miles MS*, 22 February 2022. <https://freespeechunion.org/letter-to-minister-for-education-concerning-intimidation-campaign-against-cardiff-academics/>

See further coverage in the Times (2022), *Activists pursue academics who want university to cut Stonewall ties*, 20 February 2022. <https://www.thetimes.com/uk/society/article/activists-pursue-academics-who-want-university-to-cut-stonewall-ties-jk05lct25>

⁴⁵ Kneecapping is a punishment shooting associated with paramilitary groups during the troubles in Northern Ireland whereby the victim is shot in the knee.

including public open letters, emails circulated to mailing lists, and statements on organisational web pages. This is not intended to be an exhaustive archive but provides some indication of the nature of the phenomenon and the tropes employed, as well as revealing the patterns of which groups typically direct such activities and which groups and individuals are targeted. These letters are part of the ‘ganging up’ or mobbing directed at an individual or group.⁴⁶ In contrast to academic critique, they tend to rely on: 1/ ad hominem condemnation (attacking people rather than critiquing ideas); 2/ the use of slogans rather than reasoning (e.g. ‘Trans Women Are Women’); 3/ false, defamatory and hyperbolic smears (e.g. comparing people who believe that sex is binary to eugenicists, racists, colonialists, antisemites, fascists or ‘hate groups’, and employing accusations of bigotry and transphobia). These letters are often associated with demands to deny a platform or other resource to the denounced individual or group. As discussed below in the section on ‘Gender-identity theory and academic norms’, the techniques employed in these letters and statements are not in line with truth-seeking norms.

Examples of denunciatory open letters include a series of letters published attacking the Open University Gender Critical Research Network (OUGCRN). Two of these letters were organised by Open University colleagues, while another was published on the web page of the LSE Gender Studies department.⁴⁷

Open letters have been used to express disapproval of individuals, events, funding awards, and publications. LGBTQ+ networks in higher education are prominent among the organisers and distributors of these messages, yet lesbians and gay men are often the target. For a recent example, see communications from the University of Edinburgh Staff Pride Network objecting to the election of Simon Fanshawe as Rector of the university (Appendix 1: 2024-4). Fanshawe was a founder member of Stonewall but has subsequently criticised the organisation for its ‘intolerance of disagreement and discussion.’⁴⁸ Kathleen Stock has been a repeated target of open letters, five of the open letters and statements in Appendix 1 are directed at her either personally by name or by inference (Appendix 1: 2019-4; 2021-1; 2021-9; 2021-10; 2023-3). These include objections to her publications and speaking

⁴⁶ Pace, I. (2024), *Academic mobbing - what university management needs to know*, Sex Matters. <https://openaccess.city.ac.uk/id/eprint/33445/3/Ian-Pace-on-academic-mobbing.pdf>

⁴⁷ The Telegraph (2022), *Academics demand apology from LSE over 'hostile environment for gender-critical staff and students'*, 5 November 2022. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2022/11/05/academics-demand-apology-lse-hostile-environment-gender-critical/>

⁴⁸ Multi-signatory letter to the Editor (2019), *Gay People Losing Faith in Stonewall*, 22 September 2019, The Sunday Times. <https://www.thetimes.com/article/0d4b19f0-dc80-11e9-b3b4-45ac47bac696>

engagements, and to her being awarded an OBE, and expressions of solidarity with student protestors against her.

Gender-identity theory and academic norms

In 'The Constitution of Knowledge', Jonathan Rauch outlines the norms which are essential for the functioning of a 'reality-based community' which strives towards truth (Rauch, 2021). The reality-based community is not just made up of scientists and scholars, but also lawyers, journalists, and anyone who relies on evidence and sound argumentation. To be reality-based, claims must be checkable and stand up to checking against evidence. Truth claims are not reality-based if they depend on the individual or group identity of those making the claim. A threat to the norms of the reality-based community is a threat to democracy.

These reality-based norms can be contrasted with the norms of propaganda and disinformation. Propaganda may use evidence if it is convenient, but it will also use fabrication, fearmongering, demonization, guilt by association and moral blackmail. A propagandist meets the claims of opponents, not with evidence, but with assertions of the inverse of each claim – essentially 'no, you are'. As Rauch points out, this technique may sound childish, but can succeed in sowing confusion.⁴⁹ For a propagandist, the ends justify the means, and truth-seeking norms are irrelevant.

Gender-identity theory is aligned with postmodernism and poststructuralism, and takes a radically socially constructivist view of sex categories – in other words, the sexes are not treated as real biological categories, but instead are viewed as changeable creations of society, language and law. Postmodernism generally rejects the enlightenment emphasis on reason and science, and the modern scientific view of how reliable knowledge is generated. In this worldview, 'scientific demonstration is basically only a ritual' (Foucault, 2008). For postmodernists, truth-seeking norms are only a form of rhetoric.

There is no suggestion that all postmodernists or all adherents to gender-identity theory adopt aggressive forms of activism. However, when postmodernism is combined with aggressive activism, it poses a threat to truth-seeking norms.

Because some aspects of gender-identity theory lie outside of truth-seeking norms, its adherents can characterise academic norms as simple exercises of power, and

⁴⁹ 'Donald Trump's famous retort to Hilary Clinton in a 2016 debate – "No puppet, no puppet, you're the puppet" – may have sounded infantile, but it was part of a strategy to ensure that every statement was mirrored by its opposite, that every truth was met not just with its denial but with inversion.' (Rauch 2021, p. 167).

therefore illegitimate. These norms include pluralism, dialogue and critical engagement as well as hypothesis testing and engagement with evidence.

Gender-identity advocates aim to disrupt binaries, which they see as inherently oppressive. The naming of sex categories is seen as creating, rather than describing, the sexes. The most influential advocate of gender-identity theory, Professor Judith Butler, states: 'The "naming" of sex is an act of domination and compulsion, an institutionalised performative that both creates and legislates social reality by requiring the discursive/ perceptual construction of bodies in accord with principles of sexual difference' (Butler, 1990) p157.

Within this worldview, the concept of 'violence' is flexible, not restricted to physical acts, and simply using sex categories can be characterised as 'violent' (Lloyd, 2013). In turn, aggressive tactics are considered a justified means to the end of imposing a perspective which its adherents believe is righteous and beyond challenge. Again, this is not to say that all academics who subscribe to gender-identity theory engage in these tactics, but these tactics have been legitimised within the field.

Claims that the existence of people with ordinary mainstream views about the reality of sex are a threat, and that extreme reactions are therefore justified, have been normalised within the field of gender studies. For example, this is illustrated by the acceptance of the description of a violent fantasy of holding a knife to the throats of gender-critical feminists as coursework for the MSc in Gender (Sexuality) at the London School of Economics (LSE).⁵⁰

The use of ad hominem and outright smears directed at gender-critical feminists has become a feature of some academic work in gender studies (Burt, 2023). Vilification in turn allows some academics to justify arguing for the silencing of gender-critical views. One publication claimed that universities should not host gender-critical events, because if they did, 'distress would be felt in the contamination of a part of the university which holds a particular emotional value to

⁵⁰ The paper concluded: 'If TERFs think trans* is an endemic threat to feminism, let us be the threat to feminism... Picture this: I hold a knife to your throat and spit my transness into your ear. Does that turn you on? Are you scared? I sure fucking hope so.'

Quoted in: Biggs, M. (2021), "*Watch me take a knife to your throat*", 8 August 2021, The Critic. <https://thecritic.co.uk/watch-me-take-a-knife-to-your-throat/>

certain staff and students' and the 'hosting of an unwanted event would contaminate student life for hundreds if not thousands of people'.⁵¹

The idea that gender-critical views represent 'complicity with systemic violence' and 'It is not permissible to debate the lives of people who are oppressed and murdered' has been used to justify silencing tactics.⁵²

The use of abusive language such as the term 'TERF' is used not just in activist materials but also in academic journals.⁵³ 'TERF' is a pejorative, and is associated with violent images and threats, typically directed at women.⁵⁴

Another feature of the rejection of scholarly norms is the refusal to engage directly with and to quote and cite the words of gender-critical writers. Sara Ahmed states that she has a citation policy of not naming gender-critical authors: 'I am not citing individual authors by name as I have no wish to enter into a dialogue with "gender critical" feminists'.⁵⁵ One philosopher who characterises gender-critical scholars as 'trans-exclusionary activists' has stated that 'As a matter of deliberate policy (see

⁵¹ Renton, D. Murray, D. and Jones, E. (2022), *A new report on universities legal obligations regarding trans inclusion and freedom of expression*, University of Essex.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20221207110643/https://hrcessex.wordpress.com/2022/12/07/a-new-report-on-universities-legal-obligations-regarding-trans-inclusion-and-freedom-of-expression/>

See also: Groves, J. (2022), 'Contamination' risk justifies banning gender critical speakers – report, 9 December 2022, Times Higher Education.

<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/contamination-risk-justifies-banning-gender-critical-speakers-report>

⁵² Lance, M. (2019), *Taking Trans Lives Seriously*, 29 July 2019, Inside Higher Ed.

<https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2019/07/30/philosophers-should-recognize-serious-risks-trans-people-face-opinion>

⁵³ Allen, S. et. al. (2018), *Derogatory Language in Philosophy Journal Risks Increased Hostility and Diminished Discussion* (guest post), Daily Nous.

<https://dailynous.com/2018/08/27/derogatory-language-philosophy-journal-hostility-discussion/>

⁵⁴ The term TERF is an acronym for 'trans-exclusionary radical feminist'. It has been described in the High Court by Mr Justice Julian Knowles as 'a derogatory term used by those who seek to de-platform those who hold different views'. See: *Miller vs College of Policing* <https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/miller-v-college-of-police-judgment.pdf>

Gender-identity advocates who use the term sometimes defend it as purely descriptive. However, it is applied commonly to people who are not radical feminists, and clearly functions as a slur, as explained by linguist Deborah Cameron. See: Cameron, D. (2016), *What makes a word a slur?*

<https://debuk.wordpress.com/2016/11/06/what-makes-a-word-a-slur/>

Examples of the use of the term accompanied by violent imagery and threats have been collated at the website *Terf is a Slur*. See: <https://terfisaslur.com/>

⁵⁵ See Ahmed, S. (2021), *Gender Critical = Gender Conservative*, 31 October 2021.

https://feministkilljoys.com/2021/10/31/gender-critical-gender-conservative/#_edn3

And: Ahmed, S. (2021), *Killjoy Commitments*, 4 January 2021.

<https://feministkilljoys.com/2021/01/04/killjoy-commitments/>

1.10, paragraph 4), and partly to make legal vexatiousness less likely (see 1.18), in this book I don't name *any* trans-exclusionary activists, as such'. The section referred to (1.10, paragraph 4) justifies failing to reference gender-critical work on the grounds that 'this sort of talk deserves obscurity rather than amplification'.⁵⁶ Failure to use standard citation practices means that the claims an author makes are uncheckable – failure to cite avoids accountability for false and even actionable claims.⁵⁷

Comments such as the above reveal apparent confusion over the relationship between academic freedom, freedom of expression and defamation. As discussed below, there is specific statutory protection for the freedom of academic staff to 'question and test received wisdom, and to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions' in the Education Reform Act 1988. Those working and studying in higher education also have the right to freedom of expression, as provided for under the Human Rights Act 1998. However, neither of these remove academics or students from liability for defamation, that is, statements which cause serious harm to the reputation of identifiable individuals, which can only be defended if they meet certain tests set out in statute.⁵⁸

The perspective that gender-critical views are akin to fascism,⁵⁹ and that gender-critical academics are dangerous to and even want to kill trans people is routinely expressed in certain academic settings. It is perhaps unsurprising that some vulnerable students believe these claims and are distressed by them.

⁵⁶ Chappell, S.G. (2024), *Trans Figured: On being a transgender person in a cisgender world*, Polity.

⁵⁷ Joyce, H. (2024), *Joyce activated*, issue 98, 29 November 2024.

<https://www.thehelenjoyce.com/joyce-activated-issue-98/>

⁵⁸ In England and Wales, a statement is defamatory 'its publication has caused or is likely to cause serious harm to the reputation of the claimant'. See: Defamation Act 2013, Section 1.

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2013/26/section/1>

In Scotland, 'a statement about a person is defamatory if it causes harm to the person's reputation (that is, if it tends to lower the person's reputation in the estimation of ordinary persons)'. See: Defamation and Malicious Publication (Scotland) Act 2021, Part 1.

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2021/10/part/1>

Defences against defamation in both jurisdictions include truth, honest opinion, and public interest (all subject to further tests broadly aimed at assessing the reasonableness of their use). Peer-reviewed publication of a statement that relates to a scientific or academic matter in a scientific or academic journal is also a defence, subject to absence of malice. In Scotland, this defence is provided in the form of qualified privilege.

⁵⁹ The prominent gender-identity philosopher Judith Butler has stated that gender-critical feminists (who they refer to pejoratively as 'TERFS' are 'in a position of woeful complicity with the key aims of the new fascism'. See: Butler, J. (2024), *Who's Afraid of Gender*, Farrar, Strauss and Giroux.

A ‘trans inclusivity seminar series’ held at UCL in 2024 illustrates this point. We quote from two of these seminars at length because they provide an insight into the world of gender-identity academia. We certainly do not intend to single-out UCL, which has recorded and shared these seminars with admirable transparency.⁶⁰ Speakers are quoted verbatim using the seminar recordings and automatically generated transcripts in YouTube.

This seminar series was advertised as celebrating trans-inclusivity with UCL’s own academics along with invited external speakers. The series was funded by UCL’s LGBTQ+ Equality Implementation Group (LEIG), which reports to the UCL EDI committee. It was organised by a faculty ‘LGBTQ+ equity lead’. This member of staff introduced the first seminar in the series with a statement that one of the first duties of their role was to address ‘the widespread horrific and harmfully misleading narratives about the trans community’. Further introductory remarks were provided by a UCU representative who expressed disappointment that UCL had left Stonewall⁶¹ and stated that ‘I think this seminar series can invigorate us to campaign to rejoin Stonewall’. He went on to claim that, since the UCL Academic Board vote to leave Stonewall which was ‘motivated by the gender-critical ideology’ there had been ‘incidents of trans hate across UCL’ including gender-critical stickers being found with razor blades underneath them. Describing themselves as a health and safety rep, this speaker advised listeners not to use their fingers to peel these stickers off. This libel regarding gender-critical stickers and razor blades is a standard gender-identity conspiracy theory, and no such incident has ever been documented in reality, either at UCL or elsewhere.⁶² Despite senior staff being present and providing further introductory welcoming remarks, no-one challenged this false claim.

⁶⁰ Discriminatory discourse has been noted by observers at events promoting gender-identity theory at other universities. A further example of such an event was provided in evidence to an employment tribunal held in Edinburgh in February 2024, which was told that an invited speaker at an event co-hosted by the staff Pride Network at Edinburgh University “told an audience that the “best way” to get staff to support trans inclusion policies was to “fire them”. Nicole Jones, a former student, told the hearing that the word “transphobes” was used in a “disparaging way”, adding: “She was asked what’s the best way to get staff on board with inclusion policies and she responded bluntly, ‘Fire them.’”

See: The Times, (2024), *Rape crisis centre run by trans woman ‘hid sex of its counsellors*, 4 April 2024.

<https://www.thetimes.com/uk/scotland/article/rape-crisis-centre-run-by-trans-woman-hid-sex-of-its-counsellors-x0q9xnf2>

⁶¹UCL’s Academic Board voted to disengage from Stonewall’s schemes in December 2021.

See: Sullivan, A. (2022), *Why UCL are shutting the door on Stonewall*, 2 February 2022, The Critic. <https://thecritic.co.uk/why-ucl-are-shutting-the-door-on-stonewall/>

⁶² This urban myth appears designed to echo 1970s reports that far-right groups placed razors behind posters or stickers.

Professor Deborah Shaw's presentation described Kathleen Stock as engaging in 'predatory transphobic fantasies', claiming that she was a 'totemic figure for a trans hostile media' and that her case was used to spread misinformation about and attack trans people and universities. The speaker went on to approvingly quote Sara Ahmed:

*'There cannot be a dialogue when some at the table are in effect or intent arguing for the elimination of others at the table. When you have "dialogue or debate" with those who wish to eliminate you from the conversation (because they do not recognise what is necessary for your survival or because they don't even think your existence is possible), then "dialogue and debate" becomes another technique of elimination. A refusal to have some dialogues and some debates can thus be a key tactic for survival.'*⁶³

Ahmed wrote the above in response to a 2015 letter to the Observer, which called on universities 'to stand up to attempts at intimidation and affirm their support for the basic principles of democratic political exchange'.⁶⁴

In the question-and-answer section of the seminar, the speaker stated that she believed gender-critical views were inherently transphobic, though she claimed to be careful what she said about this due to 'tribunal cases'. Shaw went on to compare gender-critical academics to eugenicists, and said she could not work with them. She was clear that there could be no dialogue with gender-critical academics. Responding to a question which referenced the Northern Ireland peace process, Shaw stated she would not even have 'talks about talks' with gender-critical

⁶³ Ahmed, S. (2015), *You are oppressing us!*, 15 February 2015.
<https://feministkilljoys.com/2015/02/15/you-are-oppressing-us/>

⁶⁴ The letter included the following statement: "No platforming" used to be a tactic used against self-proclaimed fascists and Holocaust-deniers. But today it is being used to prevent the expression of feminist arguments critical of the sex industry and of some demands made by trans activists. The feminists who hold these views have never advocated or engaged in violence against any group of people. Yet it is argued that the mere presence of anyone said to hold those views is a threat to a protected minority group's safety. You do not have to agree with the views that are being silenced to find these tactics illiberal and undemocratic. Universities have a particular responsibility to resist this kind of bullying. We call on universities and other organisations to stand up to attempts at intimidation and affirm their support for the basic principles of democratic political exchange'.

See: Multi-signatory letter to The Observer (2015), *We cannot allow censorship and silencing of individuals*, 15 February 2015, The Observer.
https://www.theguardian.com/theobserver/2015/feb/14/letters-censorship?CMP=tw_tgu&utm_content=bufferfe266&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=buffer

colleagues but would engage with students who had said ‘some very transphobic things’.

A subsequent seminar in the same series featured an introduction by a student who attacked the 2023 UCL Education for Women’s Liberation conference.⁶⁵

“And here we are, convened on a campus steeped in a disquieting legacy of Francis Galton’s eugenicist exemption. We’re in halls that just a year earlier played host to a TERF assembly, a symposium steeped in hatred and resentment ... Our quest for trans liberation cannot be an insular endeavour. It must be intertwined with the broader struggle for the self-determination of Palestinian people against the yoke of settler colonialism and indeed the sure goal for liberation of all those trampled beneath the boot of oppression. Until the chains are broken and liberation is achieved, we march on”.

The seminar speaker, Dr Natacha Kennedy, claimed that gender-critical views are a pretext for hatred and even murder:

“They can’t just say we hate trans people, we should ban them and kill them or whatever. They need to have a justification for that. They cannot express it, so they have, so the pretext is therefore a veneer of excuses or alibis to cover the real meaning of what they really believe.”

A plea for nuance during the Q&A was dismissed by the speaker:

“I have to say I don’t perceive of any nuance. Yeah. Now I don’t see any difference between academic, feminist, gender-critical activists and the far right. They are both trying to take my rights away. They are both, in my view, violent. Maybe some are proxy violent rather than actual violent, but I think there isn’t, again, from my point of view, there is no nuance. I don’t see the debate. There isn’t a debate... And this is for me, this is just fascism. There is certainly no difference between this and the sort of shouty street fascism”.

A subsequent question asked why Kennedy had made strong claims about the views of gender-critical feminists without citation to back up these claims:

“So in your subtitle, you promised an analysis of the strategies deployed by those opposed to trans people’s human rights and indeed our existence. Now that, it’s a little bit strange, I mean, every gender-

⁶⁵ UCL (2023), *Education for Women’s Liberation conference, 4 February 2023*.
<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/ioe/events/2023/feb/education-womens-liberation>

critical feminist that I've heard of not only accepts trans people's existence, it would be pretty hard to deny it, but also stresses that trans people have the right to live their lives as they wish and to be fully protected by law from violence, discrimination and harassment."

The questioner was faced with attempts to shout them down by other audience members, with no intervention from the chair, but managed to ask for evidence: "You've made a lot of attributions to gender-critical feminists, but you haven't cited the words of a single one". The speaker's reply was "I'm not going to cite a single one because ... I would likely be sued". This response appears to make little sense in the context of a question about providing quotations to demonstrate that gender-critical academics have actually said what the speaker claims they have said. There is no risk of legal liability for accurately quoting an author's work.

The discourse illustrated by these seminars promotes fear and fragility in its audience, suggesting both that disagreement constitutes violence, and that people with gender-critical views pose a threat of actual violence. It also promotes the view that gender-critical views are inherently transphobic,⁶⁶ and that there should be no discussion or dialogue with people with gender-critical views. The paranoid rhetoric deployed is far outside the experience of a normal academic seminar.

It is notable that these seminars enjoyed institutional support from staff in EDI roles. These seminars could be seen as promoting a hostile and intimidatory environment for gender-critical staff and students at UCL, but despite this there were no calls from gender-critical staff or students to prevent these events from going ahead, no demonstrations against them, and no disruption or attempts at disruption. These events illustrate two important asymmetries. First, events supporting gender-identity theory enjoy both practical and symbolic institutional support, and are seen as part of the EDI programme, whereas events platforming gender-critical speakers do not typically garner equivalent support and are not seen as a part of the EDI programme. Second, whereas supporters of gender-identity theory frequently disrupt, protest and try to no-platform events platforming gender-critical speakers, supporters of gender-critical views have not used these tactics against events in support of gender-identity theory, regardless of how extreme the views expressed at these events may be.

Management, bureaucracy and the expansion of 'Equality, Diversity and Inclusion'

Bureaucratic growth in higher education, implying an increase in the proportion of staff in senior management and senior administrative roles, relative to teaching and

⁶⁶ Contrary to legal judgments, including the Forstater judgment and the Phoenix judgment.

research staff, is an international trend alongside the expansion of higher education. There has also been a decline in the proportion of traditional academic permanent contracts, a growth of teaching and research staff on insecure contracts; and increased centralisation of professional services, thereby moving functions out of academic departments where the core business of the university, teaching and research, occurs (Wolf and Jenkins, 2021).

Bureaucratic growth and centralisation, and the decline of secure academic jobs, have been accompanied by a decline in the power and autonomy of academics within their institutions (Ginsberg, 2011). The decline in academic autonomy and increase in administrative control extends across all areas of academic life, from the curriculum, to research ethics, to staff recruitment and promotions, to university policies, and to events. The decline of democratic academic governance means that, in most universities, the majority of academics engaged in teaching and research have little say or voice in how their universities are run.

The growth of bureaucracy across the research system is the subject of the Tickell Review, which notes that bureaucratic growth ‘has been described as the accumulation of everyone’s good ideas. Bureaucracy is not introduced with the intent of stifling innovation; rather, it is typically a response to an emerging need or challenge that results in new items being added to an already long list of rules, regulations, and processes. Researchers have no ability to reject additional bureaucracy nor are there routine reviews of the individual or cumulative burdens placed on them’.⁶⁷

The intensification of management of research activities has been attributed in part to the Research Excellence Framework (REF) and its predecessors, the demands of which have become more burdensome and intrusive over time (Martin-Sardesai et al., 2017). The Research Excellence Framework (REF) is the mechanism by which UKRI (UK Research and Innovation) allocates around £2 billion a year in research funding to academic institutions via a block grant known as ‘Quality-related Research’ (QR) funding. Current proposals would expand the scope of the REF to include ‘People, Culture and Environment’ (PCE), thus weakening the link between research excellence and funding (Gandy, 2024). PCE has a heavy emphasis on EDI and could be seen as an attempt to rebrand EDI activities under a new banner. Emphasising EDI within the REF is likely to create a further incentive to remain affiliated with external schemes such as Stonewall and Athena Swan and to invest in EDI departments, networks and roles, even where there is no robust evidence of a

⁶⁷ Tickell, A. (2022), *Independent Review of Research Bureaucracy*, 22 March 2021, last updated 9 February 2024, UK Government.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-research-bureaucracy> (p.17).

net benefit to universities from these activities, and even where these activities create barriers to scholarship and encourage uncollegial and even unlawful behaviour. Proposed indicators include ‘evidence of external standards and improvement mechanisms in decision making and strategic initiatives’, with Athena Swan provided as an example.⁶⁸ The REF proposals have met with criticism on both efficiency and academic freedom grounds. Including academic freedom as a vital part of PCE has been suggested as a mitigation.⁶⁹ However, this mitigation has been rejected by Research England. The basis for this decision is unclear as Research England have not shared the results of their 2024 consultation on pilot PCE indicators. Criticism of the REF as bureaucratic and unaffordable have led some to suggest scrapping the exercise.⁷⁰

The increase in centralised, top-down control in higher education is a vital part of the background to understanding barriers to research in any area, including in the case of sex and gender. As well as reducing academic autonomy in general, committees and administrative roles can disproportionately attract activists who see an opportunity to reshape the university, hamper activities which they disapprove of, and promote those with which they are aligned (Lowrey, 2021). Many academics recognise that equality, diversity and inclusion are complex and contested concepts, yet the university administration has a tendency to impose a monolithic view. Concerns about misguided EDI agendas have also been raised with regard to the NHS.⁷¹

⁶⁸ PCE Pilot Exercise – Assessment framework (2025)

<https://web.archive.org/web/20250214090610/https://2029.ref.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/PCE-Pilot-Exercise-Assessment-framework.pdf>

⁶⁹ London Universities’ Council for Academic Freedom (2023), *Consultation Response: Assessment of people, culture and environment in REF 2028*.

<https://lucaf.org/viewdocument.php?id=1>

⁷⁰ Dalmia, S. and Carr, R. (2024), *Replacing the Research Excellence Framework*, 8 October 2024, UKDayOne.

<https://ukdayone.org/briefings/replacing-the-research-excellence-framework>

⁷¹ Donnelly, L. (2025), *Wes Streeting attacks NHS over diversity schemes*, 4 February 2025, The Telegraph.

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2025/02/04/stop-promoting-anti-whiteness-wes-streeting-tells-nhs/#:~:text=NHS%20staff%20boasted%20of%20their,were%20setting%20back%20its%20cause>

See also: Murray Blackburn Mackenzie (2024), *The NHS Fife case: what do we know about how decisions have been made?*, 15 October 2024.

<https://murrayblackburnmackenzie.org/2024/10/15/the-nhs-fife-case-what-do-we-know-about-how-decisions-have-been-made/>

'Equality, Diversity and Inclusion' (EDI) has been a particular growth area for universities,⁷² but information on the change in staff numbers and spending on this function in higher education over time is not readily available.⁷³

EDI expansion is a policy borrowed from the US (where EDI is known as DEI – Diversity, Equity and Inclusion). Scepticism regarding the value of DEI is not restricted to the political right, and those who oppose unlawful discrimination may reasonably object to some current DEI/EDI practices. In the US, investments in DEI have been enormous, yet have not necessarily yielded positive returns. According to an investigation reported in the New York Times, the University of Michigan spent a quarter of a billion dollars on DEI from 2016-2024. Yet the investigation suggests that this investment has had perverse effects, leading to a backlash. 'Michigan's own data suggests that in striving to become more diverse and equitable, the school has also become less inclusive: In a survey released in late 2022, students and faculty members reported a less positive campus climate than at the program's start and less of a sense of belonging. Students were less likely to interact with people of a different race or religion or with different politics — the exact kind of engagement D.E.I. programs, in theory, are meant to foster'.⁷⁴

In the UK, EDI activities, networks and policies have often exacerbated the discrimination and harassment described in this report. The UK has a

⁷² The direct costs of employment of EDI staff for some universities have been documented. See: Alumni for Free Speech, *Leading universities spend 214 times more on diversity staff than on free speech protection staff, according to our Freedom of Information data*, AFFS. <https://affs.uk/edi-free-speech-universities>

The AFFS exercise obtained a figure of £17.9m spent annually on dedicated EDI posts and £1.6m on external resources from the 47 institutions able to provide figures. This translated into 515 posts in total. The total cost to the sector, including the cost of staff time for staff not directly employed in EDI roles, has never been estimated, to the best of our knowledge.

⁷³ More generally, between 2014-15 and 2022-23, HESA headcount data shows much higher growth in staff allocated to 'central administration & services and student facilities' (+48%, to 2,650 in total) and academic services (+71%, to 1,825 in total) than in academic staff (+21%).

See: HESA *Table 21 - HE academic staff by cost centre and age group 2014/15 to 2022/23*. <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/staff/table-21>

Taking the figures obtained by AFFS noted above, this suggests EDI roles are the equivalent of around 12% of all staff reported as central admin or academic support, although the published information does not show which categories HEIs will have used to record staff employed in specialist EDI roles.

⁷⁴ Confessore, N. (2024), *The University of Michigan Doubled Down on D.E.I. What Went Wrong?*, 16 October 2024, New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/10/16/magazine/dei-university-michigan.html#:~:text=Michigan's%20own%20data%20suggests%20that,of%20a%20sense%20of%20belonging>

disproportionately large Human Resources (HR) sector,⁷⁵ and the failures of performative and partisan EDI work extend beyond academia (Fanshawe and Gosling, 2024). Performative EDI includes flying the ‘progress pride flag’, distributing rainbow lanyards to staff, displaying pronouns and engaging in pronoun circles,⁷⁶ and celebrating LGBTQ+ awareness, remembrance and visibility days, weeks and months.⁷⁷ Organisations do not necessarily recognise that these performative measures are part of a contested political campaign.

A recent report argues that approaches to EDI need to recognise that the public value certain institutions, including universities, as places where debate is fostered, and these will ‘better command public confidence by enabling opportunities for discussion and fostering understanding, not closing down debate.’⁷⁸ This report found strong opposition to the no-platforming of discussion of gender-critical views,⁷⁹ and suggested that the public do not support universities promoting contentious viewpoints including what the authors frame as ‘actively promoting trans rights’. The report further noted that ‘the public do not believe that work on EDI should detract from institutions’ core missions’.

⁷⁵ Dow, P. (2024), *HR Britain: how human resources captured the nation*, 27 November 2024, New Statesman.

<https://www.newstatesman.com/business/2024/11/hr-britain-how-human-resources-captured-the-nation>

⁷⁶ The practice of asking individuals to share their pronouns as part of a round of introductions in a group context such as a class.

⁷⁷ The LGBTQ+ calendar covers around 90 days a year. See for example: LGBT Youth Scotland, *LGBTQ Cultural Calendar 2024*.

<https://lgbtyouth.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/CULTURAL-CALENDAR-3.pdf>.

NHS England promotes 31 LGBT+ awareness days, which is ‘significantly more than any other topic or area, followed by cancer, which has almost half the awareness events noted at just 16.’ See: Searles, M. (2024) *From gender-fluid appreciation to trans parents day: the NHS calendar of ‘awareness’ 2025*, 21 December 2024, The Telegraph.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20241221113210/https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/12/21/gender-fluid-appreciation-trans-parents-day-nhs-calendar/>

⁷⁸ Stears, M. et al (2024), *Finding a Balance How to ensure Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is for everyone*, 23 March 2024, More in Common.

<https://www.moreincommon.org.uk/our-work/research/finding-a-balance/>

⁷⁹ The research measured the net acceptability (net responding acceptable minus unacceptable) of preventing someone from participating in a meeting on eight topics (shown in Figure 24, *ibid*). On three topics, there was net acceptability, with the strongest support (+40%) for ‘someone who incites racial hatred’. The remaining five topics all scored between -40% and -50% net unacceptable for preventing a speaker from participating, including “someone who argues that trans women shouldn’t be able to take part in women-only sports” (-40%).

The tendency of EDI policies and activities to promote highly contentious theories such as gender-identity theory⁸⁰ and critical race theory as unchallengeable fact is in particularly clear conflict with the purpose of universities, which is the pursuit of truth. One stark illustration is the 'Expect Respect' training module at the University of Kent, which asked 'True or False: Sex is, in fact, a diverse, multi-expressive form of identity, and a full spectrum.'⁸¹

Some universities have made public statements endorsing gender-identity views. In 2020, Queen Mary University of London (QMUL) made the following statement on its website:⁸²

'We recognise that trans women are women, trans men are men and non-binary people exist; arguing otherwise denies trans people's identities and causes significant harm to an already marginalised community... We also support and welcome reform of the Gender Recognition Act (2004) which would enable a less intrusive and more supportive process for legal gender change in the UK; additionally, we support improving healthcare provision for trans people, without which our trans staff and students are significantly disadvantaged.'

The University of the Arts London (UAL) made a similar statement:⁸³

'You may have seen media reports which reference leaked plans from the Government Equalities Office which would slow progress on trans rights in the UK and are rumoured to include regressive action which would further marginalise trans people in our society... We will also be adding UAL's voice to the Stonewall campaign to lobby government not to go ahead with their damaging and backward-looking plans. We will always stand up for the rights of the members of our community who identify as trans and non-binary. Transgender women are women,

⁸⁰ Biggs, M. (2018), *How Queer Theory Became University Policy*, Uncommon Ground. <https://uncommongroundmedia.com/how-queer-theory-became-university-policy/>

⁸¹ Sokal, A. (2021), *Catechism class at British universities*, 26 October 2021, Areo Magazine. https://physics.nyu.edu/faculty/sokal/catechism_class.pdf

⁸² Queen Mary University of London, *Queen Mary makes statement of support for trans and gender diverse staff and students*, 25 August 2020. <https://web.archive.org/web/20200826182138/https://www.qmul.ac.uk/media/news/2020/pr/queen-mary-makes-statement-of-support-for-trans-and-gender-diverse-staff-and-students-.html>

⁸³ University of the Arts London (2020), *Our ongoing support for trans and non-binary staff and students*, 23 June 2020. <https://www.arts.ac.uk/about-ual/press-office/stories/our-ongoing-support-for-trans-and-non-binary-staff-and-students>

transgender men are men, and non-binary identities are valid and recognised.’

Stonewall was established as an advocacy group for gay, lesbian and bisexual rights, but took on the trans and gender self-identification cause in 2015, and thereafter this became its primary focus. Stonewall’s ‘no debate’ line on gender self-id has led to criticism, including from former supporters and even founders of the organisation.⁸⁴ Freedom of Information (FOI) requests have revealed that membership of Stonewall workplace rankings has incentivised universities to adopt policies and practices in line with gender-identity theory,⁸⁵ and it has been argued that this leads to an emphasis on trans issues to the detriment of all other protected characteristics and potentially leading to unlawful discrimination.⁸⁶ Stonewall membership is used to promote activism within the workplace.⁸⁷

Stonewall-endorsed workplace activism has included marking Trans Day of Remembrance (TDOR),⁸⁸ which promotes misleading narratives about the risk of murder for trans people, which in the UK is very low.⁸⁹ One may question what purpose it serves to encourage trans students and staff to believe that they are

⁸⁴ The Times (2019), ‘Anti-women’ trans policy may split Stonewall, 22 September 2019.

<https://www.thetimes.com/article/anti-women-trans-policy-may-split-stonewall-wfv2rp5cx?msocid=3642201b50736d053052327a51b86c3b>

The Guardian (2021), *Stonewall is at centre of a toxic debate on trans rights and gender identity*, 5 June 2020.

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/jun/05/stonewall-trans-debate-toxic-gender-identity>

⁸⁵ Forstater, M. (2022), *The secrecy of Stonewall is finally breaking down*, 4 July 2022, UnHerd.

<https://unherd.com/newsroom/the-secrecy-of-stonewall-is-finally-breaking-down/>

⁸⁶ Cunningham, N. (2021), *SUBMISSION AND COMPLIANCE: risks for Stonewall Champions*, 1 February 2021, Legal Feminist.

<https://www.legalfeminist.org.uk/2021/02/01/submission-and-compliance/>

⁸⁷ For example, King’s College London ‘Welcome to Equality, Diversity & Inclusion and Wellbeing at King’s’, stated: ‘That includes us, as a part of the Stonewall Diversity Champions programme, where we work in partnership to empower LGBTQ+ people and their allies to step up as leaders, role models, and activists in our workplace.’

<https://web.archive.org/web/20241203063308/https://www.kcl.ac.uk/professional-services/diversity>

⁸⁸ Stock, K. (2024), *Stonewall and the Search for Meaning*, UnHerd.

<https://unherd.com/2024/11/stonewall-and-the-search-for-meaning/>

⁸⁹ Sullivan, A. (2023), *What the Census reveals about trans people in Britain*, 29 January 2023, The Spectator.

<https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/what-the-census-reveals-about-trans-people-in-britain/>

See also: Channel 4 (2018), *Factcheck: How many trans people are murdered in the UK?*

<https://www.channel4.com/news/factcheck/factcheck-how-many-trans-people-murdered-uk>

especially vulnerable to violence and murder.⁹⁰ Emotive and hyperbolic messaging regarding such issues is unlikely to promote good relations or civil discourse.

Employers in the UK have a duty to uphold the 2010 Equality Act (EA2010). EA2010 prohibits discrimination and harassment according to nine protected characteristics: age; gender reassignment; marriage or civil partnership status; pregnancy and maternity; disability; race; religion or belief; sex and sexual orientation. Sexual orientation is defined in terms of orientation towards the same sex, opposite sex, or both sexes – i.e. being homosexual, heterosexual or bisexual. Gender reassignment is a distinct protected characteristic. There is no hierarchy of characteristics in EA2010.

Stonewall has promoted the practice of setting up ‘LGBTQ+’ EDI staff networks rather than separate networks representing sexual orientation and gender reassignment. This in itself should be recognised as a political decision. Universities often additionally have a trans staff network, but no LGB staff network. Some universities have networks for ‘women’ defined to include some males,⁹¹ but there is typically no network for female staff.⁹² Gender-critical LGB and female staff are effectively excluded from representation in staff networks which nominally represent their protected characteristic if these groups are actively engaged in promoting gender self-identification beliefs and policies.

The Reindorf Review into two incidents of no-platforming at the University of Essex (Reindorf, 2021) noted the influence of participation in Stonewall workplace rankings

⁹⁰ For example, UCL News posted a ‘news item’ for TDoR 2024 that included the following comment from staff in EDI roles: ‘20 November is Transgender Day of Remembrance (TDoR), a day of mourning for those in our community and worldwide who have been murdered simply for being trans. It’s a stark reminder that there are many people out there – including in our own community – who don’t believe that trans people should have the right to live their lives as the genders that they know themselves to be. ~ As this is being written, we think about those of our trans siblings who have died, as well as those who are fearful due to anti-trans bigotry and violence (whether physical, emotional violence, or both).’

See: UCL (2024), *Transgender Awareness Week and Transgender Day of Remembrance 2024*, 14 November 2024, UCL News.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20241125165542/https://www.ucl.ac.uk/news/2024/nov/transgender-awareness-week-and-transgender-day-remembrance-2024>

⁹¹ For example, the University of Bristol Women's Staff Network is described as ‘a safe space for all women (inclusive of cis and trans women) and non-binary people who feel comfortable in a female-centred environment’. See: University of Bristol, *Women's Staff Network*. <https://www.bristol.ac.uk/inclusion/staff-networks/womens-staff-network/>

⁹² See: MurrayBlackburnMackenzie (2024), *Taking stock of Athena Swan: What value does it add and who decides?* (Part 4). <https://murrayblackburnmackenzie.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/MBM-ATHENA-SWAN-REPORT-AUGUST-2024-FINAL.pdf>

on university policy. Jo Phoenix and Rosa Freedman were accused of hate speech, on grounds including that they had signed a letter to The Guardian on academic freedom.⁹³ Reindorf states: 'It is worth noting that the examples of harassment in the University's Supporting Trans and Non Binary Staff policy might lend credence to the idea that these newspaper letters could amount to or lead to unlawful harassment. This policy is founded on an erroneous understanding of the law (see §§225–226 above). The policy is reviewed annually by Stonewall, and its incorrect summary of the law does not appear to have been picked up by them. In my view the policy states the law as Stonewall would prefer it to be, rather than the law as it is. To that extent the policy is misleading'.

EDI-inspired policies, practices and training are often out of step both with the law and with science and evidence. For example, EDI materials and policies often assume that gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people are underrepresented in higher education, which is not the case (Armstrong and Sullivan, 2024).

University LGBT+ networks are embedded in university policy-making via EDI committees and close working with HR,⁹⁴ which gives a seat at the table to gender-identity activists which is denied to those with differing views, including LGBT people with gender-critical views. EDI committees influence a wide range of university policies, including on issues relating to academic freedom.

Some networks which are supported under the auspices of institutional EDI departments have been responsible for discriminatory statements and actions, including calls for no-platforming. Networks which purport to represent LGBT+ staff and students have excluded and attacked lesbian and gay individuals who disagree with gender-identity theory, including Julie Bindel, Kathleen Stock, Professor Jo Phoenix, Dr Shereen Benjamin, Dr Holly Lawford Smith, and Simon Fanshawe. Networks initially set up to provide social support for a protected characteristic have become exclusionary and discriminatory towards some of those who share that characteristic.

We do not argue that the intersection between lesbianism and gender-critical beliefs as protected characteristics arises because lesbians are more likely to hold gender-

⁹³ Multi-signatory letter to the Guardian (2018), *Academics are being harassed over their research into transgender issues*, 16 October 2018, The Guardian.
<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/oct/16/academics-are-being-harassed-over-their-research-into-transgender-issues>

⁹⁴ This is standard practice. For example, the University of Bristol LGBTQ+ Network web page states that they 'Work with HR, through the co-chairs, to contribute to the development of policies and initiatives, and to ensure that all LGBTQ+ staff have a consistent and positive experience at the University'. See: University of Bristol, *LGBTQ+ Staff Network*.
<https://www.bristol.ac.uk/inclusion/staff-networks/lgbt--staff-network/>

critical beliefs, we are not aware of any evidence that this is the case. The over-representation of lesbians among individuals discriminated against for gender critical views is likely to be due to either 1/ lesbians who hold gender-critical views being more likely to feel motivated to speak up publicly and therefore attracting more abuse, and/or 2/ lesbians who speak out being treated more harshly than others who speak out. This logic also applies to women in general,⁹⁵ though the over-representation of lesbians who have been discriminated against for gender-critical views is particularly striking. To the best of our knowledge, no university EDI department has considered the intersectionality of sex, sexual orientation, and gender-critical belief, or developed policy to support those groups who are most affected.

Staff in EDI roles include academics as well as professional services staff. At UCL, a group of EDI Vice Deans (academic EDI faculty leads) signed an open letter demanding that a 2020 conference celebrating fifty years of women's liberation should not be permitted to go ahead (Sullivan and Suissa, 2022). The letter stated: 'Letting this conference go ahead will result in a huge backlash from staff and students, and cause considerable reputational damage to the university. It will also cause emotional damage to trans colleagues and students' (see Appendix 1: 2020-3). Because the signatories were in senior EDI positions, their actions created serious difficulties for the organisers, although the conference ultimately went ahead. The event was a great success, attracting close to 1,000 delegates, mainly women, and with a markedly high level of lesbian visibility, and was covered favourably on BBC 'Woman's Hour'.⁹⁶ One might assume that this would be the sort of event that EDI representatives would wish to support. The attempt to prevent this conference from going ahead illustrates the point that 'EDI' has often been a source of discrimination rather than a remedy against it.

Senior managers may sometimes be intimidated by the activism of university LGBT+ networks. Professor Simone Buitendijk, Vice Provost at Imperial College London, issued a public apology after staff and students, including representatives of LGBT+

⁹⁵ British Social Attitudes 40 (2023) asked 'How much do you agree or disagree that a person who is transgender should be able to have the sex recorded on their birth certificate changed if they want?'. 33% of female respondents and 27% of males agreed.

See: Natcen (2023), *A liberalisation in attitudes?? British Social Attitudes 40*.
<https://natcen.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2023-09/BSA%2040%20Moral%20issues.pdf>

⁹⁶ UCL Women's Liberation (2020), *UCL Women's Liberation 2020 on Woman's Hour*, 12 February 2020, UCL.
<https://blogs.ucl.ac.uk/feminism/2020/02/12/ucl-womens-liberation-2020-on-womans-hour/>

allies networks, wrote an open letter (Appendix 1: 2019-1) objecting to her social media engagements on gender issues.⁹⁷

The campaign against Ann Henderson during her time as Rector of the University of Edinburgh is a further example of the way in which small numbers of activists have been permitted to have a destructive effect on the functioning of universities (Henderson, 2024).⁹⁸ Any member of the university community, be they high or low in rank, may be the target of such campaigns if they express gender-critical views, even if they do so outside of their university role, as illustrated by the targeting of college porter Kevin Price at Clare College Cambridge.⁹⁹

EDI teams often produce glossaries which seek to define or redefine the meanings of words, rather than accepting that the meanings of words are defined by usage. Such glossaries often fail to acknowledge that many of these terms are contested. For example, Nicola Dandridge's 'Independent Review for the Open University' following the Phoenix judgment recommends that the Open University EDI team should 'produce a set of vocabulary that can be used in this area.' (Dandridge 2024, p.4). Dandridge recommends that such work should encompass the 'use and meaning of the words men and women, trans men and trans women, non-binary people, and gender critical and trans inclusive or trans affirmative views' (p.28). It is well understood that control over the official meanings of words is a powerful political tool. It is surprising that such attempts to control language could be seen as an appropriate activity for the Human Resources function within a university.

EDI practitioners are prone to suggesting additional bureaucratic mechanisms which move control away from academics and increase the size and scope of EDI teams

⁹⁷ The open letter and response are reproduced here: Felix (2019), *Imperial community pens open letter calling for confirmed support for the trans community*, 10 May 2019, Felix. <https://felixonline.co.uk/articles/2019-05-10-imperial-community-pens-open-letter-calling-for-confirmed-support-for-the-trans-community/>

The story was covered by the Telegraph (2019), *Imperial College professor issues 'grovelling apology' for promoting articles questioning transgender lobby*, 31 May 2019. <https://web.archive.org/web/20190601101358/https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2019/05/31/imperial-college-professor-issues-grovelling-apology-promoting/>

⁹⁸ Henderson, A. (2021), *Ann Henderson: Reflections on the University of Edinburgh*, 9 June 2021, Woman's Place UK. <https://womansplaceuk.org/2021/06/09/ann-henderson-reflections-on-the-university-of-edinburgh>

⁹⁹ Varsity (2020), *Clare Porter and Labour councillor resigns from Cambridge City Council amid outcry over transphobia*. <https://www.varsity.co.uk/news/20079>

and central management systems. The Dandridge report illustrates this.¹⁰⁰

Dandridge notes that at the Open University, 'A specific requirement for staff involved in research or with line management or Head of Unit responsibilities is to ensure that an 'equality analysis' is carried out for new research and new activity. EDI structures are referenced in the scheme: 'There should be a named EDI representative in each of the areas who is responsible for driving the EDI agenda in their unit...', and Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) are described as being used 'to meet our legal duty to give due regard to equality when developing or revising any ... project ... that may have an impact on people.' (Dandridge 2024, p.36).

She goes on to say that:

'Had the EIA policy been followed when the GCRN was established, then an EIA would have been conducted with account being taken of the Public Sector Equality Duty to foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. This would have then (probably) led to a significantly better outcome in that discussions may have taken place about the best way of launching the GCRN to ensure its success, involving discussions about the appropriate material to use when launching it, identification of the likely impact on other groups of staff and therefore ways of mitigating negative reactions, and proper advance communication with the trade unions and other staff groups.' (p.23).

This recommendation would allow EDI representatives to police the setting up of research networks, removing academic autonomy and replacing it with oversight by non-experts while generating more bureaucratic work.

In a similar vein, EDI committees may suggest that an Equality Impact Assessment could be required for 'potentially contentious' events.¹⁰¹ Such recommendations, which seek to increase the scope of EDI committees, do not consider the risks of exacerbating discriminatory practices and reducing academic freedom, or the inherent costs of increased bureaucracy.

Both bureaucratic load and the reduction in academic control are exacerbated by the use of external bodies to determine and assess university policies. In the case of sex

¹⁰⁰ Skidelsky, E. (2024), *The Open University publishes disappointing report on Jo Phoenix's Employment Tribunal*, 3 October 2024, Committee for Academic Freedom.
<https://afcomm.org.uk/2024/10/03/the-open-university-publishes-disappointing-report-on-jo-phoenixs-employment-tribunal/>

¹⁰¹ UCL Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee (2023), Minutes, 22 February 2023.
<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/governance-compliance/committees/equality-diversity-and-inclusion-committee/equality-diversity-and-inclusion-committee-1>

and gender, both Stonewall¹⁰² and Advance HE (preceded by the Equalities Challenge Unit (ECU)) have influenced university policy by promoting the principles of gender-identity theory. Advance HE runs the Athena Swan Charter, which has embedded the idea of gender as a spectrum (Armstrong and Sullivan, 2025; Hunter Blackburn, Murray and Mackenzie, 2024).

Bodies such as Stonewall and Advance HE are not statutory bodies assessing and confirming compliance with national or international regulations or standards and should not be assumed to provide a guarantee of standards akin to a kitemark. Compliance with such schemes appears to have contributed to homogeneity, conformity and groupthink across the sector. Groupthink refers to the situation where groups avoid debate, conflict, and criticism, often leading to sub-optimal decisions (Janis, 1971). These external bodies also lack transparency and accountability to the academic community as a whole. As they are not public bodies, they are not subject to constraints such as being subject to Freedom of Information requests.

While the role of Stonewall in shaping the policies of higher education institutions has been widely discussed, Advance HE and (formerly) the Equalities Challenge Unit (ECU) have arguably been even more influential over a longer time period. Advance HE is described as a sector-led charity, owned by Universities UK (UUK) and Guild HE.

Between 2016-2021, Advance HE advised institutions to avoid collecting data on sex. Until it was taken down in December 2021, the advice on data collection given by Advance HE was as follows: 'Advance HE recommends asking a question about gender rather than asking a question about sex. This ensures equality efforts are ... inclusive of a diverse range of gender identities'.¹⁰³

In 2018, Advance HE and ECU respectively made submissions to the UK Government and Scottish government consultations on gender recognition reform.¹⁰⁴ These responses expressed strong support for a change in the law to remove gate-keeping and allow gender self-identification. As such, Advance HE/ECU took a contentious position in a live policy debate and sought to influence government accordingly. It is not apparent that this was done on the basis of any wide consultation of views within higher education. The Advance HE submission states

¹⁰² Sullivan (2022), *Why UCL are shutting the door on Stonewall*, 2 February 2022, The Critic. <https://thecritic.co.uk/why-ucl-are-shutting-the-door-on-stonewall/>

¹⁰³ Advance HE (2021) <https://web.archive.org/web/20210822195453/https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/guidance/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/using-data-and-evidence/monitoring-questions/gender>

¹⁰⁴ Archived web page: <https://web.archive.org/web/20190103154741/https://www.ecu.ac.uk/guidance-resources/inclusive-environment/providing-support/trans-people/>

‘Advance HE has been working with the sector to implement processes to support trans staff and students based on self-identification of gender...This is to assist HEIs in fulfilling their obligations under public sector equality duty of the Equality Act 2010. Our efforts would be greatly supported by a GRC process which is also based on self-identification.’

As noted above, the University of Sussex was fined £585,000 for free speech and governance breaches following an investigation into the Kathleen Stock affair by the Office for Students (OfS). According to the Office for Students case report¹⁰⁵ the university’s ‘Trans and non-binary equality policy statement’ was based on a template provided by Advance HE in 2018.¹⁰⁶ The adoption of this template policy was found to be in violation of the university’s conditions of registration. The OfS found that statements in the policy ‘have the effect of restricting lawful speech and content, including in the curriculum and course materials, and have created a chilling effect’. These statements included a requirement for ‘any materials within relevant courses and modules [to] positively represent trans people and trans lives’. Advance HE has subsequently written to its members (on 31st March 2025) stating ‘We would encourage members to review trans inclusion policies and web pages and ensure that any legacy language from this template cited by the OfS case report is removed or updated, and that policies reflect your current legal and regulatory requirements in relation to free speech and academic freedom’. The OfS further wrote to Vice Chancellors suggesting that they review institutional policies in the light of the OfS’s findings.

A legal opinion by Akua Reindorf KC regarding King’s College London (KCL) notes the unlawfulness of certain EDI policies and practices. Reindorf states that ‘KCL’s various policies, training materials and guidance relating to the protected characteristics of sex and gender reassignment are incorrect, as a matter of law, in several substantial respects’. Regarding KCL’s promotion policies, which include a mandatory EDI statement for applicants, she notes that ‘[I]t seems to me that the requirement to demonstrate allegiance to the EDI ambitions as a criterion for

¹⁰⁵ OfS (2025) *Regulatory case report for University of Sussex: OfS decisions relating to breaches of conditions E1 and E2 and the imposition of monetary penalties*.

<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/regulatory-case-report-for-university-of-sussex/>

¹⁰⁶ ECU (undated document) *Trans Equality Policy Statement*.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20220217124236/www.ecu.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Trans-equality-policy-statement.pdf>

advancement places those with gender critical beliefs at a particular disadvantage when compared to others.’¹⁰⁷

In 2021, a group of 240 academics called on the EHRC to undertake a ‘Reindorf Review for the Higher Education sector’, stating ‘We call on the EHRC to undertake a comprehensive review of policies and practices in UK Universities that impose a radical gender orthodoxy. This review should recommend new guidance to prevent discrimination against those who recognise that sex is a protected characteristic.’¹⁰⁸

Appendix 1 attests to the importance of LGBT+ networks in campaigns against gender-critical staff. We have also had sight of materials which show the role of LGBT+ networks in privately lobbying university managers to no-platform gender-critical speakers. Universities could in principle ignore this pressure from a small number of activists, but the fact that this activism is embedded in organisational structures appears to make this more difficult.

In summary, EDI departments are in principle responsible for promoting equality, diversity and inclusion, but in practice they have promoted a contentious political stance and provided institutional cover for discrimination. They have not upheld the rights of women and gender-critical staff. Gender-critical LGB staff, especially lesbians, have been disproportionately targeted by staff networks which in theory should represent them. It would be difficult to over-state the role of these groups in promoting discrimination against staff and students with gender-critical views. No analogous cases of targeting by EDI staff and/or networks have been publicly reported or reported to this review brought by academics who hold views disagreeing with gender-critical beliefs.

Higher education institutions rightly seek to support trans students and staff. Research on trans and non-binary students points to additional barriers that they face: 24% of trans students are reported to have experienced local authority care, compared to 4% of other students; 47% of trans students declare a disability and 22% a mental health problem.¹⁰⁹ This is a group of students who need practical support. Providing such support is entirely compatible with also supporting staff (and

¹⁰⁷ Reindorf, A. (2024), *In the Matter of King’s College London Academic Promotions Criteria: Counsel’s Opinion for Sex Matters*, 5 January 2024 (amended 18 April 2024).

<https://sex-matters.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/KCL-advice-for-publication.pdf>

¹⁰⁸ Sex Matters (17 October 2021) Letter to the EHRC.

<https://sex-matters.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/EHRC-Sex-Matters-letter.pdf>

¹⁰⁹ Freeman, J. and Stephenson, R. (2024), *Trans and non-binary student experiences in UK higher education*, HEPI Report 174.

https://www.hepi.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Hepi-Report-174_Trans-and-non-binary-student-experiences-WEB-05_06_24.pdf

students) with the protected characteristic of gender-critical belief. All students, including transgender students, should be encouraged to see disagreement as an essential part of education rather than an existential threat.

Legal cases

In Britain, the right to academic freedom is enshrined in the Education Reform Act 1988. Section 202(2)(a) states: '[A]cademic staff have freedom within the law to question and test received wisdom, and to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions, without placing themselves in jeopardy of losing their jobs or privileges they may have at their institutions'.¹¹⁰ The Education Act (No. 2) 1986 (Section 43) also enshrines a positive and proactive legal duty on universities to promote and protect freedom of speech on campus, by requiring that universities 'shall take such steps as are reasonably practicable to ensure that freedom of speech within the law is secured for members, students and employees of the establishment and for visiting speakers'.¹¹¹ However, while academic freedom is protected in law in principle, in practice there has been no enforcement mechanism. The legal cases listed below all concern discrimination or harassment under the Equality Act (2010), not academic freedom.

As stated above, gender-critical beliefs are defined in UK law as the belief 'that biological sex is real, important, immutable and not to be conflated with gender identity' (Forstater vs CGD Europe and Others, 2021).¹¹² Maya Forstater, a consultant at a think-tank, did not have her contract renewed due to her expression of gender-critical views. Forstater's case established that discrimination against a person because of their gender-critical beliefs is unlawful under the 2010 Equality Act (EA2010).

The case of Phoenix vs the Open University (2024)¹¹³ applied the Forstater principle to the higher education sector. In a landmark judgment, the tribunal found that Professor Phoenix was discriminated against, harassed, constructively unfairly

¹¹⁰ Education Reform Act 1988, Section 202.
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1988/40/section/202>

¹¹¹ Education (No. 2) Act 1986. Section 43.

¹¹² Employment Appeal Tribunal (2021), *Forstater vs CGD Europe and Others*, 2021.
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/60c1cce1d3bf7f4bd9814e39/Maya_Forstater_v_CGD_Europe_and_others_UKEAT0105_20_JOJ.pdf

¹¹³ Employment Tribunal (2024), *Phoenix vs The Open University*.
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65ae82d58bbe95000e5eb1f7/Ms_J_Pheonix_v_The_Open_University_3322700.20121_other_FMH_Reserved_Judgement.pdf

dismissed, and victimised by the Open University (OU), due to her gender-critical beliefs.

Professor Jo Phoenix, a criminologist, had expressed concerns about male-bodied offenders being housed in the female prison estate, as well as concerns about the suppression of speech on such issues. She was one of a number of academics who signed a letter expressing disquiet regarding the relationship between Stonewall and UK universities.¹¹⁴ She set up a Gender Critical Research Network (GCRN) to create a space for research and discussion at the OU. In response, she faced a concerted campaign of harassment. 368 OU staff and postgraduate students signed an open letter demanding that the OU withdraw its support from the network and denouncing the network as transphobic.¹¹⁵ A further public statement similarly accusing the network members of transphobia was published on the OU website. Additional incidents included Phoenix's manager likening her to a racist.¹¹⁶ Following a two-year campaign of harassment, Phoenix was diagnosed with acute post-traumatic stress disorder and resigned from the OU. The tribunal found that the OU failed to protect Phoenix from a targeted campaign of harassment.

The judgment stated that the public denunciations of the GCRN contained untruths that were detrimental to the Claimant's professional reputation, and that the OU lacked a proper reason for allowing the harassment to continue without publicly taking action to prohibit it. The OU had argued that they were obliged to allow the targeted harassment of Phoenix as an expression of academic freedom. The tribunal disagreed, stating that '*upholding academic freedom did not prevent the Respondent from taking action to prohibit the harassment*'. As such, the judgment draws a line between the exercise of academic freedom on the one hand and campaigns of bullying intended to suppress academic research and debate on the other.

¹¹⁴ Multi-signatory letter to the Editor (2019), *Stonewall is stifling academia*, *Letters to the Editor*, 16 June 2019, The Sunday Times.

<https://www.thetimes.com/business-money/money/article/boris-deserves-to-lead-the-party-he-s-wrecked-v7k7wbf8w>

¹¹⁵ See: *Open Letter from OU staff and Postgraduate Research Students – Response to the launch of the Gender Critical Research Network*.

<https://sex-matters.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/OU-letter-about-GCRN.pdf>

¹¹⁶ Judge Young's judgment stated (paragraph 85) 'We find that Professor Westmarland said to the Claimant on 23 October 2020 at the meeting at approximately 09:00-10:15 that "having you in the department was like having a racist uncle at the Christmas dinner table." Professor Westmarland was effectively telling the Claimant off for expressing her gender critical beliefs. We accept that the Claimant was extremely upset at this comment and Professor Westmarland knew this as she saw the Claimant crying and recommended counselling'.

Under EA2010, section 26,¹¹⁷ harassment is unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic which has the effect of violating the dignity of the target or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for the target. Witnesses for the OU, including senior staff and staff in HR roles, appeared to lack knowledge of essential concepts including harassment, discrimination and academic freedom. For example, the Phoenix judgment referred to the Dean of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion's (who was a member of the Vice Chancellor's Executive) stated lack of knowledge on where to draw the line between discrimination and the exercise of academic freedom and the fact that she was not prepared to draw that line (paragraph 241, Phoenix vs OU).

Most discrimination cases are settled out of court, and most cases are not in the public domain. We note below some cases where information is available.

Cathy Boardman was dismissed as a lecturer by the BIMM Music Institute. She has stated that this followed her raising in class the question of whether drag acts could be viewed as sexist.¹¹⁸ Boardman claimed unfair dismissal and discrimination. Following a preliminary hearing, Boardman reached a settlement with her former employer.¹¹⁹

Ceramicist Claudia Clare took action against the University of the Arts London (UAL) and the Craft Potters Association after she was told that her work would not be shown at an event because of a claimed risk of protest due to her gender-critical views. UAL and CPA made an apology, and each made a donation to a women's charity.¹²⁰

James Esses, a master's student training to become a psychotherapist was summarily expelled from his course for expressing views in support of evidence-

¹¹⁷ Equality Act (2010),

[https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/26#:~:text=\(1\)A%20person%20\(A,or%20offensive%20environment%20for%20B](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/26#:~:text=(1)A%20person%20(A,or%20offensive%20environment%20for%20B).

¹¹⁸ Manning, S. (2022), *'I was sacked for suggesting that drag acts were a gross caricature of femininity': Music academy lecturer who lost her job in latest transgender controversy is taking legal action*, 20 August 2022, Mail on Sunday.

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-11130491/Music-academy-lecturer-sacked-comments-drag-queens-femininity-takes-legal-action.html>

¹¹⁹ Boardman, C. (2022), *Support Lecturers and Respect Students*, CrowdJustice.

<https://www.crowdjustice.com/case/support-lecturers-in-education/>

¹²⁰ The Telegraph (2023), *Top arts school forced to apologise for cancelling feminist artist*, 17 June 2023.

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/06/17/top-arts-school-apologise-cancelling-feminist-artist/#:~:text=Britain's%20top%20arts%20school%20has,a%20feminist%20artist%20was%20cancelled>

based therapy for children struggling with gender dysphoria. He took legal action, which was settled out of court. The Metanoia Institute made a public apology and acknowledged discrimination based on Esses' gender-critical beliefs.¹²¹

Dr Cathy Rosario, a lecturer at Goldsmiths, was unfairly dismissed due to her gender-critical views following student complaints. She received legal representation from the Free Speech Union (FSU) and was given financial compensation and an apology by the University of London in 2024.

Dr Laura Favaro, a researcher at City, University of London, published findings discussing the persecution faced by gender-critical scholars.¹²² This led to complaints to the university, some of which came from academics who disagreed with gender-critical views. Dr Favaro took out an employment tribunal claim against City after the university blocked Favaro's access to her research project database. She was additionally made redundant on the grounds that her fixed-term contract had expired, while Favaro claimed she had a permanent contract. The claim was settled and Favaro regained access to the research data.¹²³

Professor Jon Pike is a philosopher of sport at the Open University and convenor and co-founder of the OU Gender Critical Research Network (GCRN). Professor Pike's research concerns the ethics of sport, and he has critiqued male inclusion in the female category as unfair. He undertook proceedings against the OU and a senior academic colleague (J Pike vs The Open University and Sophie Grace Chappell) for harassment and discrimination due to gender-critical beliefs. Pike was supported by the Universities and College Union (UCU). The case was settled by mutual agreement.

¹²¹ The Times (2024), *Apology for gender-critical student expelled from master's course*, 14 August 2024.

<https://www.thetimes.com/uk/law/article/apology-for-gender-critical-student-expelled-from-masters-course-p23cgwmf5>

¹²² Favaro, L. (2022), *Researchers are wounded in academia's gender wars*, 15 September 2022, Times Higher Education.

<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/depth/researchers-are-wounded-academias-gender-wars>

¹²³ Times Higher Education (2024), *Laura Favaro: City settles gender studies critic's tribunal claim*, 31 July 2024.

<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/laura-favaro-city-settles-gender-studies-critics-tribunal-claim>

Pilgrim Tucker, a PhD student, took action against the OU for discrimination on the basis of gender-critical belief, and bullying, harassment and victimisation.¹²⁴ The case was settled by mutual agreement.

Dr Almut Gadow was sacked from her teaching role at the OU. She has stated that this was the result of her challenging new requirements to treat gender-identity theory as an uncontested truth. She received support from the Free Speech Union (FSU) and crowdfunded £100k for legal expenses.¹²⁵ The case was settled by mutual agreement.

University and College Union (UCU) members Deirdre O'Neill and Michael Wayne have brought a claim against the UCU for unlawful discrimination based on gender-critical belief, following attempts by the union's Edinburgh branch to interfere with the screening of their documentary 'Adult Human Female.' The claimants note that the branch denounced the film as 'hate speech' and 'transphobic'.¹²⁶ Their claim was rejected by an employment tribunal.

An unsuccessful case was brought against the University of Bristol by a PhD student, Raquel Rosario Sanchez.¹²⁷ The judge agreed that Rosario Sanchez was the victim of intimidating behaviour including threats of violence, by activist students, but found that the university did not have a duty of care to students.¹²⁸ Rosario Sanchez's doctoral supervisor made a statement regarding her perception of failures of Bristol's internal processes in this case.¹²⁹ A letter/petition naming Raquel Rosario Sanchez and demanding the cancellation of an event which she was due to chair is included in Appendix 1 (2018-1).

¹²⁴ Tucker, P. (2023), *Challenging Bullying and Discrimination at the Open University*, CrowdJustice. <https://www.crowdjustice.com/case/pilgrim-tucker-challenging-discrimination-at-ou/>

¹²⁵ Free Speech Union (2023), *Almut Gadow - standing against indoctrination and for academic freedom*, CrowdJustice. <https://www.crowdjustice.com/case/almut-gadow-academic-freedom/>

¹²⁶ Adult Human Female (2023), *In Defence of Academic Freedom*. <https://www.crowdjustice.com/case/in-defence-of-academic-freedom/>

¹²⁷ Sanchez vs University of Bristol (2022). <https://web.archive.org/web/20220421145019/https://1chancerylane.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Sanchez-v-Uni-Bristol-final-21.4.22.pdf>

¹²⁸ Times Higher Education (2022), *Raquel Rosario Sánchez on Bristol's 'hollow victory' in trans row*, 18 May 2022. <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/raquel-rosario-sanchez-bristols-hollow-victory-trans-row>

¹²⁹ Williamson, E. (2019) *Statement by the Head of the Centre for Gender and Violence Research at the University of Bristol*, 21 August 2019. <https://womansplaceuk.org/2019/08/21/statement-by-the-head-of-the-centre-for-gender-and-violence-research-at-the-university-of-bristol/>

It is worth noting additional cases of apparent discrimination which are in the public domain but where, to the best of our knowledge, no legal action has been pursued.

The University of Huddersfield was obliged to pay compensation to a PhD student, Jonny Best, in 2021, after subjecting him to a lengthy disciplinary investigation.¹³⁰ Best had been reported by an anonymous student for his published work and tweets, which expressed his reservations about the transactivist movement from his perspective as a gay man and former director of the Queer Up North Festival.¹³¹ The university initially found Best guilty of violating the university's social media and trans equality policies, but Best overturned the decision on appeal. The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education found multiple failings in Huddersfield's investigation of Best.¹³²

Dr Louise Moody has described her experience as a deaf woman and lesbian who had her Research Associate position in philosophy at the University of York withdrawn following her expression of gender-critical views.¹³³

As well as public legal cases, we are able to draw on case data from the Free Speech Union (FSU), an organisation which campaigns for free speech and defends the speech rights of its members. FSU have handled approximately 3,300 cases and queries since they began in February 2020, of which 2,416 are closed cases or queries with sufficient data for classification. Fifteen percent of these closed cases related to higher education (355) and of these 29% (102) related to gender-identity issues. FSU were unable to identify any examples of cases brought to them by individuals opposed to gender-critical views.

¹³⁰ Sex Matters (2021), *Huddersfield University apologises for "transphobic tweets" investigation*, 7 March 2021.

<https://sex-matters.org/posts/freedom-of-speech/huddersfield-university-apologises-for-transphobic-tweets-investigation/>

¹³¹ Best, J. *My first brush with trans activism and what I learned*.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20230103164623/https://www.jonnybest.co.uk/my-first-experience-of-trans-activism>

¹³² The Telegraph (2021), *University forced to apologise and compensate PhD student over 'transphobic' tweets*, 6 March 2021.

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2021/03/06/university-forced-apologise-compensate-phd-student-transphobic/>

¹³³ Moody, L. (2019), *University of York Abolished Research Associate Position to Silence Me*, 8 October 2019, Uncommon Ground.

https://uncommongroundmedia.com/university-of-york-abolished-research-associate-position-to-silence-me/?utm_content=cmp-true

To the best of our knowledge, there have been no discrimination cases based on opposition to gender-critical belief analogous to those taken by gender-critical workers, either in higher education or elsewhere.

Taken together, the legal cases described above, in combination with the activities of EDI departments described later in this report, suggest that staff with responsibility for upholding the responsibilities of the university under EA2010 and other relevant legal frameworks have not always had an adequate understanding of the law. Legislators should be aware that employers may have difficulty in interpreting their legal responsibilities, and/or may respond to perceived risks of litigation even when these go beyond what was intended by legislators.¹³⁴ Clarity is therefore of paramount importance in upholding the rights of all.

Events and no-platforming

Seminars, conferences and events are an integral part of academic life, allowing research and ideas to be developed and discussed, and often promoting engagement with policymakers and the public. Restrictions on such events interfere with the rights of members of the university and the wider public to listen to and engage with information and ideas.

Cases of attempts to no-platform gender-critical speakers, to prevent events from going ahead, or to place restrictions on events, have been widely documented¹³⁵. Documented cases are likely to represent a small minority of all incidents. The phenomenon of ‘quiet no-platforming’ whereby speakers are not invited in the first place due to the expectation of repercussions, is widespread among students¹³⁶ and it would be surprising if academics were immune to such pressures.

¹³⁴ We are aware of possible relevant concerns for academic freedom, relating to the proposed Employment Rights Bill (at time of writing undergoing its Report Stage and awaiting its third Reading within the House of Commons). Within the Bill, Clause 16 (an amendment to the Equality Act 2010) creates a responsibility for employers to protect employees from harassment from third parties such as customers. The government has stated that a high threshold is required for harassment as defined within Section 26 of the Equality Act. However, some fear that Clause 16 could have unintended consequences for free speech, including within universities and academia. The Equality and Human Rights Commission have expressed significant concerns and highlighted that some legal definitions are “not well understood by employers”. EHRC (2025) *Parliamentary briefing: Employment Rights Bill: House of Commons Committee Stage*. <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/our-work/advising-parliament-and-governments/employment-rights-bill-house-commons-committee-stage>

¹³⁵ See for example: Academics for Academic Freedom (online), *The Banned List*. <https://www.afaf.org.uk/the-banned-list/>

¹³⁶ Freeman, F. (2022), *No Platform: Speaker Events at University Debating Unions*, HEPI Report 153. <https://www.hepi.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/No-Platform-Speaker-Events-at-University-Debating-Unions.pdf>

Examples of no-platforming and barriers to events going ahead specifically affecting gender-critical speakers which have been documented in the UK include:

- The University of Cardiff treated Cardiff academics as ‘an external group’ in order to justify charging them for room hire and security for an event on academic freedom that included invited speakers (2024)¹³⁷. Internal academics are not typically charged by their universities for room hire and associated costs of organising events. The event was a panel on academic freedom with a range of views represented¹³⁸. The event was only able to proceed due to external funding from the Free Speech Union.
- A group of students invited a commissioner at the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), to the University of Bristol for a panel discussion with leading lawyers about protecting women’s rights (2023). The university insisted on conditions including no admission for the general public and demanding that the student society pay half the security costs. Ultimately this meant the event did not take place on campus.¹³⁹
- The University of Edinburgh branch of Academics for Academic Freedom organised a showing of the film ‘Adult Human Female’ followed by a discussion of the issues raised, scheduled for December 2022. Activists physically blocked access to the venue. This was repeated at a rescheduled screening in 2023.¹⁴⁰ The screening finally went ahead at the third attempt in November 2023 with a substantial security presence.¹⁴¹

¹³⁷ Cardiff Academic Freedom Association (2024), *Statement on Cardiff University’s decision not to fund our event*, 28 May 2024.

<https://cardiffacademicfreedomassoc.wordpress.com/2024/05/28/statement-on-cardiff-universitys-decision-not-to-fund-our-event/>

¹³⁸ Cardiff University (2024), *Panel on academic freedom*, 23 May 2024.

<https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/community/events/view/2814578-panel-on-academic-freedom>

¹³⁹ The Telegraph (2023), *Bristol University bans public from feminist event with Stonewall-critical lawyer*, 29 April 2023.

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/04/29/bristol-university-bans-public-feminist-event/>

¹⁴⁰ The Guardian (2023), *Edinburgh University cancels film screening after trans rights protest*.

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/apr/26/edinburgh-university-cancels-film-screening-after-trans-rights-protest>

¹⁴¹ Mackenzie, L. (2023), *Letter to University of Edinburgh Court Members meeting on 4 December 2023*, 4 December 2023.

<https://medium.com/@l.n.mackenzie/letter-to-university-of-edinburgh-court-members-meeting-on-4-december-2023-33d4c377d9c5>

- Baroness Claire Fox was no-platformed by Royal Holloway University (2023)¹⁴² after commenting favourably on a Ricky Gervais joke. It was reported in The Telegraph that ‘the university’s debating society claimed it was ‘strong armed’ and ‘bullied’ into cancelling the talk by Royal Holloway’s students’ union (RHSU)’.
- Professor Selina Todd was no-platformed by an event organised by the Oxford International Women’s Festival at Exeter College, Oxford to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Ruskin College’s inaugural Women’s Liberation Conference (2020).¹⁴³
- Professor Rosa Freedman was due to speak at a roundtable discussion on the subject of ‘The State of Antisemitism Today’ as part of a Holocaust Memorial Week event organised by the University of Essex’s Human Rights Centre (2020).¹⁴⁴ (See further details below)
- Professor Jo Phoenix had an invitation to speak on trans rights in prisons withdrawn following objections regarding her raising questions about sex and the criminal justice system (2019).¹⁴⁵ As noted in the Reindorf Review ‘The seminar was cancelled due to security concerns, on the basis that it would be rearranged. At a later meeting of the Department of Sociology, however, it was decided by vote to rescind the invitation and to not invite Prof Phoenix to a future seminar. An apology was made for the hurt caused to the trans community.’ (Further details below)
- Professor Alice Sullivan was invited to give a talk on sex and data at a one-day conference jointly organised by the National Centre for Social

¹⁴² The Telegraph (2023), *Peer disinvited from university debating society over support for Ricky Gervais trans joke*, 20 March 2023.
<https://web.archive.org/web/20230321195202/https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/03/20/peer-disinvited-university-debating-society-support-ricky-gervais/>

¹⁴³ Todd, S. (2020), *Women’s Liberation at 50 - The Talk that should have been*, 29 February 2020, Filia.
<https://www.filia.org.uk/latest-news/2020/2/29/womens-liberation-at-50-the-talk-that-should-have-been-by-selina-todd>

BBC News (2020), *Oxford University professor condemns exclusion from event*, 4 March 2020.
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-oxfordshire-51737206>

¹⁴⁴ The Sunday Times (2020), *Lawyer demands inquiry into trans ‘gag’ by university*, 26 January 2020.
<https://www.thetimes.com/article/lawyer-demands-inquiry-into-trans-gag-by-university-nbzf95wsc>

¹⁴⁵ The Guardian (2020), *Sacked or silenced: academics say they are blocked from exploring trans issues*, 14 January 2020.
<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2020/jan/14/sacked-silenced-academics-say-they-are-blocked-from-exploring-trans-issues>

Research (NatCen) and City University of London (2020).¹⁴⁶ The entire event was cancelled in order to avoid platforming her (Sullivan, 2021).

- A Seminar on 'Schools and Gender Non-Conforming Children' was due to take place at the University of Edinburgh in 2019. The event was cancelled following objections from the university Staff Pride Network, with the university citing fears for the safety of speakers.¹⁴⁷ Substantial barriers were placed in the path of academics attempting to reschedule the event, which ultimately took place in June 2022.¹⁴⁸
- A conference organised by the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies (CCJS) on 'Prison Abolition in the UK', was cancelled following denunciation of its Director, Richard Garside, for his stated belief that male offenders should not be housed in women's prisons (2019).¹⁴⁹
- Rachel Ara was invited to give a talk on feminism and art by Oxford Brookes University's fine art research unit. The talk was cancelled after the LGBTQ+ society sent a letter to the pro-vice-chancellor, condemning Ara as a 'trans exclusionary radical feminist' (2019).¹⁵⁰ Ms Ara subsequently threatened legal action and the event was eventually rescheduled, nearly 18 months later.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁶ The Times (2020), *Stonewall's new boss Nancy Kelley let census expert be no-platformed*, 24 May 2020.

<https://www.thetimes.com/uk/science/article/stonewalls-new-boss-nancy-kelley-let-census-expert-be-no-platformed-ljsnw6v3r>

¹⁴⁷ The Scotsman (2019), *Scottish schools transgender event cancelled amid fears for speakers' safety*, 3 December 2019.

<https://www.scotsman.com/news/scottish-news/scottish-schools-transgender-event-cancelled-amid-fears-for-speakers-safety-1400793>

¹⁴⁸ Benjamin, S. (2022), *Schools and gender: the unfinished history of an open seminar*, 11 April 2022.

<https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/edinburghafaf/2022/04/11/schools-and-gender-the-unfinished-history-of-an-open-seminar/>

¹⁴⁹ Times Higher Education (2019), *Conference axed after threats from transgender activists*, 20 March 2019.

<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/conference-axed-after-threats-transgender-activists>

¹⁵⁰ The Times (2019), *Oxford Brookes University cancels feminist speaker Rachel Ara after students accuse her of transphobia*, 20 November 2019.

https://www.thetimes.com/uk/education/article/oxford-brookes-university-cancels-feminist-speaker-rachel-ara-after-students-accuse-her-of-transphobia-3tdkxscz6?fbclid=IwAR2xnv20tvk_R3m-wTkgYxe2_o3yREFo4_xMM0XOoQ9S7w2yAGsMRokphBE

¹⁵¹ Daily Mail (2021), *Oxford Brookes University will defy a hate mob by hosting top British artist Rachel Ara who was cancelled amid accusations of being transphobic*, 21 February 2021.

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9282823/Oxford-Brookes-University-defy-hate-mob-hosting-artist-accused-transphobic.html>

- In 2018, Professor Michael Rainsborough planned a seminar series on ‘the debate over the exercise of the rights to freedom of expression on university campuses and within wider society’.¹⁵² The rationale stated for the series was that, ‘Arguments about the limitations of speech and the struggle for control over what can and cannot be said, and who can or cannot be allowed to speak, within the educational and public space, is assuming greater prominence and has been identified as a threat to traditional notions of the university ethos where the free exchange of ideas, especially those deemed to be difficult, offensive and challenging, can be scrutinized and questioned’. Dr Joanna Williams was invited to speak on academic freedom at the launch event. A student petition demanded that the university cancel the event and that the department should make a public apology.¹⁵³ Although the event went ahead successfully, senior managers were unsupportive and brought pressure on Rainsborough to cancel further events in the series.¹⁵⁴ Rainsborough was forced out of his role as Head of Department soon afterwards (see the testimonies section for further detail).
- Dr Heather Brunskell-Evans was due to give a talk on pornography and the sexualisation of young women at King’s College London. The event was cancelled on the grounds that her views on the risks to children of gender-affirming approaches ‘would violate the student union’s “safe space” policy’ (2017).¹⁵⁵
- Linda Bellos, a veteran campaigner for gay rights, racial equality and feminism, was no-platformed as a speaker at Peterhouse College, University of Cambridge after she told the organisers that she would be ‘publicly questioning some of the trans politics . . . which seems to assert

¹⁵² King’s College London (2018), *Endangered Speeches launch with Dr Joanna Williams*, 13 November 2018.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20220928151017/https://www.kcl.ac.uk/events/endangered-speeches-launch-with-dr-joanna-williams>

¹⁵³ The King’s Tab (2018), *King’s students have written an open letter against ‘transphobic’ speaker Dr. Joanna Williams*, 11 November 2018.

<https://archive.thetab.com/uk/kings/2018/11/11/kings-students-have-written-an-open-letter-against-transphobic-speaker-dr-joanna-williams-23577>

¹⁵⁴ Rainsborough provides insightful reflections on these experiences. See: Smith, MLR (2020), *University of Fear: The paradox of modern higher education*, 5 June 2020.

<https://www.cieo.org.uk/research/university-of-fear/>

¹⁵⁵ Daily Mail (2017), *University students bar academic from giving a talk at their campus after she dared to say that children should not be labelled as transgender*, 23 November 2017.

https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5112565/Students-bar-academic-transgender-children-comment.html?mrn_rm=als1

the power of those who were previously designated male to tell lesbians, and especially lesbian feminists, what to say and think' (2017).¹⁵⁶

- Julie Bindel, a feminist campaigner and journalist with a long track record of activism and investigative work highlighting male violence against women and girls,¹⁵⁷ has been no-platformed regularly by the National Union of Students (NUS) since 2004.^{158, 159} NUS policy has singled Bindel out as a named person who should not be platformed,¹⁶⁰ preventing students who wish to hear her speak from doing so.¹⁶¹ For example, Bindel was invited to speak at an event planned by the Manchester University Free Speech Society on 'From liberation to censorship: Does modern feminism have a problem with free speech' but was banned from speaking by the Student Union.¹⁶² In 2022, Bindel was invited to speak on 'Feminism and Free Speech' by the University of York Free Speech Society. A student 'solidarity network' called for her to be no-platformed,¹⁶³ and succeeded in

¹⁵⁶ The Times (2017), *Linda Bellos barred in Cambridge University row*, 1 October 2017.

<https://www.thetimes.com/article/linda-bellos-barred-in-cambridge-university-row-0pbdq5sm9>

¹⁵⁷ See: University of Reading School of Law (online), *Julie Bindel*.

<https://www.reading.ac.uk/law/our-staff/julie-bindel>

¹⁵⁸ Bindel, J. (2014), *No platform: my exclusion proves this is an anti-feminist crusade*, 9 October 2014, The Guardian.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/oct/09/no-platform-universities-julie-bindel-exclusion-anti-feminist-crusade>

¹⁵⁹ This cancellation of over twenty-years standing was sparked by the following article published in Bindel, J. (2004), 'Gender Benders Beware', 31 January 2004, The Guardian.

https://www.theguardian.com/world/2004/jan/31/gender.weekend7?fbclid=IwY2xjawHng7hleHRuA2FIbQlXMAABHRmiOU5obxwx_w8Oe1ggxMQXC6yKf5STH8KJF8KxVXEQvFpXYnp3PSpcUw_aem_vsBcldyYC7mef3Ebn7t6qw

¹⁶⁰ Dittum, S. (2014), 'No platform' was once reserved for violent fascists. Now it's being used to silence debate, 18 March 2014, New Statesman.

<https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/uk-politics/2014/03/when-did-no-platform-become-about-attacking-individuals-deemed-disagreeable>

¹⁶¹ Deacon, L. (2014), *Sheffield SU and NUS Ban on Julie Bindel - An Affront to Free Speech, our Intellectual freedom and an Insult to Students*, 3 November 2014, Huffington Post.

https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/liam-deacon/julie-bindel-ban_b_6081224.html

¹⁶² Staite, E. (2015), *Controversial Free Speech Society event completely cancelled*, 10 October 2015, The Tab.

<https://archive.thetab.com/uk/manchester/2015/10/10/controversial-free-speech-society-event-completely-cancelled-14248>

¹⁶³ The York Press (2022), *Feminist speaker Julie Bindel 'deplatformed' after outcry from some York students*, 17 March 2022.

<https://www.yorkpress.co.uk/news/20001172.feminist-speaker-julie-bindel-deplatformed-outcry-york-students/>

preventing the event from going ahead as planned,¹⁶⁴ although it was later rescheduled.¹⁶⁵

We are not aware of any analogous cases affecting speakers in support of gender-identity theory.

The University of Essex commissioned a report following two of the instances of no-platforming detailed above (Reindorf, 2021). The criminologist Professor Jo Phoenix, from the Open University, had been due to speak on 'Trans rights, imprisonment and the criminal justice system'. The seminar was cancelled due to credible threats from students, and a flyer circulating displaying a gun-toting figure captioned 'SHUT THE FUCK UP, TERF' (see Figure 1). Reindorf notes that the initial cancellation was justified due to security concerns, but this was on the basis that the talk would be rescheduled. However, the sociology department subsequently decided not only not to reissue the invitation but to blacklist Professor Phoenix from any future invitation. Reindorf states: 'The later decision to exclude and blacklist Prof Phoenix was also unlawful. There was no reasonable basis for thinking that Prof Phoenix would engage in harassment or any other kind of unlawful speech. The decision was unnecessary and disproportionate. Moreover, the violent flyer was wholly unacceptable and should have been the subject of a timely disciplinary'.

Figure 1. Anime figure holding gun, text reads 'SHUT THE FUCK UP TERF'

¹⁶⁴ Clayton, E. (2022), *Statement addressing the intended date for 'Free Speech and Feminism' event being cancelled*, 16 March 2022.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20250102104537/https://euanclayton.substack.com/p/statement-addressing-the-intended>

¹⁶⁵ York Vision (2022), *Event with Julie Bindel Back On*, 21 April 2022.

<https://www.yorkvision.co.uk/news/afternoon-with-julie-bindel-back-on/21/04/2022>

Jo Phoenix is a transphobe who should not be invited to this university. You can't call yourself a feminist if you don't respect trans women!

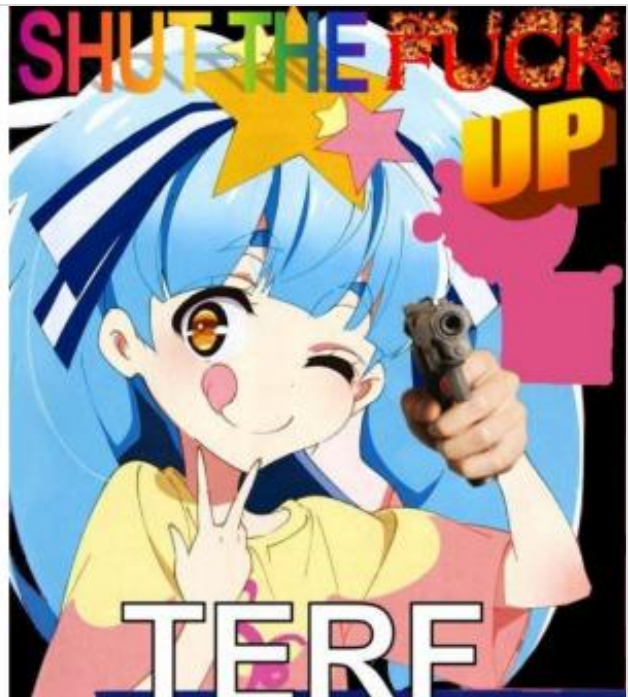
Delegitimising trans people is part of a misogynistic, colonialist and violent ideology.

Jo Phoenix has been (wrongly) accusing "trans politics" of reinforcing gender stereotypes. In actual fact, it is her kind of trans-exclusionary feminism that reinforces rigid roles for women (they must be able to give birth, must have XX chromosomes, etc) – but women outside of these roles have existed for all of history.

She is covering up her bigotry in academic jargon and claiming to just "raise questions", but this is a typical disguise for prejudice.

Along with other bigoted academics, Jo Phoenix signed a letter to the Guardian claiming that "research into transgender issues" (i.e. academic transphobia) is being silenced.

It isn't but it should be!



Source: Sex Matters (2021), *Leadership starts with the law: Briefing for universities on the Reindorf Review*, June 2021, Sex Matters.

<https://sex-matters.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Reindorf-Report-Sex-Matters-.docx.pdf>

Professor Rosa Freedman of the University of Reading was invited to take part in a roundtable on antisemitism as part of the University of Essex's programme for Holocaust memorial week. The invitation was rescinded after concerns were raised about her views on sex and gender. Freedman wrote to her MP and to the Universities Minister, and spoke to the press, and as a result the invitation was reinstated. A member of academic staff at Essex responded with a tweet comparing Freedman, who is Jewish, to a Holocaust denier. Reindorf notes: *'If the invitation had not been reinstated she would have been subjected to an interference with her right to freedom of expression. This would have been particularly egregious given that the topic on which she was due to speak was entirely unconnected to the question of gender identity and was a matter of academic expertise.'*

The Reindorf Report is an important source,¹⁶⁶ offering a robust presentation of the facts and a legal analysis which has not been challenged. The facts surrounding cases of no-platforming are often highly contested. Reindorf's thorough investigation of events at Essex University provides vital insights into the processes through which universities fail to act in line with their stated commitment to academic freedom.

¹⁶⁶ It is unfortunate that the University of Essex has only made a heavily redacted version available. See: *Sokal vs The Information Commissioner and The University of Essex*
<https://www.bailii.org/uk/cases/UKFTT/GRC/2024/795.pdf>

Notably, the evidence gathered by Reindorf documented a wider climate of fear for staff wishing to express views outside the orthodoxy of gender-identity theory. Reindorf stated that Essex may be in breach of its Public Sector Equality Duty to foster good relations between persons with particular protected characteristics: *'Excluding and silencing individuals does not foster good relations; that can only be achieved by resolving disputes through peaceful dialogue in an environment which supports and protects those who are distressed by the discussion of challenging issues.'* In addition, Reindorf noted that suppressing gender-critical views may constitute indirect sex discrimination, given that the academics targeted are overwhelmingly women.

It should be noted that the list above is far from exhaustive. The testimonies section of this report provides numerous additional examples, including several provided by Kathleen Stock alone.

In many cases, activists have sought to prevent events from taking place, but these events have ultimately gone ahead. Nevertheless, activists have succeeded in generating difficulties for event organisers, and have smeared the reputations of organisers and speakers (Sullivan and Suissa, 2022). Such instances contribute to a chilling effect, discouraging academics and students from organising events including gender-critical perspectives. They can also be seen as part of a campaign of cancellation and mobbing of particular individuals.

University management have imposed increased bureaucratic control and 'risk management' on events, often leading to demands that events seen as 'risky' because they may attract opposition should be subject to 'mitigations' such as demands for organisers to pay for increased security, refusal to allow normal promotion for the event, refusal to allow external attendees, or refusal to allow an event to be held in-person. Those speakers who are deemed 'risky' are typically those who have been attacked and no-platformed in the past. Thus, the university's bureaucratic processes, while supposedly neutral, empower the aggressors and compound the silencing of those under attack. In practice therefore, these risk assessment processes are not viewpoint neutral.

Some universities attempt to eliminate the risk of reputational damage by pre-vetting speakers before issuing an invitation.¹⁶⁷ This attempt to 'disappear' the phenomenon

¹⁶⁷ For example, the University of Bristol 'External Speaker Code of Practice' states: 'No booking of the speaker or venue should be confirmed until a decision has been made under this procedure that the event can go ahead'. I have been told that 'Where possible [such] mitigations are normally agreed and put in place before a speaker is invited to speak at a University of Bristol event' (private correspondence).

of no-platforming removes the autonomy of academics and students in inviting speakers.

In some cases, violence and physical intimidation and disruption have been employed by gender-identity activists at university events. For example:

- As reported by The Scotsman in 2019, 'Julie Bindel, the keynote speaker at an Edinburgh University event which discussed the future of women's sex-based rights, said she was verbally abused, "lunged at" and almost "punched in the face", by a transwoman as she left the building'.¹⁶⁸ The perpetrator was issued with a Direct Measure by the Crown Office.¹⁶⁹ A stink bomb was let off during the meeting.¹⁷⁰ Due to threats of disruption, the university gave speakers a one-hour security briefing beforehand, leading one to be physically sick with anxiety.¹⁷¹
- An event with Helen Joyce at Gonville and Caius College Cambridge was disrupted by chanting, screaming and banging.¹⁷²
- At the book launch for 'Sex and Gender: a contemporary reader' (Routledge) at the University of Edinburgh, activists attempted to block access to the lecture theatre and grabbed women's legs as they were attempting to enter the venue (Benjamin, 2023).
- The 2023 UCL WPUK 'Education for Women's Liberation' conference was targeted by activists, apparently led by an individual with convictions for kidnapping, torture and attempted murder. Activists banged on windows

¹⁶⁸ The Scotsman (2019), *Feminist speaker Julie Bindel 'attacked by transgender person' at Edinburgh University after talk*, 6 June 2019.

<https://www.scotsman.com/news/scottish-news/feminist-speaker-julie-bindel-attacked-by-transgender-person-at-edinburgh-university-after-talk-545841>

¹⁶⁹ The Scotsman (2019), *Scottish schools transgender event cancelled amid fears for speakers' safety*, 3 December 2019.

<https://www.scotsman.com/news/scottish-news/scottish-schools-transgender-event-cancelled-amid-fears-for-speakers-safety-1400793>

¹⁷⁰ Bindel, J. (2022), *Scotland must rebel against this oppressive gender ideology*, 17 December 2022, The Spectator.

<https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/scotland-must-rebel-against-this-oppressive-gender-ideology/>

¹⁷¹ Heuchan, C. (2024), in Dalgety, S. and Hunter Blackburn L. (eds) (2024) *The Women Who Wouldn't Wheesht* (Constable).

¹⁷² Sex Matters (2022), *Helen Joyce speaks at Caius College*, 15 November 2022.

<https://sex-matters.org/posts/updates/helen-joyce-speaks-at-caius-college/>

and screamed abuse, disrupting a session and forcing delegates to evacuate the room they were in.¹⁷³

- Protestors disrupted a debate with Kathleen Stock at the Oxford Union, which required a police presence.¹⁷⁴

This is not a ‘both sides’ issue in a ‘toxic debate’. We are not aware of any instances of attempts, successful or otherwise, to prevent trans-affirmative events from going ahead, or to protest or disrupt such events. No examples of this were provided to the call for evidence for this Review. Most universities have hosted numerous such events, some of which have included speakers who could be seen as highly provocative, without any incident. Indeed, such events are frequent, often organised by both staff and student LGBTQ+ networks, and, in contrast to gender-critical events, typically have a high level of institutional support.¹⁷⁵

In some cases, university managers have exacerbated a culture of silencing and discrimination by issuing partisan messaging which suggests that staff and students may be harmed, not even by exposure to diverse views, but by views which they have not engaged with being expressed anywhere on campus. An example of this at the University of Swansea includes the suggestion that LGBT+ staff may need mental health support because of an event on ‘Sex, Discrimination and the Equality Act’. (See Appendix 1, 2024-8). Another example of partisan messaging is provided by an email from the Master and Senior Tutor of Gonville and Caius College Cambridge regarding an event with Helen Joyce (Appendix 1, 2022-4). The message, sent to all students, attacked Joyce’s views as offensive and hateful, and

¹⁷³ Reduux (2023), *Violent Transgender Convict Protests Women’s Rights Conference*, 5 February 2023.

<https://reduxx.info/uk-violent-transgender-convict-protests-womens-rights-conference/>

¹⁷⁴ The Guardian (2023), *Trans activists disrupt Kathleen Stock speech at Oxford Union*, 30 May 2023.

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/may/30/trans-activists-disrupt-kathleen-stock-speech-at-oxford-union>

¹⁷⁵ See for example Horbury, E. and Yao, C.X. (2020), *Empire and eugenics: Trans studies in the United Kingdom*. ‘Together with our colleague Ella Metcalfe in Maths and Physical Sciences we were successful in securing an internal grant to hold our institution’s first symposium on trans issues and for trans people, ‘Trans Studies, Trans Lives: Past, Present, and Future.’ Our call sought to bring together academics, activists, and creatives. We hoped to create a visible counternarrative of community and affirmation fusing the often bifurcated efforts of the research versus social and advocacy groups. All would be welcome to come, discuss, and learn in a spirit of generosity. In many respects, the event was a triumph: excellent presentations of research from the medieval period through to the present and many forms of artistic and literary production informed by lived experience; outstanding turnout from students, staff, and faculty; participation from nonacademics living in the wider community; visible support from senior administrators.’

emphasised that the Master and Senior Tutor would not be attending.¹⁷⁶ The organiser of the event has described the fears of students who wished to attend, ‘... several students, mostly women, told me that they felt afraid to attend. This was not necessarily because they were frightened of violent protests. In a way it was worse than that. They were afraid of ostracism by their student peers, and even by academic staff. I therefore booked unobtrusive spaces where they could stay for up to three hours in advance, so that they could enter the hall without being seen’.¹⁷⁷

In other cases, university managers have taken a very different approach, signalling that they see debate and discussion as a positive value. For example, Professor Michael Spence, Provost of UCL, has made a statement regarding how UCL manages disagreement and diverse views. As part of his announcement of the UCL Disagreeing Well initiative Spence stated that ‘...communities of our kind are ones in which people should expect to be confronted with ideas and expression which they find confronting, offensive, uncomfortable, and even impact on their core sense of self, as well as ideas and expression with which they agree’.¹⁷⁸ Professor Robert van der Noort, Vice Chancellor of Reading University made a statement affirming the value of disagreement following objections to an event hosting the philosopher Holly Lawford Smith. ‘None of us, though, has a right to not be offended by somebody’s views. We have an obligation to respect and allow others to express views we disagree with, even those we find upsetting and hurtful. If you are offended by a speaker, don’t just surround yourself with people who agree with you – go to the talk or seminar and try to change some people’s minds through reasoned debate. Preventing discussion from happening isn’t just wrong, it’s also counter-productive to good ideas’.¹⁷⁹ Van der Noort makes a point of attending contentious events and also of engaging with any demonstrators.

¹⁷⁶ Sex Matters (2022), *Helen Joyce speaks at Caius College*.

<https://sex-matters.org/posts/updates/helen-joyce-speaks-at-caius-college/>

¹⁷⁷ Ahmed, A. (2022), *The fear to speak freely stalks Cambridge*, 26 October 2022, Telegraph.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20221027021350/https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2022/10/26/fear-speak-freely-stalks-cambridge/>

¹⁷⁸ UCL (2023), ‘*Provost's update: How do we manage disagreement and diverse views in our community?*’.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20230518104351/https://www.ucl.ac.uk/news/2023/mar/provosts-update-how-do-we-manage-disagreement-and-diverse-views-our-community>

¹⁷⁹ University of Reading (2022), ‘*From the Vice-Chancellor: Use your hard-won freedoms*’.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20220505155642/https://www.reading.ac.uk/news/2022/University-News/VC-comment-strengthen-freedom-and-support>

Research ethics processes

Ethics committees have grown steadily in power and scope since the 1980s, and the implications for academic freedom are of longstanding concern. It has been argued that ethical processes developed for medical science have been inappropriately applied to the humanities and social sciences, disciplines where there is little methodological consensus and political disagreement is unavoidable (Schrag, 2010). Hammersley (2010) notes that 'In 2000, a major change in the institutional environment of UK social science occurred when the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) produced its Research Ethics Framework (REF), requiring that all institutions whose members seek funding must operate ethical regulation procedures of a prescribed kind.' ESRC set out the ground rules for RECs in UK universities in their Research Ethics Framework (confusingly named REF, which was later renamed the Framework for Research Ethics – FRE). Writing in 2008, Boden et al noted 'the new ethics regimes taking root in universities sediment rules and codes in centralised policies, bureaucratic procedures and processes that delimit academic freedom to roam critically and creatively' (Boden, Epstein and Latimer, 2009). Since then, the demands of ethics committees and the degree of centralisation of ethics processes have grown apace. Increasingly, student as well as staff research is subject to ethical review, and even secondary data analysis is not necessarily exempt. The tendency of universities to use ethical review to manage the risk of 'reputational damage' has been noted (Hedgecoe, 2016). Current ESRC guidelines do not acknowledge risks to academic freedom or suggest mitigations to address such risks.¹⁸⁰

Ethical review makes high demands on staff time, and routinely generates delays, preventing researchers from being able to commence their research when planned. Seeking to avoid such delays can generate a chilling effect on the proposed research, even when the research is ultimately approved, as researchers seek to avoid proposing anything which may be questioned by an ethics board reviewer. Delays can prevent time-sensitive research from being delivered in a timely way.

Given the political nature of the social sciences, it is perhaps inevitable that some reviewers seek to use their positions to impose particular viewpoints or to block research that they dislike.

Ethics committees commonly direct researchers to draw on advice from university EDI teams. We have seen examples of university guidance documents which codify

¹⁸⁰ UKRI (online), *Research organisations and research ethics committees*.
<https://web.archive.org/web/20241126160152/https://www.ukri.org/councils/esrc/guidance-for-applicants/research-ethics-guidance/research-organisations-and-research-ethics-committees-our-principles-research-ethics-committees/>

a belief in gender-identity theory into rules and recommendations regarding what data should be collected, discouraging data collection on sex. Guidance from Loughborough University on data collection on sex and gender says ‘This guide aims to help you decide what you need to ask and how you need to ask it. This may be as part of academic research, undergraduate projects or internal university projects like staff and student surveys.’ The guide states that ‘in most cases gender [as opposed to sex] will be most relevant’.¹⁸¹ It also recommends asking ‘Are you intersex and/or have a variation of sex characteristics (VSC)?’, and repeats the myth (Sax, 2002) that 1.7% of the population have ‘intersex variations’. The University of Oxford hosts guidance stating that data collection on ‘sex/gender’ may be problematic, and further stating that ‘National guidance on data collection in higher education has changed, with a move towards recognising a gender spectrum by offering multiple options of ‘male’, ‘female’, ‘non-binary’ or ‘other’.’¹⁸² UCL guidance suggests that data on binary sex should only be collected in particular circumstances¹⁸³. Recent (but no longer current) UCL ethics guidance on collecting data on sex and gender stated that ‘It is most usual to ask people about their gender. Where this is done, the researcher should not assume that gender will be binary. Best-practice would be to allow the person to input their own gender into a blank box, or to provide additional options that account for non-binary gender identities’.

Cases in the public domain where ethics committees have prevented gender-critical research include those of James Caspian at Bath Spa University¹⁸⁴ and Dr John Armstrong at King’s College London.¹⁸⁵ These cases are both included in the testimonies documented in part three of this report.

¹⁸¹ Loughborough University (online), *Data gathering - sex and gender*.
<https://web.archive.org/web/20231209172925/https://www.lboro.ac.uk/equity-diversity-inclusion/edi-me/data-gathering-sex-gender/>

¹⁸² University of Oxford (online), ‘Gender identity survey questions: Information on asking survey questions about gender identity’.
<https://web.archive.org/web/20241203124126/https://edu.admin.ox.ac.uk/gender-identity-survey-questions#collapse1112756>

¹⁸³ UCL (online), *Guidance on the collection of diversity monitoring data*.
<https://web.archive.org/web/20240726174127/https://www.ucl.ac.uk/equality-diversity-inclusion/equalityucl/monitoring-data/guidance-collection-diversity-monitoring-data#Gender>

¹⁸⁴ Scullion, D. (2021), ‘Banned from Researching Trans’, 17 February 2021, The Critic.
<https://thecritic.co.uk/banned-from-researching-trans/>

¹⁸⁵ Armstrong, J. (2023), *EDI Contra Science*, 1 April 2023, The Critic.
<https://thecritic.co.uk/edi-contra-science/>

Academic Publishing

Academic publishing is a lucrative international business which has faced an erosion in trust due to factors including the replicability crisis, plagiarism, fraud, and retractions (Khan et al., 2024) as well as increased politicisation.¹⁸⁶ Publishers face pressures from internal and external activists, including multi-signatory letters and social media pile-ons.

Some journals have embedded gender-identity theory into their guidelines for authors. For example, the medical journal *The Lancet* suggests in its author guidelines that sex is not binary: 'Sex and gender are often incorrectly portrayed as binary (female/male or woman/man), concordant, and static. However, these constructs exist along a spectrum that includes additional sex categorisations and gender identities, such as people who are intersex/have differences of sex development (DSD) or identify as non-binary. In any given person, sex and gender might not align, and both can change. Sex and gender are not entirely discrete concepts and their definitions continue to evolve.'¹⁸⁷

Other journals have broader guidelines which do not explicitly outlaw any given viewpoint, but pose a risk of enabling politicised gate-keeping. For example, *Nature Human Behaviour* has produced new ethics guidance which 'addresses potential harms for human population groups who do not participate in research but may be harmed by its publication' (*Nature Human Behaviour*, 2022). These vague and overly broad guidelines create a risk of politicisation and censorship of science.¹⁸⁸ Similarly, the Royal Society of Chemistry have published 'Guidance for the elimination of inappropriate content in RSC journals and books'¹⁸⁹ including the statement that 'inappropriate content' may include 'any content that could reasonably offend someone on the basis of their age, gender, race, sexual orientation, religious or political beliefs, marital or parental status, physical features, national origin, social status or disability'. This implies that valid and robust research may be rejected on subjective grounds (Krylov, Frenking and Gill, 2022).

¹⁸⁶ Ritchie, S. (2022), *Science is political - and that's a bad thing*.
<https://www.sciencefictions.org/p/science-is-political>

¹⁸⁷ The Lancet (2025), *Information for Authors*,
<https://web.archive.org/web/20250303183904/https://www.thelancet.com/pb-assets/Lancet/authors/tl-info-for-authors-1717152770277.pdf>

¹⁸⁸ Sokal, A. (2024), *How ideology threatens to corrupt science*, 22 May 2024, *The Critic*.
<https://thecritic.co.uk/how-ideology-threatens-to-corrupt-science/>

¹⁸⁹ Royal Society of Chemistry (2021), *Guidance for the elimination of inappropriate content in RSC journals and books*.
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1h8VqXygX_q3b1H-1MX0ye4uAaY60xHx/view?pli=1

In some cases, editors and publishers have been unduly responsive to gender-identity activists who have demanded that papers with a gender-critical perspective be retracted.

Dr Lisa Littman's (Littman, 2018) pioneering work on rapid-onset gender dysphoria in adolescents and young adults was subject to retraction and a post-publication review following activist complaints, though the paper was subsequently republished.¹⁹⁰ A subsequent paper on the same topic (by different authors) was retracted by Springer Nature following complaints¹⁹¹ and later published by a different journal (Bailey and Diaz, 2023). Retraction of a paper is normally reserved for extreme cases such as plagiarism or fabrication of data. The traditional academic response to disagreement would be to publish a critique, rather than demand retraction of offending views or findings. A further paper criticising the retraction and suggesting that retractions have become a vehicle for censorship, was initially accepted by the journal 'Current Psychology', but this acceptance was rescinded, leading to the resignation of an editor.¹⁹²

The case of Dr Rebecca Tuvel's article 'In defense of transracialism' (Tuvel, 2017) published in 'Hypatia: A journal of feminist philosophy' is unusual, in that Tuvel was not advocating a gender-critical view, but nevertheless attracted demands by gender-identity activists that her paper be retracted. Tuvel's paper responded to the Rachel Dolezal affair¹⁹³ and argued that '...considerations that support transgenderism extend to transracialism. Given this parity, since we should accept transgender individuals' decisions to change sexes, we should also accept transracial individuals' decisions to change races.' Tuvel's paper was not intended as a *reductio ad*

¹⁹⁰ Transgender Trend (2019), *Lisa Littman Study is Republished by PLOS ONE*.

<https://www.transgendertrend.com/lisa-littman-study-republished-plos-one/>

¹⁹¹ Bailey, M. (2023), 'My Research on Gender Dysphoria Was Censored. But I Won't Be'.

<https://www.thefp.com/p/trans-activists-killed-my-scientific-paper>

[Link to open letter demanding the removal of Kenneth Zucker as editor:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20240201181934/https://asbopenletter.com/>]

See also Wright, C. (2023), *Anatomy of a scientific scandal*, City Journal. <https://www.city-journal.org/article/anatomy-of-a-scientific-scandal>

¹⁹² Retraction Watch (2024), 'Exclusive: Editor resigns after he says publisher blocked criticism of decision to retract paper on gender dysphoria'.

<https://retractionwatch.com/2024/09/03/exclusive-editor-resigns-as-publisher-blocks-criticism-of-decision-to-pull-paper-on-gender-dysphoria/>

¹⁹³ McGeal, C. (2015), 'Rachel Dolezal: 'I wasn't identifying as black to upset people. I was being me'', 13 December 2013, The Guardian.

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/dec/13/rachel-dolezal-i-wasnt-identifying-as-black-to-upset-people-i-was-being-me>

absurdum of gender-identity theory. Nonetheless, an open letter¹⁹⁴ demanding retraction of the paper garnered over 800 signatories, including prominent figures in gender studies such as Professor Judith Butler.¹⁹⁵ The letter claimed that the article ‘causes harm’ and stated ‘we can only conclude that there has been a failure in the review process, and one that painfully reflects a lack of engagement beyond white and cisgender privilege’. The associate editors of *Hypatia* responded by apologising¹⁹⁶ for the publication of Tuvel’s paper in terms which have been described as ‘defamation’,¹⁹⁷ and the paper was initially removed from the *Hypatia* website.¹⁹⁸ The *Hypatia* board later clarified that the associate editors had acted without consultation with the editor,¹⁹⁹ and the paper was restored to the journal. Tuvel’s treatment has been described as a witch hunt.²⁰⁰

Authors also experience barriers within the editorial and peer-review process. These barriers are ‘hidden’ compared to post-publication attacks. Academics expect to experience mixed and sometimes unfair treatment within the peer-review process. Nevertheless, accounts of difficulty in publishing important findings, such as Sallie Baxendale’s experience of repeated rejection of her work on the impact of suppressing puberty on neuropsychological function (Baxendale, 2024), are troubling. As Baxendale notes ‘I have never encountered the kinds of concerns that

¹⁹⁴ Open letter to *Hypatia* (online).
<https://archive.is/IUeR4>

¹⁹⁵ This stands in interesting juxtaposition with Butler’s name as first signatory on a multi-signatory letter supporting a professor accused of sexual harassment, available here:
<https://leiterreports.typepad.com/blog/2018/06/blaming-the-victim-is-apparently-ok-when-the-accused-is-a-feminist-literary-theorist.html>, see coverage of this incident here: Gessen, M. (2018), *An N.Y.U. ‘Sexual-Harassment Case Has Spurred a Necessary Conversation About #MeToo’*, *The New Yorker*.
<https://www.newyorker.com/news/our-columnists/an-nyu-sexual-harassment-case-has-spurred-a-necessary-conversation-about-metoo>

¹⁹⁶ Leiter Reports (2017), ‘*Thought crimes watch: comparing trans-racism to transgenderism verboten!*’.
<https://leiterreports.typepad.com/blog/2017/05/thought-crimes-watch-comparing-trans-racism-to-transgenderism-verboten.html>

¹⁹⁷ Leiter Reports (2017), ‘*The defamation of Rebecca Tuvel by the Board of Associate Editors of Hypatia and the authors of the Open Letter*’.
<https://leiterreports.typepad.com/blog/2017/05/the-defamation-of-rebecca-tuvel-by-the-board-of-associate-editors-of-hypatia-and-the-open-letter.html>

¹⁹⁸ Vigo, J. and Garano, L. (2017), *An open letter on the Hypatia controversy*, *Feminist Current*.
<https://www.feministcurrent.com/2017/05/25/open-letter-hypatia-controversy/>

¹⁹⁹ <https://dailynous.com/2017/05/18/statement-hypatia-board-regarding-tuvel-controversy/>

²⁰⁰ Singal, J. (2017), *This Is What a Modern-Day Witch Hunt Looks Like*, *Intelligencer*.
<https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2017/05/transracism-article-controversy.html>

some of the reviewers expressed in response to my review of puberty blockers. In this case, it wasn't the methods they objected to, it was the actual findings'.²⁰¹

Another researcher received reviewer comments which described the text repeatedly as 'transphobic', adding 'using the term opposite biological sex is not only sexist, homophobic and transphobic, it is biologically incorrect', 'male bodied people is incorrect and transphobic' and 'The Authors should remember that not just gender, but sex too, is a social construction'.²⁰²

Discrimination by journals is typically difficult to prove, but in two documented cases, Subject Access Request data has established that the perceived gender-critical beliefs of the authors, as distinct from the content of the submitted work, were a factor in editorial rejection.²⁰³ These cases are described in detail in the testimonies section of this report.

In another case, Edinburgh University Press unprecedentedly raised questions with the journal 'Scottish Affairs' regarding the suitability of a paper which had already been accepted for publication when it was sent for type-setting and preparation for press.^{204 205} This intervention was due to an accusation of transphobia from within the publisher's staff, based on the article's use of the word 'woman'. The journal's editor refused to bow to pressure in this case, and the article was published (Hunter Blackburn, Murray and Mackenzie, 2021; Murray and Hunter Blackburn, 2019). Lisa Mackenzie had already experienced a months-long investigation by her employer, the Royal College of Nursing, after the findings of the paper were presented at an event on women's rights. Mackenzie asked for her name to be removed from the

²⁰¹ Baxendale, S. (2024), *Why did three journals reject my puberty-blocker study? Trans children deserve to know the facts*, 12 February 2024, Unherd.

<https://unherd.com/2024/02/why-did-three-journals-reject-my-puberty-blocker-study/>

²⁰² Devine, C. (2021), *Written evidence submitted to parliament by Cathy Devine [GRA1160]*.

<https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/17227/pdf/>

²⁰³ Times Higher Education (2024), *Gender-critical scholars claim discrimination over BMJ rejections* <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/gender-critical-scholars-claim-discrimination-over-bmj-rejections> Note that the lead author of this review is a co-author of one of the rejected papers referred to.

²⁰⁴ MurrayBlackburnMackenzie (2020), *Statement on Edinburgh University Press and our Scottish Affairs article*.

<https://murrayblackburnmackenzie.org/2020/08/01/statement-about-edinburgh-university-press-and-our-scottish-affairs-article/>

²⁰⁵ The Times (2020), *Academics tell of bid by Edinburgh University Press to censor article on transwomen*, 2 August 2020.

<https://www.thetimes.com/uk/scotland/article/academics-tell-of-bid-by-edinburgh-university-press-to-censor-article-on-transwomen-5frs77fhd>

paper due to her employer's stance, and has stated that she felt she was left with no other option but to quit her job.²⁰⁶

Activist campaigns can pose challenges for academic publishers. Michele Moore faced a campaign to have her ousted from her position as editor of the journal *Disability and Society* due to her gender-critical views²⁰⁷ following her publication of a book which questioned the idea that children can be born in the wrong body (Brunskell-Evans and Moore, 2018). A multi-signatory open letter (Appendix 1, 2019-5) stated:

'We insist, in the strongest possible terms, that Dr. Moore step down from her post as editor of *Disability & Society*. We also urge the editorial board to write a public statement that condemns anti-transgender bigotry and affirms the inherent worth of the transgender and gender nonconforming members of the DS community specifically and the lives of transgender and gender nonconforming people broadly. Until such time as Dr. Moore resigns, we, the undersigned, will not review for, publish with, promote, or subscribe to *Disability & Society*'.

In this case, the journal stood firm, and Moore remained in post as editor.

In another case, Sarah Honeychurch, an editor of the journal *Hybrid Pedagogy*, received a request for her resignation from the managing editor and was removed from her post.²⁰⁸ This was simply for signing a letter to *The Times* expressing concern about the campaign group Stonewall's influence restricting academic freedom.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁶ Marland, I. (2021) *Nursing union 'hounded out' worker over trans research*. *The Times*. <https://www.thetimes.com/uk/politics/article/nursing-union-hounded-out-worker-over-trans-research-fbr9ktk7j>

²⁰⁷ Yeomans, E. (2019), *Journal editors quit in protest over 'transphobic' academic*, 26 June 2019, *The Times*. <https://www.thetimes.com/article/journal-editors-quit-in-protest-over-transphobic-academic-6tvq3cwf>

²⁰⁸ Griffiths, S. and Somerville, E. (2019), *'Academic faces sack for letter to Sunday Times that criticised training on trans issues'*, 23 June 2019, *The Sunday Times*. <https://www.thetimes.com/article/academic-faces-sack-for-letter-to-sunday-times-that-criticised-trans-training-gnbr8gxqm>

²⁰⁹ The letter concluded 'We therefore urge Stonewall to clarify that it fully supports academic freedom of thought. Failing this, we ask universities to sever their links with this organisation altogether.'. *The Times* (2019), *Letters to the Editor*, 26 June 2019. <https://www.thetimes.com/business-money/money/article/boris-deserves-to-lead-the-party-he-s-wrecked-v7k7wbf8w>

Publishers have faced objections from activists to the publication of gender-critical works. The anticipation of such protests from internal and external activists may influence publishers' decisions.

In 2019, Oxford University Press USA decided not to go ahead with a collection of interviews with women philosophers after its curator, Richard Marshall, refused to remove interviews with two gender-critical philosophers, Kathleen Stock and Holly Lawford Smith.²¹⁰

In 2021, Oxford University Press (OUP) pulled Holly Lawford-Smith's book 'Gender-Critical Feminism' (Lawford-Smith, 2022) out of production, reclassified it from a trade book to an academic book (meaning a higher price point and likely lower readership), sent a chapter out for re-review, and required further revisions.²¹¹ The publisher received two open letters objecting to the publication, one from 'members of the international scholarly community'²¹² and another from 'Oxford University Press employees and authors'. The first letter (Appendix 1: 2022-7) expressed 'profound disappointment at OUP's forthcoming publication of the book Gender-Critical Feminism by Holly Lawford-Smith', going on to say that 'The very title of her forthcoming publication with OUP is an anti-trans dog whistle: a turn of phrase designed to sound academic that serves instead as a rallying cry for people who believe that trans people do not and should not exist.' The second letter asks that OUP management reconsider the publication of Lawford-Smith's book, stating 'We are asking OUP to prioritize the wellbeing of its trans employees, trans authors, and the trans community as a whole over the potential profit that this book may generate'.²¹³ OUP stood firm in this case, issuing a clear statement defending the publication of the book.²¹⁴

²¹⁰ This would have been a sequel to the following volume: Marshall, R. (2017), *'Ethics at 3: AM: Questions and Answers on how to Live Well'*, Oxford University Press.

²¹¹ Byrne, A. (2023), *Philosophy's No-go Zone*, Quillette.
<https://quillette.com/2023/04/17/philosophys-no-go-zone/>

²¹² Letter to OUP re: "gender critical" publication (online).
<https://web.archive.org/web/20241229153004/https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSc342TjGvVsw80WpnZtJqJO7JUAjCY5LVxcZQzVVjFVEFbvUQ/viewform>

²¹³ Weinberg, J. (2022), *OUP's Decision to Publish "Gender-Critical" Book Raises Concerns of Scholars and OUP Employees*.
<https://dailynous.com/2022/04/12/oups-decision-to-publish-gender-critical-book-raises-concerns-of-scholars-and-oup-employees/>

²¹⁴ Brown, L. (2022), *OUP stands by book on gender critical feminism after author backlash*, The Bookseller.
<https://www.thebookseller.com/news/oup-stands-by-book-on-gender-critical-feminism-after-author-backlash>

Philosopher Alex Byrne had a contract with OUP for a book titled 'Trouble with Gender'. Following delivery of the manuscript in 2022, the book was rejected outright with no option for making revisions.²¹⁵ The book was subsequently published by Polity Press.

Also in 2022, OUP informed Holly Lawford-Smith that they would not be publishing 'Sex Matters: Essays in Gender-Critical Philosophy', despite the fact the book was under contract and had been positively reviewed. Following the intervention of the Free Speech Union, the book was published by OUP in 2023.²¹⁶

Threats of legal action create significant financial risk and can be wielded by those who wish to censor lawful views. Michele Moore and Heather Brunsell Evans faced a legal threat to their second book from the Tavistock Gender Identity Services (GIDS). This is documented in Moore's testimony to this review (in the testimonies section). She states, 'We were very shocked. This left the publishers Cambridge Scholars in a terrible dilemma over whether to bring the book out. We were determined that the book needed to come out but had no money to access the kind of legal support we would need to go up against the Tavistock. We knew we stood to lose our homes if a legal battle ensued. The Tavistock had a sort of hubris about themselves as if they were untouchable. We were looking over the edge of the cliff if we were to bring this book out. Then somehow, we found allies, a barrister and a solicitor came forward to work for us pro bono. They restored the publisher's confidence for bringing out the book, our contributors who feared their own homes could also be on the line stood with us. It was a terrifying period of several months, the campaigns against us were at fever pitch. Right at the last minute threats from the Tavistock simply evaporated and so the book appeared'.

Authors of highly successful books which question gender-identity theory have recounted exceptional difficulties in finding a publisher, including Kathleen Stock and Hannah Barnes.²¹⁷ The editor of Kathleen Stock's bestselling and influential book 'Material Girls' subsequently left her employment with the publisher Hachette, citing

²¹⁵ The rejection letter is posted here: <https://leiterreports.typepad.com/blog/2023/04/alex-byrnes-rejection-email-from-oxford-university-press.html>

²¹⁶ Lawford-Smith, H. (2023), *Sex Matters: Essays in Gender-Critical Philosophy*, Oxford University Press.
<https://global.oup.com/academic/product/sex-matters-9780192896131?cc=us&lang=en&>

²¹⁷ Barnes, H. (2022), 'Hannah Barnes: My Tavistock exposé scared off 22 publishers', 26 February 2023, The Times.
<https://www.thetimes.com/culture/books/article/hannah-barnes-my-tavistock-expose-scared-off-22-publishers-rfd23dfng>

discrimination for her gender-critical views, and sued her employer for discrimination.²¹⁸ The parties reached a confidential settlement in 2025.

Opportunities to disseminate work to wider audiences beyond academia are important to scholars seeking to contribute to policy debates.

3am Magazine is a website which has for many years published interviews with philosophers, carried out by one of its editors, Richard Marshall. Following online complaints, the magazine withdrew an interview with the philosopher Holly Lawford-Smith from publication. This led to the resignation of Richard Marshall from 3am after 19 years with the outlet.²¹⁹

In 2019, the Institute for Art and Ideas (IAI) solicited six contributions from authors, three from each side of the gender debate, four of whom were academic philosophers. All six pieces were published, but the contributors taking the gender-identity theory perspective objected to being published alongside contributions from gender-critical feminists and demanded that their contributions be retracted. Following these objections, all of the pieces were initially taken down from the IAI website, but the gender-critical contributions were subsequently re-published. Robin Dembroff, Rebecca Kukla (who now goes by the name Quill Kukla) and Susan Stryker issued a retraction statement stating that they had been 'non-consensually co-platformed'.²²⁰ The authors stated that they refused on principle to engage in any discussion alongside gender-critical positions '...in the same way that we would refuse to participate in a conversation that debated whether the Holocaust actually happened, or whether corrective rape should be used to cure lesbianism, or whether or not the white race is superior to all others. There are limits to civil and intellectual discourse beyond which speech acts are simply acts of violence.' Holly Lawford-

²¹⁸ Crowd Justice (2024) <https://www.crowdjustice.com/case/hounded-out-of-my-job-in-publi/>

²¹⁹ Covered by Leiter Reports (2019), <https://leiterreports.typepad.com/blog/2019/03/3am-magazines-radical-chic-motto-whatever-it-is-were-against-it-turns-out-to-be-bullocks.html> and the Daily Nous (2019), <https://dailynous.com/2019/03/20/richard-marshall-resigns-3am-magazine/> The interview is available here: <https://www.3-16am.co.uk/articles/thinking-about-climate-change-global-justice-and-trans>

²²⁰ Retraction Statement by Robin Dembroff, Rebecca Kukla and Susan Stryker: The scholars explain their position against co-platforming (2019). <https://web.archive.org/web/20241229144929/https://iai.tv/articles/retraction-statement-by-robin-dembroff-rebecca-kukla-and-susan-stryker-auid-1256?ref=quillette.com>

Smith has suggested that the comment regarding corrective rape was a ‘grotesque barb’ directed at herself, Kathleen Stock and Julie Bindel, who are all lesbians.²²¹

We are not aware of any reported examples of barriers to publishing analogous to those above from academics who disagree with gender-critical views.²²²

Academic publishers may look to the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) guidance.²²³ This guidance could be strengthened by addressing contemporary problems such as pressure from both internal and external activists. It would be helpful to develop clear guidance to assist publishers in navigating such issues.

Social media

Academics are increasingly advised to use social media to disseminate their research, often with a view to generating societal impact. However, this engagement can expose academics, irrespective of their views and on both sides of the gender debate, to aggression, mockery and abuse.²²⁴ At its most serious, social media abuse may include sexualised threats and death threats. Abuse may come from anonymous accounts or from named individuals, including other academics. This is not a direct barrier to research, yet it contributes to an intimidatory climate which is not conducive to sharing ideas. University managers should consider what more they should be doing to support staff with this aspect of professional and public engagement.

²²¹ Lawford-Smith, H. (2010), *How the Trans-Rights Movement Is Turning Philosophers into Activists*, 20 August 2019, Quillette.
<https://quillette.com/2019/09/20/how-the-trans-rights-movement-is-turning-academic-philosophers-into-sloganeering-activists/>

²²² An Associate Professor at a US university stated on social media in June 2023 that a UK University ‘has intervened to prevent one of their journals from publishing my essay in defense of academic freedom’, and further claimed that this was due to ‘fear that they will be sued’ for libel by individuals mentioned in the paper. The paper in question stated that the ‘gender critical movement’ poses a ‘mortal threat’ to academic freedom in the UK (the author posted the paper online). In subsequent posts, the university forum in question was named as UCL’s ‘Think Pieces’. ‘Think Pieces’ describes itself as a ‘collaborative online forum’ rather than a journal, and is not peer-reviewed. As noted elsewhere, academic freedom only provides specific enhanced protection from defamation in limited circumstances, requiring peer-reviewed publication.

²²³ Committee on Publication Ethics (online).
<https://publicationethics.org/guidance/Guidelines>

²²⁴ Jack, P. (2025), *Universities failing academics targeted by online abuse*, Times Higher Education
<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/universities-failing-academics-targeted-online-abuse-paper> See also Yelin, H. and Clancy, L., (2024), ‘I Have a Folder in My Email Called Hate Mail’: *Academic Public Engagement, Digital Hate and the Unequally Distributed Risks of Visibility*, New Formations, 110(110-111), pp.187-206.

Academic research and teaching should be conducted in line with professional norms. In turn, institutions should be prepared to support and assist staff and students in dealing with any difficult wider reaction to their work, whenever and however it emerges. Concerns about media and social media reaction should not act as a barrier to undertaking controversial research or to communicating its findings. Universities should consider how they can better advise and support academics and research students regarding their social media use. Where an individual is facing abuse, a statement such as that issued by the University of Glasgow in support of Dr Michael Foran may sometimes be appropriate.²²⁵ If academics or students are engaged in clearly inappropriate social media activity directed at members of a university, such as making defamatory posts, line managers should ensure that support is provided to the victim and action taken to remedy the situation.²²⁶ Particularly in the case of students and junior staff, there is also a duty of care to those acting aggressively online, to ensure that they understand the potential damage to their own reputations.

Summary

Barriers to research on sex and gender have been widely documented. The higher education sector has struggled to grasp the nature of this problem, which is often misleadingly described as a ‘toxic debate’, suggesting a symmetry of toxic behaviour which is not in fact apparent.

Some proponents of gender-identity theory have not adhered to truth-seeking norms and have promoted fear of disagreement and of people with dissenting views.

Campaigns of harassment have had devastating consequences for individuals and created a wider chilling effect for academia and the research community.

University policies have often adhered to the tenets of gender-identity theory, thus embedding discriminatory practices.

In cases where individual academics or students have tried to resolve issues using internal mechanisms, these processes have often proven inadequate. Going to an employment tribunal is an exceptionally onerous and potentially career-ending step.

²²⁵ Dunlop, R. (2024), *In defence of Michael Foran*, 25 October 2024, The Critic.

<https://thecritic.co.uk/in-defence-of-michael-foran/>.

Link to University of Glasgow letter <https://x.com/michaelpforan/status/1852034129258336492>

²²⁶ Good practice in this area is likely to be relatively hidden as it operates behind the scenes. We are aware of one case where a line manager approached a senior staff member at the institution of an individual who had made a post which was perceived as defamatory and elicited an apology and deletion of the post.

Statements from higher education management representatives and bodies have typically downplayed and denied problems with academic freedom,²²⁷ dismissing or minimising concerns as ‘media noise’ or ‘culture wars’. However, we have also highlighted some examples of good practice.

²²⁷ For example, the Chair of UUK’s Free Speech and Academic Freedom Advisory Group recently wrote that ‘Despite the media noise, universities generally feel that they have done a pretty good job of protecting the principles of free speech and academic freedom’ Shitij Kapur (2023) Securing and promoting freedom of speech is a responsibility universities take seriously. WonkHE (online). <https://wonkhe.com/blogs/securing-and-promoting-freedom-of-speech-is-a-responsibility-universities-take-seriously/>

Part 2. Methods and respondent profile

This part of the report describes the methods used and looks at the profile of respondents, drawing on responses to the occupational, demographic, occupational, and attitudinal questions asked in the survey instrument. This includes demographic data (on sex, age, disability, ethnicity, disability, religion, sexual orientation, and trans status), data on respondent occupation, and for those within Higher Education, their disciplines and career status. The analysis also draws out comparisons between the profile of those respondents employed in academic roles, with those in Higher Education more widely, based on data submitted to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA).²²⁸ Lastly, we provide an overview of respondents' views and beliefs, including political alignment (left/right), views on feminism, and views on gender-critical beliefs. The analysis also draws out key differences in respondent profile between those who agree and disagreed with gender-critical beliefs. These include differences in how the two groups approached the survey instrument (for example, non-response rates for different questions) and differences in demographic profile.

Call for evidence

The call for evidence was hosted on a UCL project page that provided information about the project.²²⁹ It was publicised through a piece in Times Higher Education,²³⁰ the leading journal for higher education in the UK, through the X/Twitter account set up for the Review, and via the lead researcher's X/Twitter account. It was made clear that responses were welcome from any perspective. The call for evidence was therefore equally available to those wishing to report that they had encountered any kind of barrier, regardless of their views.

²²⁸ HESA collects, assures and disseminates data about higher education in the UK. UK higher education providers have statutory requirements to submit student data. HE Providers in Wales must submit data on both academic and non-academic staff. All approved (fee cap) HE Providers in England must submit data on academic staff and may choose to submit data on non-academic staff.

²²⁹ UCL (online), *Review of data, statistics and research on sex and gender*.
<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/ioe/departments-and-centres/departments/social-research-institute/research/review-data-statistics-and-research-sex-and-gender>

²³⁰ Sullivan, A. (2024), *Post-Cass, promoting accurate data should never be seen as partisan*, Times Higher Education.
<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/blog/post-cass-promoting-accurate-data-should-never-be-seen-partisan>

The survey instrument asked respondents (a full copy is shown in Appendix four):

‘What barriers to research have you faced? Select all that apply.

We will invite you to tell us what happened for each of the options you have selected. You may report on multiple experiences or issues. If a particular experience that you wish to report fits more than one category, you can select all the categories that apply, but just report the experience under what you consider the most relevant category.

There is no word limit.’

The online survey then set out seventeen types of barrier, as shown below. For each category respondents could either check a box to select a category, and/or provide supporting details.

1. Research ethics processes
2. Barriers to research funding
3. Barriers to data collection
4. Barriers to publication
5. Self-censorship and chilling effects (for example, feeling unable to express certain views)
6. No-platforming and discrimination against you as a speaker
7. Barriers to holding events, including any unusual demands on organisers failure to support the organisers in the usual way.
8. Disinvitations from projects or collaborations
9. Discrimination by university administrators or services (such as, IT, communications, HR, etc.)
10. Bullying, harassment and ostracism (such as colleagues or students cutting ties)
11. Complaints, including coordinated complaints against you
12. Management behaviour
13. Compelled speech (being forced to assent to certain views, statements or signals).
14. Barriers to career progression
15. Institutional policies and training
16. Barriers affecting students
17. Other

The online call also gave respondents the option to report on their demographic characteristics and aspects of their beliefs, including their left/right political alignment, views on feminism, and views on gender-critical beliefs.

Respondents could choose between providing their identity or remaining completely anonymous. In those cases where an identity was provided, the respondent was able to give or withhold permission to use their name. We have sought to protect anonymity as far as possible and have only named respondents in cases which are already in the public domain.

The project was approved by the UCL Research Ethics Committee.

Feminist Gender Equality Network

The call for evidence was shared by the Feminist Gender Equality Network (FGEN), which describes itself as ‘a major new global movement, dedicated to countering anti-trans propaganda at home and abroad, and spear-headed by academics in UK universities.’ FGEN emailed its membership providing a ‘Guide to completing the survey’ including template suggested responses. The email and guide are shown in Appendix 2. FGEN shared a direct link to the survey instrument (rather than a link to the project page with information about the call) via email only. A convenor of the network alerted members to the ‘urgent email’ in their inboxes via Twitter/X, but neither the network nor its convenors shared details of the call for evidence on social media. The email stated that FGEN had a ‘3 point plan’ regarding this Review, including UCL academics ‘taking up the issue internally with the ethics boards’, raising FOI requests with the government, and asking its membership to complete the call for evidence survey.

FGEN’s suggested responses expressed hostility to gender-critical views, for example likening these views to fascism. Suggested comments provided by the guide include ‘Gender “critical” beliefs are discriminatory, not “critical” in any capacity, and are gender-exclusionary beliefs’; ‘Lots of TNBGD [Trans, non-binary and gender diverse] speakers and allies (at UCL) come under attack by people with gender-exclusionary views, e.g., under the guise of asking questions, they call the speakers’ very existence into question. No one should have to explain or justify their existence, it’s horrific’; ‘Overt discrimination, erasure, questioning existence, microaggressions, harassment, misgendering, exclusionary practices, abuse are common experiences fueled [sic] by those with gender-exclusionary views (or so called gender-critical views)’; ‘Gender-exclusionary views have a knock on effect - it’s not just an attack on TNBGD folk, it echoes facism [sic] and is an attack on rights of LGBTQIA+ people, migrants, reproductive rights - and ultimately freedom and rights for all’; ‘Physical dangers - e.g., razor blades hidden behind anti-trans posters on campus’.

As shown in part three, some respondents simply copy-pasted the FGEN suggested responses into their submissions, while an unknown number are likely to have been influenced by the FGEN guide but used their own words to at least some extent.

Respondent profile

The following analysis is based on 130 completed submissions to the UCL portal. We also received a further ten responses directly, via email. These are not included in the quantitative analysis.

Taking an overview, the overall respondent profile can be characterised as aged 36 to 55, with left of centre political views. Around three-fifths (61%) of respondents said they were based in Higher Education, as either academic or non-academic staff. Just over half of the respondents identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or another sexual orientation (52%, n=68) and just under one in ten (8%, n=11) identified as trans. These proportions are higher compared to both the general population, and to academic staff employed in Higher Education more widely.

There are some marked differences among respondents, depending on whether they agree or disagree with gender-critical beliefs. This is defined in the survey questionnaire as ‘the belief that biological sex is real, important, immutable, and not to be conflated with gender identity’. Those who disagreed with gender-critical beliefs tended to be younger, much less likely to disclose their sex, more likely to be disabled, and more likely to report their political orientation as very left wing, compared to those who agreed with gender-critical beliefs. All bar one of the trans-identified respondents disagreed with gender-critical beliefs. Of the 51 respondents who disagreed with gender-critical beliefs,²³¹ just under a quarter of the submissions (n=12) appeared to be based on the FGEN template, as indicated by the extensive use of cut and pasted responses across multiple questions. None of the template-based responses gave first-hand accounts of barriers to research.

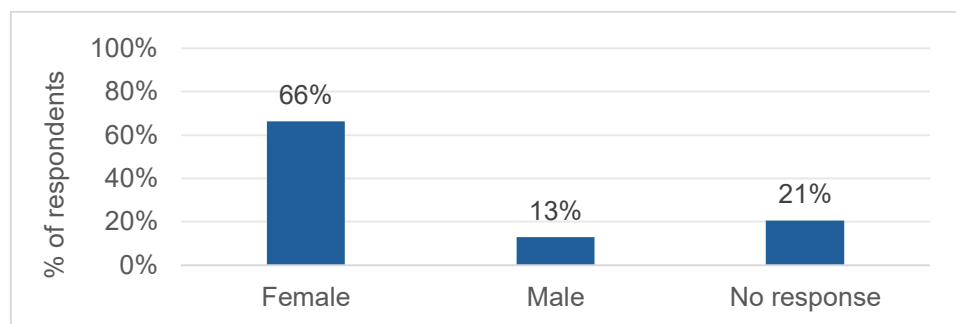
²³¹ This figure is based on an imputed variable, which assigned 17 respondents who did not respond to the question an ‘agree’ or ‘disagree’ value, on the basis of their qualitative responses. For further details on imputation see section 2.3 in this chapter.

2.1 Demographics

Sex

The survey asked, 'what is your sex', with male and female response options. Of the 130 valid submissions, two-thirds of respondents were female (66%, n=86). Just over ten percent were male (13%, n=17).

Figure 2. All survey respondents, by sex (%)



Base: All respondents (130)

A fifth of respondents (21%, n=27) did not disclose their sex, which is the second highest item non-response rate in the survey. Non-response correlated strongly with views on gender-critical beliefs. Over two-fifths (43%) of those opposing gender-critical beliefs did not disclose their sex, compared to just 3% of those with gender-critical beliefs. Non-response to the sex question was also much higher for respondents based in HE, compared to those not based in HE, at 19% and 11% respectively.

For reference, female staff accounted for 48% of academic staff reported to HESA in 2022/23,²³² although note that any comparison is limited by the very high non-response rate among survey respondents.

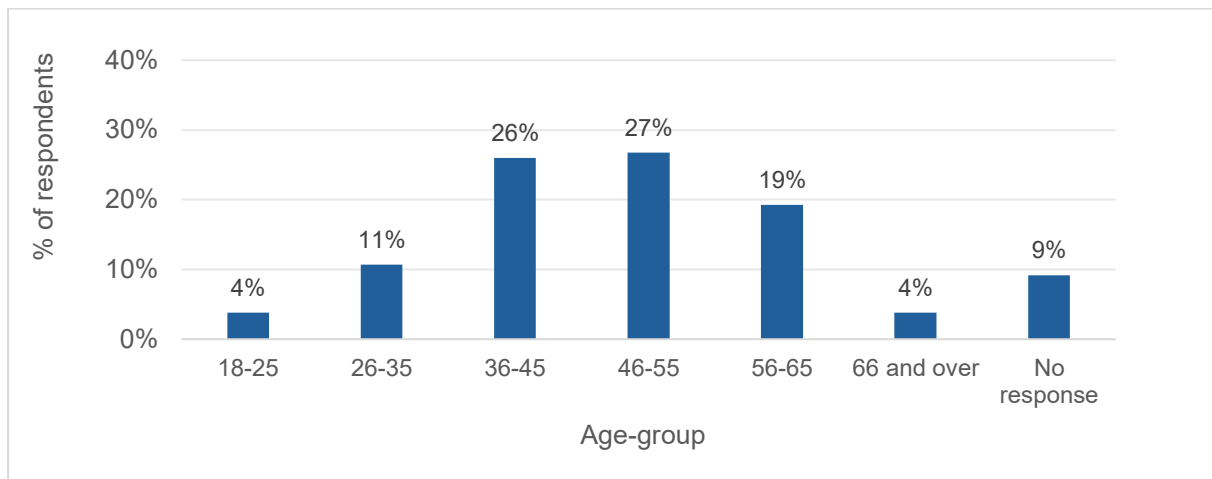
²³² HESA (online), *Figure 5 - Academic staff (excluding atypical) by personal characteristics 2018/19 - 2022/23*.

<https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/sb267/figure-5>

Age-group

Figure 3 shows the age-distribution of respondents. Over half (53%, n=69) were aged between 36 and 55 years. Overall, those aged between 36 and 65 years accounted for nearly three-quarters of respondents. The non-response rate for age was less than half that for the sex question, at 9% and 21% respectively.

Figure 3. All survey respondents, by age-group (%)

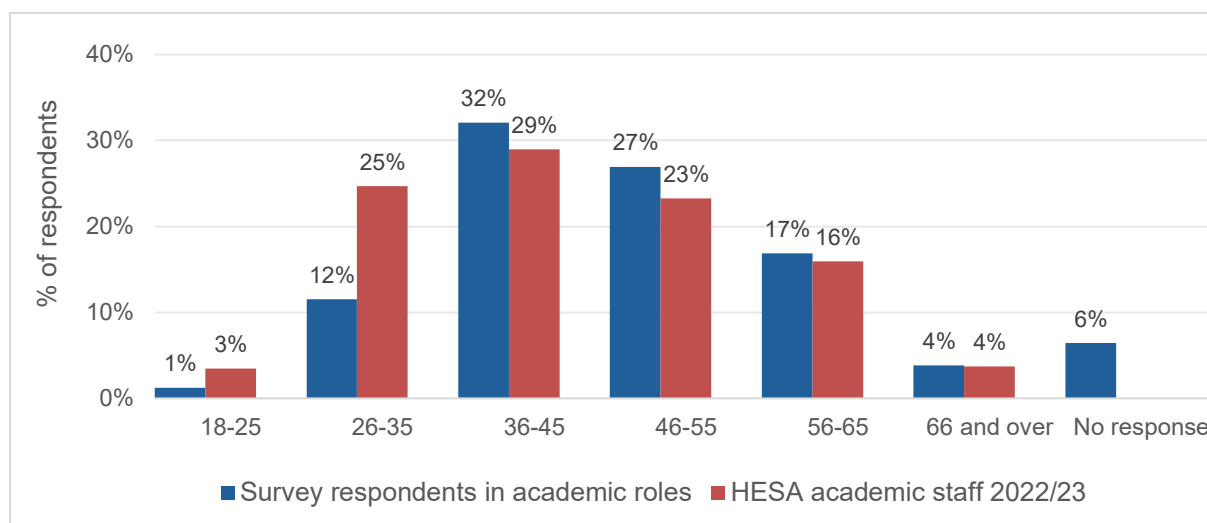


Base: All respondents (130)

Respondents in academic roles and age-group

Figure 4 compares the age-profile of respondents in academic roles (n=77) with academic staff reported to HESA in 2022/23. With the exception of the 26 to 35 years age-group, the age distributions are very similar. For the 26 to 20 years age-group, the proportion employed within higher education (25%) is just over double that of survey respondents (12%).

Figure 4. Survey respondents employed in higher education (blue), and academic staff reported to HESA (red), by age-group (%)

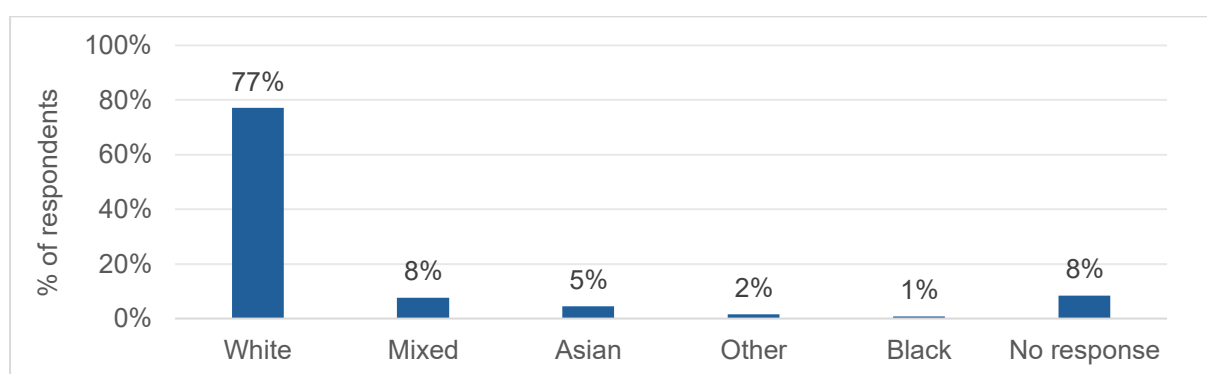


Base: All survey respondents employed in higher education (n = 77); academic staff in higher education reported to HESA 2022/23.²³³

Ethnic group

Just over three quarters of respondents (77%, n=100) reported their ethnicity as white. Less than one in ten (8%, n=10) reported a mixed ethnic background, with smaller numbers of respondents from Asian, black, or other ethnic groups. These proportions are shown below.

Figure 5. All survey respondents, by ethnic group (%)



Base: All respondents (130)

²³³ See: HESA (online), *Figure 5 - Academic staff (excluding atypical) by personal characteristics 2018/19 - 2022/23*. <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/sb267/figure-5>

Respondents in academic roles and ethnicity

Among survey respondents in academic roles, 79% (n=61), reported their ethnicity as white. This is higher than the proportion of white higher education academic staff reported to HESA in 2022/23 (70%), as shown below.²³⁴

Table 1. Survey respondents employed in academic roles, and academic staff reported to HESA 2022/23, by ethnicity (%)

Ethnicity	Survey respondents in academic roles	Academic staff reported to HESA 2022/2023
White	79%	70%
Black	1%	3%
Asian	5%	12%
Mixed	6%	3%
Other	1%	3%
Not known	6%	10%

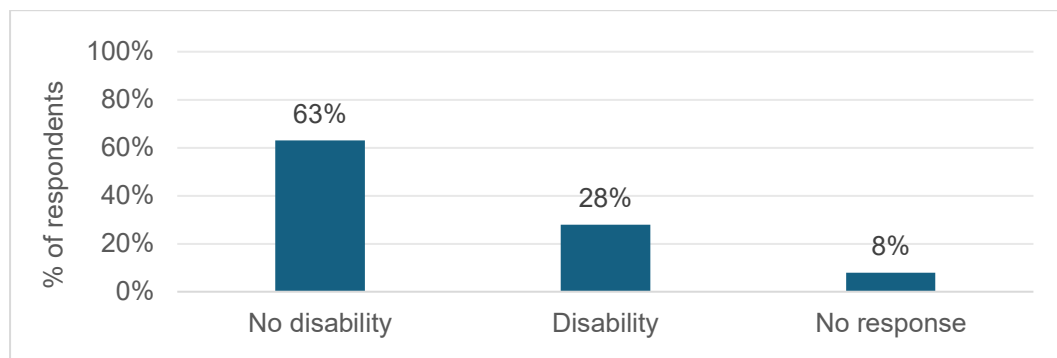
Base: All survey respondents employed in higher education (n = 77); academic staff in higher education reported to HESA 2022/23, excluding atypical staff.

²³⁴ See: HESA (online). *Figure 5 - Academic staff (excluding atypical) by personal characteristics 2018/19 - 2022/23*. <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/sb267/figure-5>

Disability

The survey asked a simple ‘do you have a disability’ question (yes, no), with no further definition. Over a quarter of all survey respondents reported a disability (28%, n=37). By comparison, the estimated proportion of working age disabled people (age 16 to 24) in the UK, as based on the ONS Labour Force Survey for October to December 2023, is 24%.²³⁵

Figure 6. All survey respondents, by disability (%)



Base: All respondents (130)

Respondents in academic roles and disability

Of those respondents in academic roles (n=77), 27% reported a disability. This is a far higher proportion than that among higher education academic staff more widely, as reported to HESA in 2022/23 (6%).²³⁶

Views on gender-critical belief and disability

The distribution of respondents reporting a disability correlated strongly with gender-critical beliefs. Of those who agreed with gender-critical-belief, 18% (n=13) reported having a disability. This proportion was much higher among those who disagreed with gender-critical beliefs, with almost half reporting a disability (47%, n=24) (see further section 3.7).

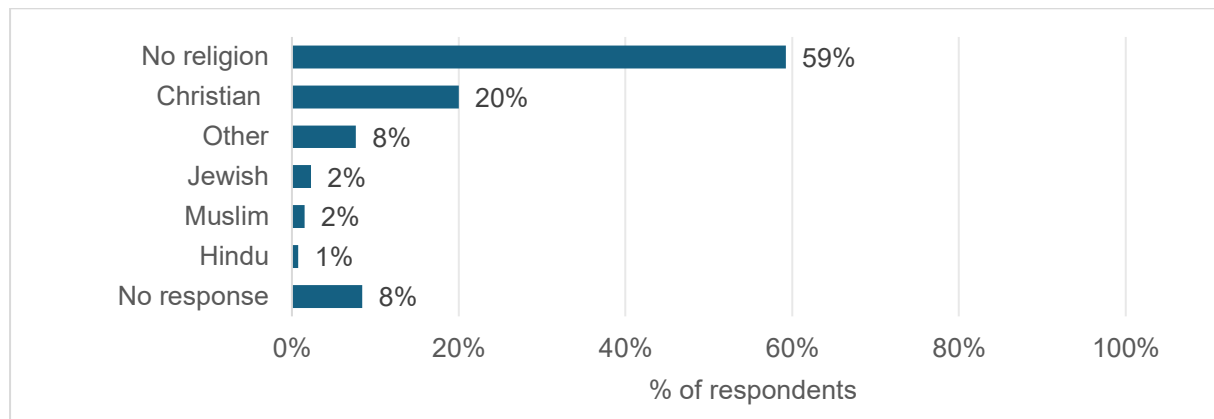
²³⁵ See: House of Commons Library (2024), *Disabled people in employment*.
<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-7540/#:~:text=How%20many%20people%20in%20the,of%20the%20working%2Dage%20population.>

²³⁶ See: HESA (online), *Figure 5 - Academic staff (excluding atypical) by personal characteristics 2018/19 - 2022/23*.
<https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/sb267/figure-5>

Religion

The majority of respondents reported that they did not have a religion (59%, n=77). A fifth of respondents (20%, n=26) reported their religion as Christian.

Figure 7. All survey respondents, by religion (%)



Base: All respondents (130)

Sexual orientation

The survey asked, 'Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?', with a range of response options.

Figure 8 8 shows that just of half of the respondents reported their sexual orientation as straight/heterosexual (52%, n=68).

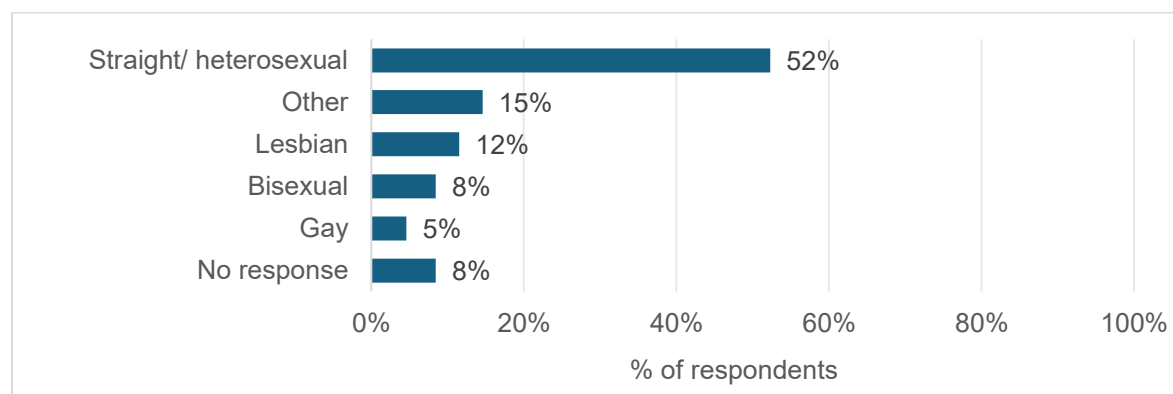
Overall, 39% (n=51) of respondents reported an LGB+ sexual orientation (with the 'plus' denoting 'other').²³⁷ Of this group, 15% (n=19) reported their sexual orientation as 'other'. A further 12% (n=15) reported their orientation as lesbian, and 8% (n=11) as bisexual. Indicative of the relatively high proportion of female respondents, a much smaller proportion of respondents reported their sexual orientation as gay (5%, n=6).

The overall proportion of LGB+ respondents is far higher than that within the adult general population. In the 2021 England and Wales census 4.9% of the working-age

²³⁷ This proportion (39%) does not correspond with the proportion shown in Figure 8 (40%) due to rounding in the latter.

population (aged 16 or over) with degree equivalent qualifications reported an LGB+ sexual orientation.²³⁸

Figure 8. All survey respondents, by sexual orientation (%)



Base: All respondents (130).

Respondents in academic roles and sexual orientation

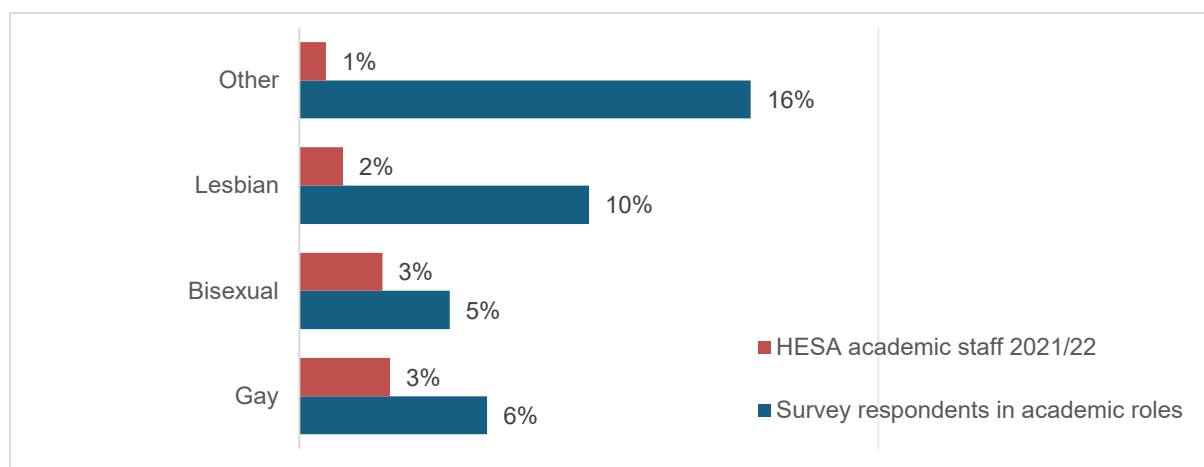
Figure 9 compares the proportion of academic survey respondents reporting an LGB+ sexual orientation with academic staff in Higher Education more widely.²³⁹ Note we do not include data on those reporting a straight/heterosexual orientation, due to a lack of accessible comparable HESA data.

Of those respondents employed in academic roles (n=77), 38% reported an LGB+ sexual orientation, compared to 8.4% of academic staff reported to HESA in 2021/22. This difference is most pronounced within the 'other' category, which accounted for 16% of survey respondents in academic roles, compared to just 1% among academic staff reported to HESA.

²³⁸ See: Armstrong, J. and Sullivan, A. (2024), *LGBT+ representation higher education in England and Wales*, British Journal of Sociology of Education, 45:6, 875-891 (Table 1).
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/01425692.2024.2369922>

²³⁹ See above (Table 1).

Figure 9. Survey respondents in academic roles (blue) and academic staff reported to HESA 2021/22 (red), by sexual orientation %



Base: Survey respondents in academic roles (77). Proportions do not total 100% due to rounding.

Trans status

The survey asked, ‘Do you consider yourself to be trans, or have a trans history?’. Like sexual orientation, the proportion of respondents reporting a transgender status is much higher than within the general population. Nearly one in ten respondents reported either a trans status or a trans history (8%, n=11).

Compared to the general population, the proportion of trans identified survey respondents is far higher. The most reliable general population estimate is provided by Scotland’s 2022 census, in which 0.4% of adults aged 16 and over reported a trans status or history.²⁴⁰ In the 2021 England and Wales Census, 0.5% of adults aged 16 or over reported their gender identity as different from their sex registered at birth. Whilst this is very likely an overestimate due to the flawed question design,²⁴¹ it is still far lower than the proportion of trans identified respondents in the survey.

²⁴⁰ Scotland’s Census (2024), *Scotland’s Census 2022 - Sexual orientation and trans status or history*. <https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/2022-results/scotland-s-census-2022-sexual-orientation-and-trans-status-or-history/#:~:text=%22In%202022%20Scotland's%20Census%20found,people%20aged%2016%20and%20over.%22>

²⁴¹ Statistics on gender identity in the England and Wales Census 2021 are not designated as accredited official statistics. See: Office for National Statistics (2023), *Gender identity, England and Wales: Census 2021*. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/genderidentity/bulletins/genderidentityenglandandwales/census2021>

The proportion of trans identified survey respondents is also much higher than within Higher Education more widely. HESA data collected in 2021/22 shows that 1.4% of academic staff and 1.0% of students reported a trans identity.²⁴²

2.2 Academic/professional background

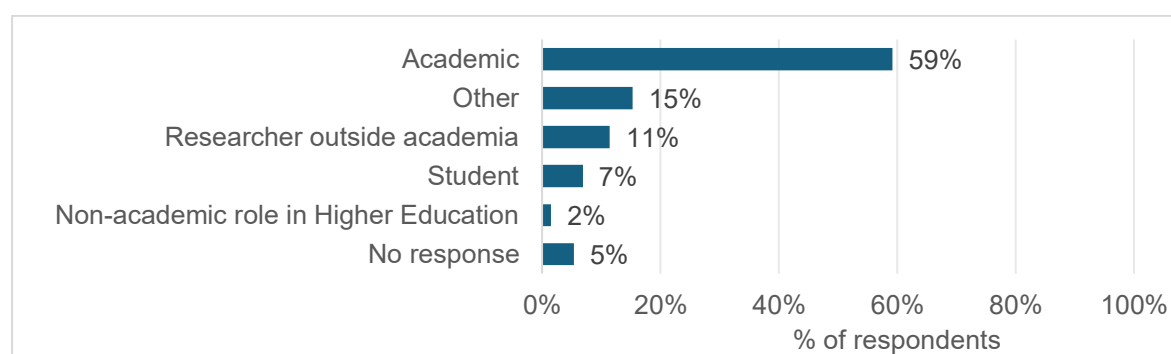
The survey asked respondents about their occupation, and for those based in Higher education, their institution, discipline, career status (whether early career and/or precarious). These results are shown below.

Occupation

Figure 10 shows that most respondents were based in Higher Education in academic roles (59%, n=77). Nine respondents stated that they were students (7%) and two respondents worked in non-academic roles in Higher Education.

Just over a quarter of respondents did not work within Higher Education (27%, n=35), with 15% (n=20) reporting their occupation as 'other', and 11% (n=15) working in research outside of academia. Analysis of the respective qualitative responses indicated that of those who reported their occupation as 'other', half worked in either medical or health related professions (n=10).

Figure 10. All survey respondents by occupation (%)



Base: All respondents (130)

²⁴² See: Armstrong, J. and Sullivan, A. (2024), *LGBT+ representation higher education in England and Wales*, British Journal of Sociology of Education, 45:6, 875-891.
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/01425692.2024.2369922>

Higher Education institutions

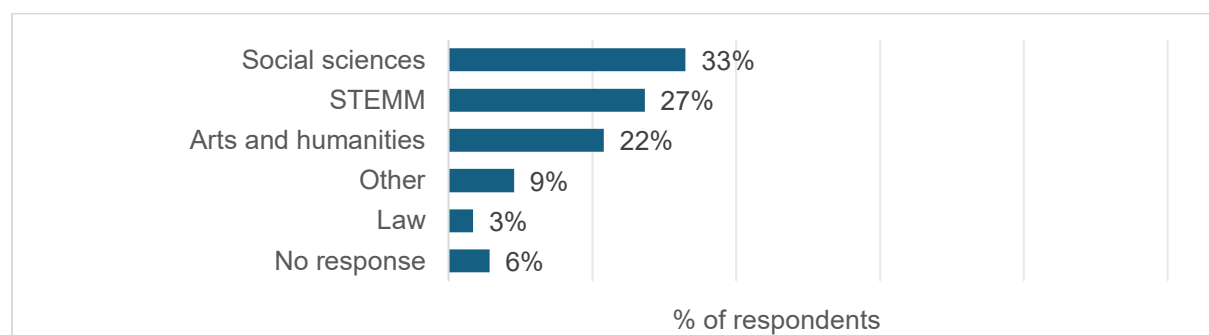
The survey asked, 'If you are based in a higher education institution, which one?' with a write-in option. Of the respondents based in Higher Education, that is, academics, non-academic staff, and students (n=88), around three-fifths (59%, n=52) disclosed their respective institution, and 41% (n=36) did not. This was by far the highest level of non-response in the survey and can reasonably be read as indicative of the fear that is felt in relation to the debate on sex and gender identity.

Of the thirty-six respondents who did not disclose their institution, most did not respond to the question (83%, n=30). Six respondents (16%) actively stated that they did not want to disclose their institution. Named institutions included University College London (UCL), which accounted for 17 submissions. King's College London and the University of Edinburgh accounted for four submissions respectively. The remaining identifying submissions related to 23 different UK HE institutions, and one non-UK institution.

Academic discipline

For those based in higher education (n=88), the survey asked respondents about their academic discipline, where applicable. Of these respondents, a third worked in the social sciences (33%, n=29). This was followed by STEMM subjects (science, technology, engineering, medicine and mathematics), which accounted for just over a quarter of responses (27%, n=24), then arts and humanities (22%, n=19).

Figure 11. Survey respondents based in Higher Education by discipline (%)



Base: Respondents based in Higher Education, including students and non-academic staff (88)

Early career and/or precarious academic status

The survey asked, 'Would you describe yourself as 'early career' and/or precariously employed?'. A total of 39 respondents (30%) reported their status as either early career or precarious. This group consisted of 25 academics, six respondents who

described their occupation as 'other', four students, three researchers outside academia and one respondent in a non-academic HE-based role.

Of this group, most respondents were female (72%, n=28), which is higher than for all survey respondents (66%). Eight respondents did not disclose their sex, which accounted for around a fifth of the group (21%).

The proportion reporting an LGB+ identity was particularly high, accounting for 49% (n=19) of early career/precarious respondents. This is higher than the comparable proportion for all survey respondents (39%). Those reporting their sexual orientation as 'other' accounted for 21% (n=8) of the early career/precarious group, followed by lesbians, who accounted for 18% (n=7).

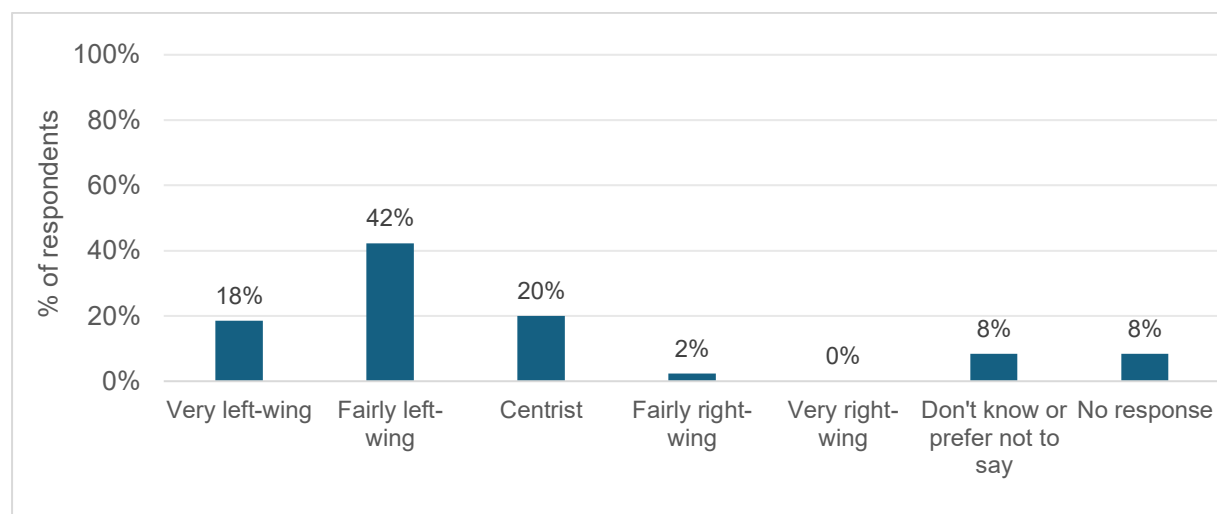
2.3 Political views and beliefs

The call for evidence asked respondents about their political views (left or right), their views on feminism, and whether they disagreed or agreed with gender-critical beliefs.

Political alignment

The survey asked, 'How would you describe your political views', with response options running from very left-wing to very right-wing. Taking an overview, most respondents described themselves as holding left-wing or centrist views. Six out of ten respondents (61%, n=79) described their views as either fairly or very left-wing.²⁴³ Of these, most respondents described themselves as fairly left-wing (42%). A fifth of respondents described their views as centrist (20%, n=26). Three respondents (2%) described their views as fairly right-wing, whilst no respondents described their views as very right wing.

Figure 12. All survey respondents, by political views (%)



Base: All respondents (130)

²⁴³ For context, other evidence suggests a general leftward skew within academia, e.g. Adekoya, R., Kaufmann, E. and Simpson, T., (2020), *Academic Freedom in the UK*, Policy Exchange. <https://policyexchange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Academic-freedom-in-the-UK.pdf>

Feminist or feminist ally

The survey asked, 'Would you say that you are a feminist or ally of feminism?' with three response options (yes, no, prefer not to say).

More than eight out of ten respondents described themselves as a feminist or a feminist ally (82%, n=107). Eight respondents (6%) stated that they were not a feminist or ally, six of whom were female. Seven respondents (5%) stated that they did not know or preferred not to say, and eight respondents (6%) did not respond to the question.

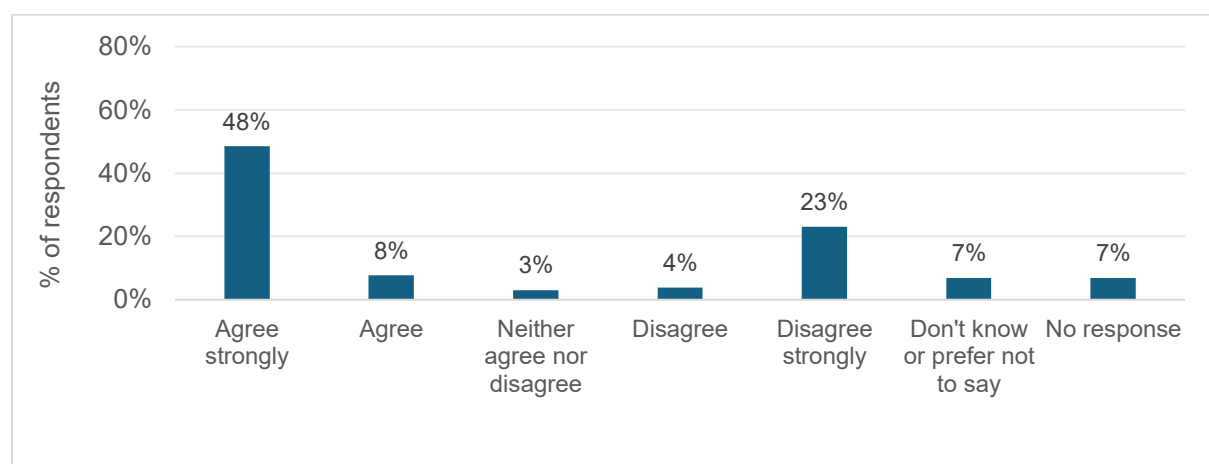
Views on sex and gender

The survey asked, 'Gender-critical beliefs are defined in law as the belief that biological sex is real, important, immutable, and not to be conflated with gender identity. Do you agree or disagree with the gender-critical perspective?' The response options were: Agree strongly/Agree/Neither agree nor disagree/Disagree/Disagree strongly/Don't know or prefer not to say.

Figure 13 shows that over half of the respondents either agreed or agreed strongly with gender-critical beliefs (56%, n=73), with 48% agreeing strongly. This is more than double the number who reported either disagreeing or disagreeing strongly (27%, n=35), most of whom disagreed strongly (23%).

Nine respondents (7%) stated that they did not know or preferred not to say, nine respondents did not answer the question (7%), and four respondents stated that they neither agreed nor disagreed (3%). Taken together, this 'unknown' group accounted for nearly a fifth of respondents (17%, n=22).

Figure 13. All survey respondents, by views on gender-critical beliefs (%)



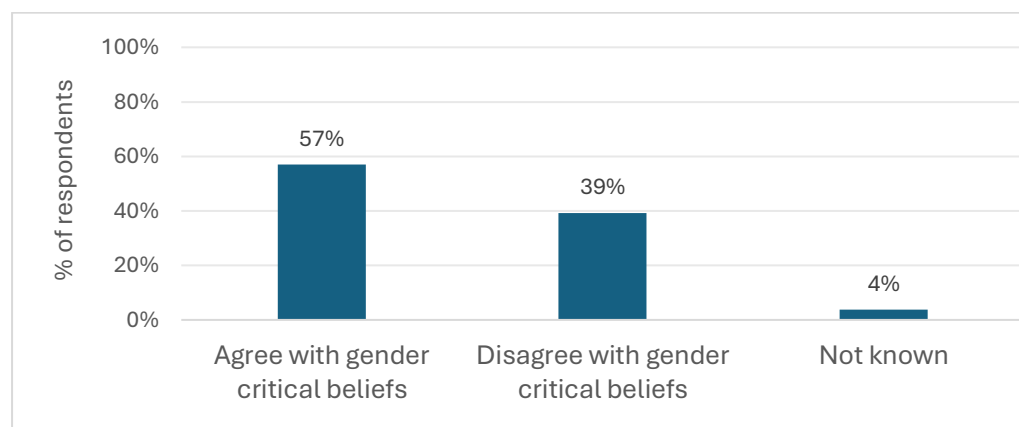
Base: All respondents (130)

Views on sex and gender: imputed variable

To minimise the number of 'unknown' and missing responses, we analysed the qualitative data fields for these cases, in order to impute (i.e., assign) values for each respondent. Drawing on both the content and language used (for example terms such as 'anti-trans' or making use of the FGEN template) we classified sixteen respondents as disagreeing with gender-critical beliefs and one respondent as agreeing with gender-critical beliefs. A further five cases could not be classified, based on the available information.

Below, Figure 14 shows the distribution of the imputed variable on gender-critical beliefs. Here, the gap between the number of respondents who disagree or agree with gender-critical beliefs is much smaller, compared to the results in Figure 13. Using imputation, just over half of respondents agreed with gender-critical beliefs (57%, n=74) and two fifths disagreed (39%, n=51).

Figure 14. All survey respondents, views on gender-critical beliefs (imputed variable)



Base: All respondents (130)

Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding

Approaches to the survey, by views on gender-critical beliefs

Respondents varied as to how they approached the survey instrument, depending on whether they agreed or disagreed with gender-critical views. These relate to respondent's willingness to provide identifying information, consent to be quoted and survey item (i.e., question) response rates.

Identifying information

Those who agreed with gender-critical beliefs were more likely to be identifiable, for example, by providing a name or email address, compared to those who disagreed at 70% and 18% respectively, as shown in Table 2 below. Of the twelve FGEN template-based responses, only two people provided identifying details.

Table 2. Views on gender-critical beliefs (imputed variable), by provision of identifying information

Name and/or email provided	Views on gender-critical beliefs		
	Agree	Disagree	Not known
No	30%	82%	80%
Yes	70%	18%	20%
Base (all respondents)	74	51	5

This patterning is also apparent in the quoted material in part three of the report (for each quote used, we state whether or not the respondent provided a name, either in full, or by way of an identifiable email address).

Relatedly, Table 3 shows that those who agreed with gender-critical beliefs were more willing to state that they could be contacted for further information, compared to those who disagreed at 18% and 72% respectively.

Table 3. Views on gender-critical beliefs (imputed variable), by willingness to be contacted

Willingness to be contacted	Views on gender-critical beliefs		
	Agree	Disagree	Not known
No	22%	75%	40%
Yes	72%	18%	20%
No response	7%	8%	40%
Base (all respondents)	74	51	5

Consent to be quoted

Most respondents consented to be quoted but not identified. Among those who agreed with gender-critical beliefs, 57% consented to be quoted but not identified, compared to 65% of those who disagreed with gender-critical beliefs.

Of those who disagreed with gender-critical beliefs, two respondents (4%) consented to be quoted directly and identified (although one did not provide any identifiable details). In contrast, nearly a fifth of respondents who agreed with gender-critical beliefs (18%, n=13) consented to be quoted directly and identified.

Table 4. Views on gender-critical beliefs (imputed variable), by willingness to be contacted

Willingness to be quoted	Views on gender-critical beliefs		
	Agree	Disagree	Not known
Can be quoted directly and identified	18%	4%	0%
Can be quoted directly but not identified	57%	65%	0%
Do not consent to use of direct quotations	18%	24%	60%
No response	8%	8%	40%
Base (all respondents)	74	51	5

Survey item response rates

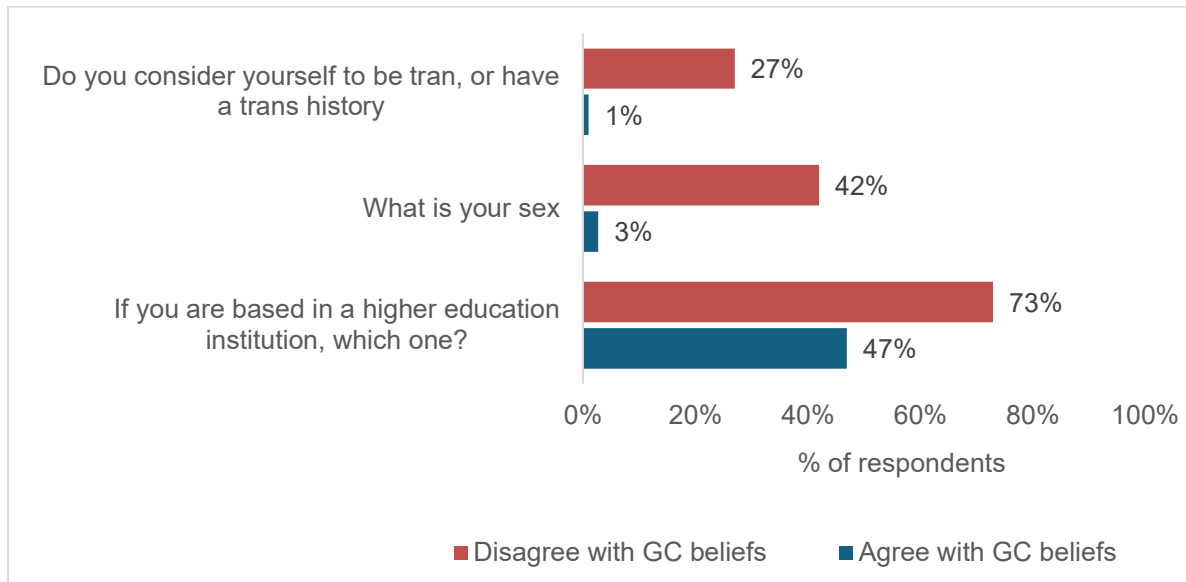
Non-response for different survey items varied between those who agreed or disagreed with gender-critical beliefs. Across all questions, the non-response rate was higher among those who disagreed with gender-critical beliefs, compared to those agreed.

For most demographic questions (for example, age, disability, religion, and sexual orientation), the non-response rate was around 13% for those who disagree with gender-critical beliefs, compared to three or four per cent for those who agreed with gender-critical beliefs.

Three questions in particular, on academic institution, sex, and trans status, elicited very high levels of non-response amongst those who disagreed with gender-critical beliefs. These results are shown in Figure 15 below.

Among those who agreed with gender-critical beliefs, the only question that elicited a high non-response rate related to place of work ('If you are based in a higher education institution, which one?'). Of this group, 47% of respondents did not disclose their institution. The non-response rate was, however, even higher, among those who disagreed with gender-critical beliefs, at 73%.

Figure 15. Non-response rates (on specific questions), by views on gender-critical beliefs (imputed variable) (%)



Base: agree with GC beliefs (74), disagree with GC beliefs (51). Excludes unknown views (5).

Use of the FGEN template

Of the 51 respondents who disagreed with gender-critical beliefs (imputed variable), just under a quarter of the submissions (n=12) were characterised by the extensive use of cut and pasted responses across multiple questions, based on the FGEN template. Stock phrases used by respondents in this group included:

‘Ethics committees have people with discriminatory views (gender-exclusionary) who try to steer the research in a damaging and dangerous direction for participants...’

‘Some ethics committees consider "how would this play out in the Daily Mail" when assessing applications thus inhibiting TNBGD inclusive research.’

‘Funders say they are interested in funding equity, inequality, inclusion and diversity research but when it comes down to it, they often won't (lip service, tokenistic).’

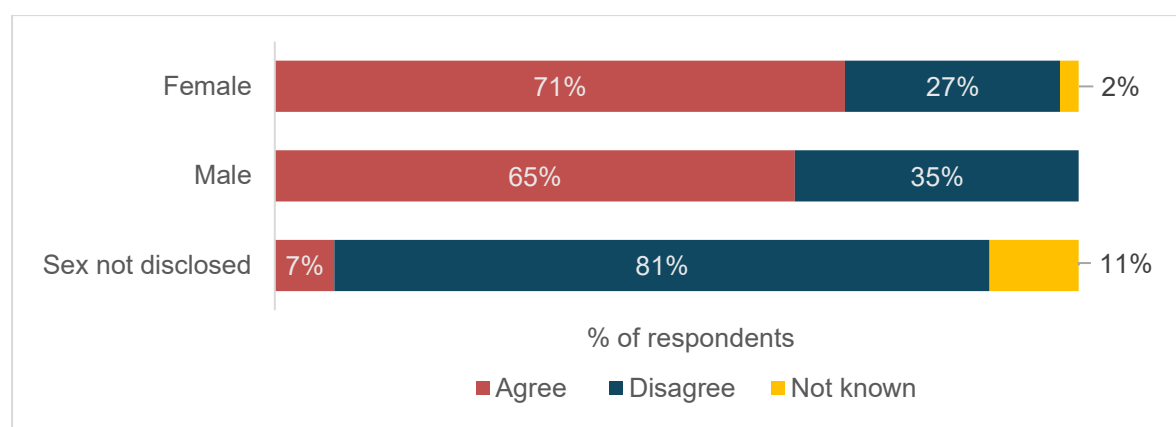
‘No one should have to explain or justify their existence, it's horrific.’

Using the imputed variable, the remainder of this section looks at how the demographic and political profile of respondents varied, according to views on gender-critical beliefs.

Views on gender-critical beliefs (imputed variable), by sex

Among those respondents who disclosed their sex, around seven in ten female respondents agreed with gender-critical beliefs (71%, n=61). Around two-thirds of the male respondents agreed with gender-critical beliefs (65%, n=11). Of those who did not disclose their sex (n=27), around eight out of ten did disagreed with gender-critical beliefs (81%).

Figure 16. Views on gender-critical beliefs, by sex (%)



Base: Male (17), Female (86), Sex not disclosed (27)

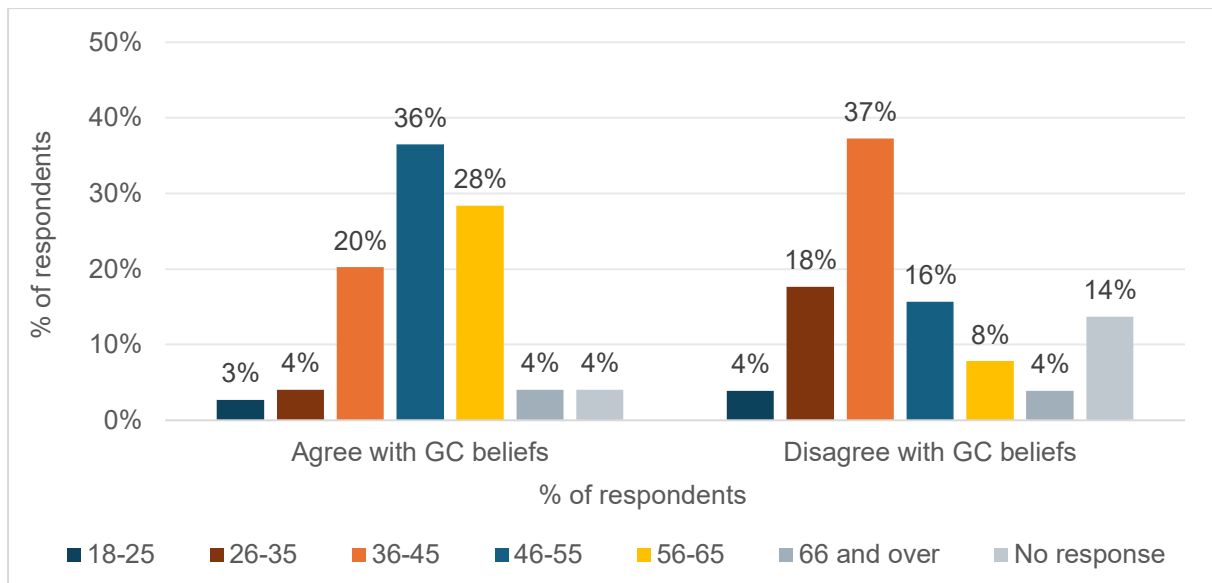
Views on gender-critical beliefs (imputed variable), by age-group

Respondents who disagreed with gender-critical beliefs were generally younger, compared to those who agreed with gender-critical beliefs.

Of those who agreed with gender-critical beliefs, over a third (36%, n=27) were aged between 46 and 55 years. By comparison, this age-group accounted for only 16% (n=8) of those who disagreed with gender-critical views. Those aged between 56 and 65 years accounted for around two-fifths of those with agreed with gender-critical views (28%, n=21), compared to just 8% (n=4) of those who disagreed.

Of those who disagreed, the largest age-group was 36 to 45 years, which accounted for around two-fifths of the group (37%, n=19). These results are shown in Figure 17 and Table 5.

Figure 17. Age-group distribution, by views on gender-critical beliefs (%)



Base: agree with GC beliefs (74), disagree with GC beliefs (51). Excludes unknown views (5).

Table 5. Age-group distribution, by views on gender-critical beliefs (%)

Age-group	Agree with gender-critical beliefs		Disagree with gender-critical beliefs		Total (age-group)	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
18-25	2	3%	2	4%	4	3%
26-35	3	4%	9	18%	12	10%
36-45	15	20%	19	37%	34	27%
46-55	27	36%	8	16%	35	28%
56-65	21	28%	4	8%	25	20%
66 and over	3	4%	2	4%	5	4%
No response	3	4%	7	14%	10	8%
Total (beliefs)	74	100%	51	100%	125	100%

Views on gender-critical beliefs (imputed variable), by ethnicity

There were very few differences in respect of ethnicity between those who agreed or disagreed with gender-critical beliefs. Table 6 shows that those who agreed with gender-critical beliefs were more likely to be from a mixed ethnic background, compared to those disagreed (11% and 4% respectively), although the numbers are very small. Again, the level of non-response was higher among those who disagreed

with gender-critical views, compared to those agreed (12% and 4% respectively). Otherwise, the two groups are very similar across all measures.

Table 6. Views on gender-critical views (imputed variable), by ethnicity (n, %)

	Agree with gender-critical beliefs		Disagree with gender-critical beliefs		Total (ethnicity)	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Asian	4	5%	2	4%	6	5%
Black	0	0%	1	2%	1	1%
Mixed	8	11%	2	4%	10	8%
Other	1	1%	1	2%	2	2%
White	58	78%	39	76%	97	78%
No response	3	4%	6	12%	9	7%
Total (beliefs)	74	99%	51	100%	125	100%

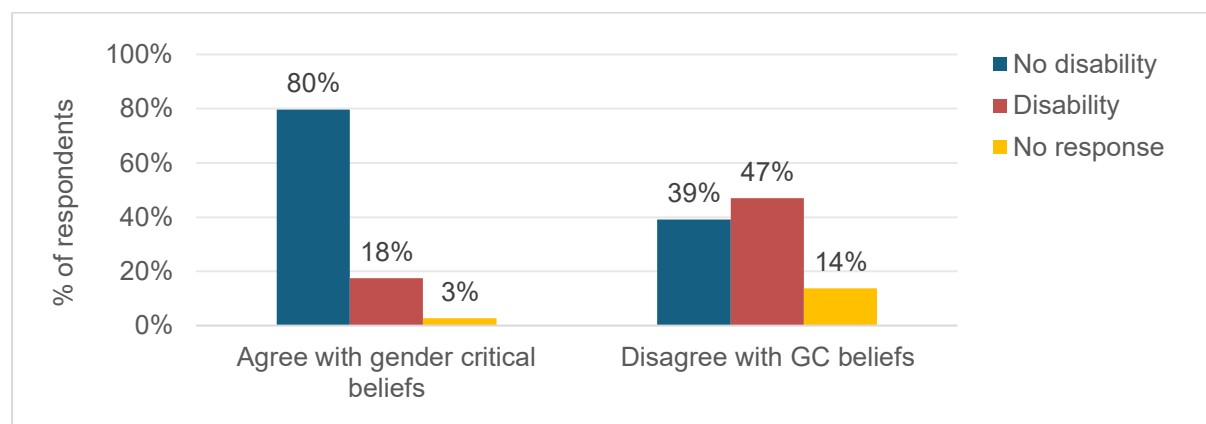
Totals do not add to 100% due to rounding.

Views on gender-critical beliefs (imputed variable), by disability

As noted above, the survey asked a simple ‘Do you have a disability’ question, with no further definition. The proportion of respondents reporting a disability varied sharply by views on gender-critical beliefs.

Of those who agreed with gender-critical beliefs (n=74), just under a fifth (18%, n=13) beliefs reported a disability. By contrast, among those who disagreed with gender-critical beliefs (n=51), nearly half reported a disability (46%, n=24). These differences are shown in Figure 18.

Figure 18. Disability status, by views on gender-critical beliefs (imputed variable) (%)



Base: agree with GC beliefs (74), disagree with GC beliefs (51). Excludes unknown views (5).

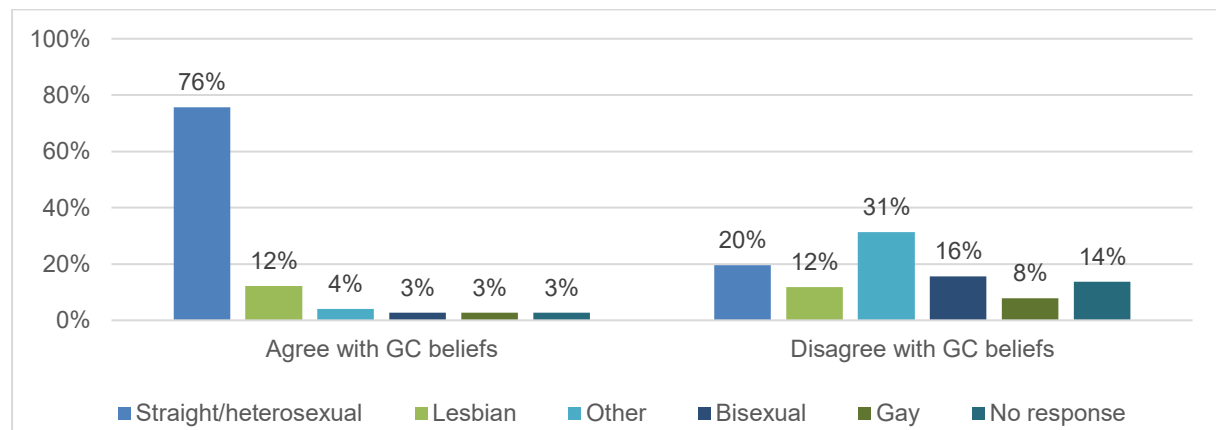
Views on gender-critical beliefs (imputed variable) by sexual orientation

The distribution of respondent sexual orientation also varied sharply by views on gender-critical beliefs. These results are shown in Figure 19 and Table 7

Of those who agreed with gender-critical beliefs (n=74), around three-quarters (76%, n=56) stated that they were heterosexual, compared to a fifth (20%, n=10) of those who disagreed.

Among those who disagreed with gender-critical beliefs (n=51), nearly a third (31%, n=16) described their sexual orientation as 'other', compared to just four percent of those who agreed with gender-critical beliefs (n=3). The higher proportion within the former group is likely to reflect the belief that sex is not binary and therefore sexual orientation extends beyond four categories.

Figure 19. Sexual orientation, by views on gender-critical beliefs (%)



Base: Agree with GC beliefs (74), disagree with GC beliefs (51). Excludes unknown views (5).

Table 7. Sexual orientation, by views on gender-critical beliefs (%)

Sexual orientation	Agree with gender-critical beliefs		Disagree with gender-critical beliefs		Total (sexual orientation)	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Straight/heterosexual	56	76%	10	12%	66	53%
Lesbian	9	12%	6	4%	15	12%
Other	3	4%	16	76%	19	15%
Bisexual	2	3%	8	4%	10	8%
Gay	2	3%	4	2%	6	5%
No response	2	3%	7	2%	9	7%
Total (beliefs)	74	101%	51	100%	125	100%

Totals do not add to 100% due to rounding.

Views on gender-critical beliefs (imputed variable) and trans status

As noted above, eleven respondents reported having a trans status or history. Of this small group, ten respondents disagreed with gender-critical views (the position of one respondent was not clear).

Among all respondents who disagreed with gender-critical views (n=51), the non-response rate to the trans status question was relatively high, at 27% (n=14). By contrast, among those who agreed with gender-critical beliefs (n=51), only one individual did not respond.

Of those who agreed with gender-critical beliefs, no respondent reported a trans status or trans history.

Views on gender-critical belief (imputed belief) and political alignment

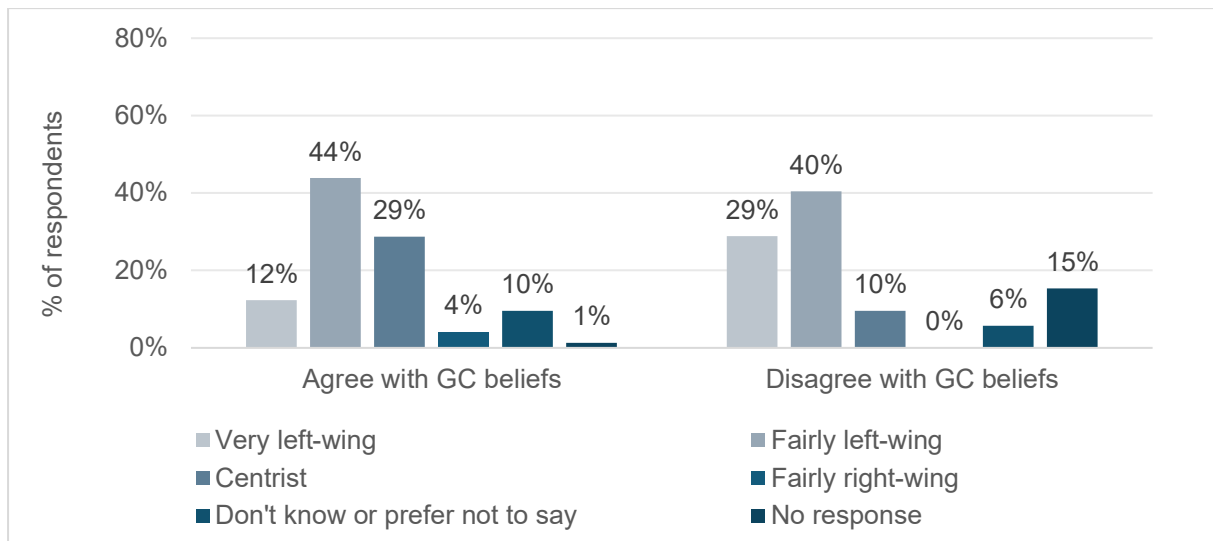
Respondents were asked: How would you describe your political views?

- Very left-wing
- Fairly left-wing
- Centrist
- Fairly right-wing
- Very right-wing
- Don't know or prefer not to say

Figure 20 and Table 8 show how political alignment differed between those who agreed and disagreed with gender-critical beliefs. Those who disagreed with gender-critical beliefs were much more likely to report very left-wing views, compared to those who agreed, at 29% and 12% respectively.

Nearly three-quarters of those who agreed with gender-critical beliefs can be classed as centre-left (centrist or fairly left-wing) (73%, n=53), compared to half (50%, n=26) of those who disagreed. Three respondents who agreed with gender-critical beliefs described themselves as fairly right-wing. No respondents described themselves as very right wing.

Figure 20. Political alignment, by views on gender-critical beliefs (%)



Base: agree with GC beliefs (74), disagree with GC beliefs (51). Excludes unknown views (5).

Table 8. Political alignment, by views on gender-critical beliefs (%)

Political alignment	Agree with gender-critical beliefs		Disagree with gender-critical beliefs		Total (political alignment)	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Very left-wing	9	12%	15	29%	24	19%
Fairly left-wing	32	43%	21	41%	53	42%
Centrist	22	30%	4	8%	26	21%
Fairly right-wing	3	4%	0	0%	3	2%
Very right-wing	0	0	0	0	0	0
Don't know or prefer not to say	7	9%	3	6%	10	8%
No response	1	1%	8	16%	9	7%
Total (beliefs)	74	100%	51	100%	125	100%

Part 3. Testimonies on barriers to research

This part of the report presents the qualitative evidence submitted to the review. We make no claim to quantify the extent of the problems we report. The presentation is thematic and intended to provide insight into the personal experiences of respondents and the social and organisational factors at play.

The topics are presented in order of the overall number of responses submitted under each heading, so that those issues on which comments were made most frequently are presented first. Self-censorship was the topic most commented on by respondents by some distance, followed by bullying and difficulties with publication in roughly equal numbers.

130 testimonies were received via the online portal, with an additional ten received by email. Where numbers are provided in what follows, these relate only to the online responses, as the email responses were in a range of formats, not necessarily using the categories provided by the online survey. Where numbers of respondents are provided, these refer only to those responses where some text was entered. The totals do not include cases where respondents ticked the box indicating they had experienced a particular barrier but did not include any text.

The table below shows the numbers and proportions of respondents who provided details via the online portal, under the different research barrier headings. Results are shown for all respondents and also disaggregated by views on gender-critical beliefs. For those who disagreed with gender-critical beliefs, figures that exclude the template-based responses are shown in brackets. On average, this has the effect of reducing the proportion of reported barriers by around 13 percentage points among those who disagreed with gender-critical views (varying from four to 18 points across different barriers).

Overall, the most frequently reported barrier related to self-censorship and chilling effects, as reported by 58% of all respondents (n=75). This was followed by bullying, harassment and ostracism, with 55 respondents (42%) providing details, then barriers to publication, as reported by 51 respondents (39%). Around a third of respondents provided details in relation to barriers to data collection (34%, n=44), holding events (33%, n=43), institutional policies and training (32%, n=41) and barriers affecting students (32%, n=41).

Table 9. Respondents who provided detailed barriers to research, by gender-critical views (agree, disagree, and disagree excluding template-based responses) (n, %)

Type of barrier reported	Views on gender-critical beliefs				All respondents	
	Agree		Disagree (bracketed figures exclude template- based responses)			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Self-censorship and chilling effects	41	55%	34 (22)	67% (56%)	75	58%
Bullying, harassment and ostracism	29	39%	26 (15)	51% (38%)	55	42%
Barriers to publication	27	36%	24 (14)	47% (36%)	51	39%
Barriers to data collection	12	16%	30 (18)	59% (46%)	44	34%
Barriers to holding events	21	28%	22 (12)	43% (31%)	43	33%
Institutional policies and training	26	35%	14 (6)	27% (15%)	41	32%
Barriers affecting students	11	15%	20 (10)	39% (26%)	41	32%
Complaints, inc. coordinated complaints	21	28%	16 (7)	31% (18%)	37	28%
Management behaviour	20	27%	17 (8)	33% (21%)	37	28%
Barriers to career progression	18	24%	19 (9)	37% (23%)	37	28%
Research ethics processes	14	19%	22 (10)	43% (26%)	36	28%
Compelled speech	18	24%	17 (6)	33% (15%)	35	27%
No-platforming/discrimination, as a speaker	14	19%	19 (8)	37% (21%)	33	25%
Other	13	18%	18 (8)	35% (21%)	32	25%
Barriers to research funding	6	8%	24 (14)	47% (36%)	30	23%
Discrimination by university admin/services	10	14%	19 (9)	37% (23%)	29	22%
Disinvitations from projects or collaborations	9	12%	14 (9)	27% (23%)	23	18%
Base (all respondents)	74		51 (118)		130	

Testimonies varied greatly in length and detail and some individuals reported multiple experiences and incidents. Testimony from Michele Moore is provided as a whole narrative in a final, separate section (see section 3.18).

As stated in the methods section, respondents were able to choose between providing their identity and remaining completely anonymous. In those cases where an identity was provided, the respondent was able to give or withhold permission to use their name. We have sought to protect anonymity as far as possible and only named respondents in cases which are already in the public domain. We state whether or not a respondent provided their name (either stated, or via in an

identifiable email address). In some cases, we have also redacted names and other identifying information. Some respondents did not give permission to be quoted and some did not provide their names.

The testimonies reflect the views, reported experiences and claims of the respondents. We start from the presumption that the individually-written accounts accurately reflect the *perception* of each person involved. It is for readers to judge their individual reliability as factual accounts of events, based on the information individuals provided and, where available, information already in the public domain. Notwithstanding that limitation, we believe that taken together as a body of evidence the testimonies provided from both perspectives provide valuable insight into the challenges facing university and NHS managers.

The analysis presented below separates responses according to agreement or disagreement with the gender-critical position. As noted previously, some respondents opposing the gender-critical position used a guide circulated by the Feminist Gender Equality Network (FGEN).²⁴⁴ The guide and accompanying FGEN communications are provided in Appendix 2. The FGEN guide provides essential context for understanding some of the responses. Multiple respondents simply pasted the text suggested by FGEN verbatim, and the relevant text is therefore included in each analysis section. The FGEN guide states ‘we have provided some general examples and suggest people complete with it their own personal examples of how good research has been, and is being, silenced.’ The ‘copy-paste’ responses received are not the only ones influenced by the suggestions in the guide, some other responses were also clearly influenced by the wording and suggestions to varying degrees.

The FGEN template and some responses suggested that threats of defamation from gender-critical academics were having a chilling effect. The template states:

‘TNBGD people and allies have to be careful with the language they use and what they say in case gender-exclusionary people come after them or try to sue for “defamation”.’

As noted above, the defences against defamation include truth, honest opinion and public interest, and qualified privilege applies to peer-reviewed publications in a scientific or academic journal, subject to absence of malice.

²⁴⁴ Feminist Gender Equality Network (online), *Children of Omelas; Effects of the UK Puberty Blocker Ban*.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20241125094906/https://feministgenderequality.network/>

We are unaware of any reported case of defamation proceedings being brought against any academic in the UK in relation to their work on this issue.²⁴⁵ Threats of legal action may nevertheless produce a chilling effect, as evidenced by Michele Moore's testimony regarding her book (Brunskell-Evans and Moore, 2019) which faced the threat of legal action from the Tavistock Gender Identity Services (GIDS). This legal threat has also been documented elsewhere.²⁴⁶ No specific examples of legal threats were raised by the respondents to this review who disagreed with gender-critical views. It should be noted that academic freedom only applies to lawful speech and does not entail a right to libel individuals.

We summarise key points from the testimonies at the start of each section. An over-arching theme throughout these testimonies is one of management failure in the face of activist tactics. Another over-arching theme is the enormous personal cost for gender-critical individuals of standing up for the values of science and scholarship, and for the intellectual life of our universities.

Gender-critical respondents testified to a range of barriers that they had faced across the research system. Some of these respondents had faced repeated discrimination and abuse. Some had faced severe personal consequences to their careers, mental health and wellbeing. Others had self-censored in order to avoid such consequences. This 'chilling effect' is strongly evidenced in the responses. Management responses to the problems respondents faced were typically viewed as inadequate.

Although a small number of responses from individuals who disagreed with gender-critical views referred to specific events, these responses more often suggested fearfulness, fragility, and a sense of threat at the idea of exposure to gender-critical views or simply the fact of having gender-critical colleagues.

Putting the gender-critical responses side by side with the anti-gender-critical responses is revealing. We see a marked difference in the level of detail and specific information provided. Many gender-critical responses provide extensive detail, whereas the anti-gender-critical responses are typically light on detail. Several gender-critical respondents have spoken about their experiences in the public

²⁴⁵ As Professor Kathleen Stock's submission to this review records, she successfully brought a legal action for defamation against a student newspaper, and has been inaccurately accused of bringing a case against a graduate student.

²⁴⁶ Evans, M. (2020), '*Why I Resigned from Tavistock: Trans-Identified Children Need Therapy, Not Just 'Affirmation' and Drugs*', Quillette.
<https://quillette.com/2020/01/17/why-i-resigned-from-tavistock-trans-identified-children-need-therapy-not-just-affirmation-and-drugs/>

domain, which allows for further scrutiny and triangulation. This was not the case for any of the responses from those opposing gender-critical views.

To illustrate this point, an opponent of gender-critical views stated the following regarding organising events.

“It has become difficult to hold events which are supportive of the LGBTQIA+ community, especially those from the trans community. Gender-exclusionary scholars and activists have created such a hostile environment it is uncertain whether we could ethically hold an event and be able to keep those from trans communities in particular safe. We are not just talking about emotional abuse but physical violence - for example, women who do not necessarily embody 'womanhood' in displaying stereotypical femininity have been beaten up on trying to use women's toilet facilities. Because of this we have felt compelled to move such events online, however there is still a very high risk of people joining who do not believe in the existence of trans people and whose intention is to disrupt the event and display hostility.” (Name not provided)

Note that, though extreme claims are made regarding emotional abuse and physical violence, no detail is provided, and there are no accounts in the public domain which would support the view that this has ever happened.

We can contrast this with the specificity of gender-critical accounts in the same section. For example:

“In brief, in 2018-19 I ran a speaker series at King's College London - entitled Endangered Speeches - to promote civil discourse around academic debate, with invited speakers from outside the College. The series was organised through all the proper channels utilising the professional events team in my Department of which I was Head at the time (the Department of War Studies). In the few days prior to the first event in November 2018, by Dr Joanna Williams of the University of Kent, a petition was raised against her visit on the grounds that she was - absurdly - in favour of killing trans people. Although the event with Dr Williams passed off successfully... Both the [SENIOR MANAGER REDACTED], and the [SENIOR MANAGER REDACTED], brought pressure upon me to cancel the other speaking events. I refused on the grounds that this was free speech/free inquiry and made it clear that I resented being pressurised over what should be a basic precept of university life (the freedom to debate viewpoints). ... Although, the College management allowed the subsequent speaking event to proceed, it was subject to aggressive oversight by

the [SENIOR MANAGER REDACTED]... In sum, after the holding of the first event with Dr Williams, the reaction of the College/Faculty/School administrators was not to offer support to the event organiser in the usual way but to pressurise them, and impose unusual - and to my mind - deeply unpleasant demands and requests." (Professor Michael Rainsborough).

A further account makes clear how substantial the differences in understanding of acceptable behaviour in a university community have become. However, in this instance, a positive management response is recorded:

"I was invited by my institution to speak to the University's [REDACTED] forum about my experiences researching in a controversial area. When the talk was advertised, a colleague in another Department emailed her entire Department to let them know that I was 'anti-trans' and the event would be an unsafe space. I wrote to the colleague in question asking if she would be willing to meet privately to discuss her concerns, stating that "I'm saddened to hear that a colleague at [REDACTED] takes the view that, because of my involvement in this discussion, my views are anti-trans. I'm also keen to set the record straight, not least because it is harmful to my trans students if they are led to believe, on the basis of misreadings of my position, that I am somehow against them." The colleague replied "Unfortunately I do not trust your intent as your record for being anti-trans is extensive and harmful. Any "misreadings" of your position are your own fault and you will need to do extensive reparative work to change that." On the upside, I felt I should share the exchange with my HoD in case things went further. My HoD insisted on speaking to the Dean of Faculty and Head of Department for the colleague's Department, and my understanding is that the HoD spoke to the colleague in question to let her know that emailing the Dept mailing list to denounce me as transphobic was inappropriate behaviour. So I have been well supported institutionally, despite such complaints being personally hard to take." (Name provided)

Until recent years, the view of the respondent and the senior managers who acted in their support would have been the commonplace understanding of expected behaviour in higher education. However, with the rise of the belief that activism is a core professional activity, in higher education and more widely, this can no longer be consistently assumed.

University leaders have to be uncompromising about the unacceptability of freedom-restricting harassment within institutions and clear about the response staff and students should expect to it. Sometimes, as in the example immediately above,

managers are doing this. But in too many cases detailed below, and elsewhere in this report, this has not been the case, and in some cases, activism from within the sector aimed at closing down research and enquiry that starts simply from the unexceptional position that sex is immutable, binary and salient in particular contexts, has not only been tolerated but conceded to, even placated, at the highest level in institutions.

Despite some claims otherwise, there is no basis from material already public, or shared with this review, for believing that this is happening in the other direction. A few non-gender-critical respondents stressed the supportive nature of their working environment; another said gender-critical academics were “rarely” the source of hostile comments (but thought they should do more to police the behaviour of their followers on-line). We do not claim that researchers working within the gender-identity paradigm never encounter obstacles, criticism or hostility from within the sector that goes beyond what they should expect as part of ordinary academic engagement and critique. But the responses discussed below reinforce that there are no grounds for believing that they face the sort of organised internal hostile activism to which researchers deemed gender-critical have become subject in recent years.

3.1 Self-censorship and chilling effects

Summary

- Pressure to self-censor due to the anticipation of being discriminated against is widely reported. This affects all aspects of academic life, including teaching and learning, research, and the ability to have open discussions.
- Some respondents noted that behaviour from senior managers and other senior colleagues contributed to the chilling effect.

Seventy-five people provided a response under this heading: it received the largest response of any category. Forty-one responses were from those who agreed with the gender-critical position while 34 were from those who disagreed. Of the latter, 22 provided an individual response, and a further 12 provided a response using generic wording from the FGEN template.

Self-censorship by its nature is general in its effect. As one respondent put it: “This permeates all of my work - teaching, research, admin. I have to be very careful what I say when teaching on feminism” (gender-critical), and another, “I have repeatedly had to be careful in professional contexts how I frame, express and share relevant research” (non- gender-critical). As self-censorship is a complex phenomenon, goes to the core of research as an endeavour, and attracted the most responses, we include material from respondents from both perspectives at length.

Self-censorship: responses from those agreeing with the gender-critical position

Most responses from the gender-critical position focussed on their local working environment as the principal source of pressure to self-censor; three-quarters of these responses identified the behaviour of colleagues or supervisors as a main driver to self-censor, and/or institutional culture, mostly within universities.

“While I worked at the University of Sussex. I became well known for my gender-critical views. However, due to the oppressive circumstances (detailed below) there were many areas of discourse in which I did not feel I could be completely frank about my views: on e.g. the consequences of the heavy presence of autogynephilia in trans-identified males; the high rates of sexual offending amongst incarcerated trans-identified males, compared to the male prison population generally.

It was not just the negative events that made me, and I believe others in my workplace, self-censor. There were also chilling effects from

public transactivist interventions of senior staff at Sussex. For instance, from 2021 my line manager was explicitly a transactivist, describing in "Dean's Update" emails to the school how she regularly volunteered with a transactivist youth group, and including submissions in her email updates from other transactivist members of staff, about the importance of gender affirmation in the School. In 2018, as then-Chair of the Staff LGBT network and Head of Teaching and Learning for a separate School, the same person also participated in a video with a group of others which was a direct response to an interview I had given to the Brighton Argus. This video, featuring her presence at two points, finished with the graphic "Trans women are always welcome in the changing room with us"; and was accompanied by text which said "Recently, we were ashamed to discover that our local paper, The Argus, printed an article about someone who said that trans women shouldn't be allowed to change in a women's changing room. We don't agree. If we have to use gendered, women's changing rooms, showers or bathrooms we want cis women, trans women and non binary people to all feel welcome in these spaces together. Everyone should be free to change in peace without fear of transphobia, humiliation or discrimination. #changetogether #LwiththeT #NotaDebate Please share the video and encourage your league to get involved!" (Kathleen Stock, former Professor of Philosophy, University of Sussex)

~

"There are lectures and seminars I used to do that I can no longer use. I have been told by a university senior management colleague in my department – categorically – that the university would not support me if I said anything publicly on this issue. I am not on any kind of social media because I feel it would be dishonest as I would not be able to share or speak openly." (Name provided)

~

"My department has some senior members of staff who call anyone who wants to question the 'no debate' position of Stonewall as TERFs. I no longer feel comfortable talking about this issue with anyone other than those who I know are open to dialogue." (Name provided)

~

"I am a PhD student. My supervisors have been on "trans training". In the supervision after their training they both recited one after the other

that “trans women are women, not all women have vaginas”. I was supposed to say it next. It was like being compelled to recite the catechism at school. I didn’t, but it was awkward, and I feel like I have been walking on eggshells ever since. My project is about women – and I don’t want to say more than that because I don’t want to be identified in any way – so it is very hard to negotiate this impasse.”
(Name not provided)

~

“I have suggested multiple times to colleagues and students that it is important to be clear about what data we are collecting, i.e. sex or gender, and that I believe we should always collect data on sex, and additionally collect data on gender if that is the topic under investigation. However, I would be fearful about making my gender critical beliefs any more explicit due to the likelihood of discrimination. As an early career researcher on a fixed term contract, and the sole income earner in my household, I can’t risk doing anything that would make it difficult for me to secure employment.” (Name not provided)

~

“I have felt unable to voice my belief (that sex is real and immutable). In particular I felt this most acutely in the period before Maya Forstater won her employment tribunal on appeal. In general I don’t speak about my opinions with work colleagues although this has become easier now that there have been a few important court cases. An example of where I have self-censored is: I recently worked with someone who was conducting a project which involved interviewing older adults. My colleague sent me her interview schedule which included a question about whether the interviewee identified as a man or a woman. I thought this question was wholly inappropriate as the interviews were going to be face to face (so the interviewer could see the sex/gender of the person) and also older adults don’t always understand the whole gender conversation and the language would confuse them. However, I did not say anything as I did not want to get into a confrontation and lose out on a working on a project that I thought was important.” (Name provided)

~

“The Royal College of Psychiatrists hosted a seminar on 23 November description in this article is accurate <https://thecritic.co.uk/in-defence-of-medical-heretics/> college issued this tweet that evening

<https://twitter.com/rcpsych/status/1595502687059345409> [We are appalled by the treatment of the presenters this afternoon during our CCQI EDI webinar, it represents the opposite to the College values, which we strive to uphold every day. We are currently looking into what happened and how.]... I tried to get them to publish the results of the subsequent investigation which found no transphobic content to no avail huge chilling effect in my view” (Name provided)

~

“I was investigated for expressing concern about gender overriding sex in supposedly sex-specific leadership training. I have been ostracised for asking my public, statutory organisation to collect data on sex, which is important in the health service I work in.” (Name provided)

~

“I am unable to attend or contribute to the feminist research groups within the university where I employed and a different university where I am studying for my PhD. Both departments require adherence to the affirmation that trans women are women.... Reluctantly, I have signed [a charter] to avoid being excluded from the events. Signing this charter has had a profound negative impact on my academic experience and work. It has placed me in a position where I feel unable to freely express my views or engage in critical discussions, especially on topics where my perspective diverges from the dominant narrative. ... This enforced conformity has stifled my intellectual freedom and made me feel isolated within academic settings that are supposed to foster open dialogue and diverse viewpoints. It has created an atmosphere of self-censorship, where I cannot fully engage with or challenge the material presented, thus hindering my academic growth and the development of my critical thinking skills. The emotional toll of navigating these constraints has been significant. The experience of being coerced into agreeing with statements I fundamentally question has led to feelings of frustration, helplessness, and alienation. This internal conflict between adhering to imposed norms and staying true to my intellectual beliefs has not only affected my morale but also my ability to collaborate effectively with peers and mentors who may hold different views. Consequently, this environment has impeded my ability to contribute meaningfully to discussions and has detracted from the overall quality and rigor of my work at an early stage of my career.” (Name provided)

~

"I was interested in the effect of changing sex markers on the quality of research created using linked administrative data using systems such as ONS IDS or SAIL. What impact does it have on the linkage and match rates of administrative and health data? As I am completing my masters whilst also working in the field I decided that it would not be worth the professional risk to do so. I am studying for an MSc at a university that has been in the news for protests to Academics of Academic Freedom events that have resulted in events being shut down and people being arrested for violence. I could not risk the bullying that could result in taking on the research. I have decided to leave with a Postgraduate diploma rather than complete the dissertation." (Name not provided)

~

"Part of my research looks at the harmful effects of gender stereotypes, so I have tried to attend talks, groups and events on the subject of gender in the hope of engaging with a range of questions and viewpoints. There has not been a single one of these events at my university where I have felt able to express even mildly gender-critical views, or question the accepted pro-trans orthodoxy: several of my colleagues openly (and mockingly) refer to "TERFs" and dismiss gender-critical views as "toxic", "outdated" or "bigoted", with no-one visibly challenging them. For similar reasons, I feel I have had no choice but to leave my union (UCU) because of the extreme pro-trans ideology expressed by the most vocal members and the derogatory terms in which gender-critical thought is described." (Name provided)

~

"I left an academic career of 25 years because the University environment was toxic and I couldn't face (informal!) student complaints which were clearly targeting a group of gender critical staff. Support from colleagues beyond my immediate circle was non-existent." (Name provided)

A respondent working as a researcher in the third sector, on a sensitive topic predominantly affecting women, gave a detailed account of attending an internal staff workshop.

"[It] was highly problematic with respect to the silencing of gender critical views. It began with a round of mandatory pronouns, which - whether or not that was the intent - had the effect of creating an intimidating and hostile atmosphere for gender critical staff, including me In the workshop, all but two of the [REDACTED] or so participants gave their pronouns, which suggests either a highly gender affirmative environment, or a level of fear around the consequences of pronoun refusal. I was one of the two people to refuse to give pronouns. All present in the staff workshop were put on the spot and instructed to declare their feelings. Every person said some variant of 'anxious', 'worried' or 'uncomfortable', which is not indicative of a space of enquiry that is free from fear. It supports the view that staff faced an intimidating atmosphere in which to express opinions. I refused to state my feelings, as it was my [REDACTED] week in the job and I wasn't ready to discuss how I felt in that moment with a room full of strangers. I was in fact feeling horrified and scared, as I'd managed to skim-read the paper copy on the table in front of me of the proposed trans inclusion guidance, which I felt was intended to have the effect of eliminating single sex [REDACTED] services entirely in order to promote trans inclusion... That week, my [REDACTED] team had circulated a training PowerPoint on trans inclusion from an external workshop of 'experts' which contained the suggestion that gender critical people be discriminated against in employment in the [REDACTED] sector in order to promote trans inclusion... Whether or not this was the intent, the effect was to add to the hostile and intimidating atmosphere for gender critical staff, carrying as it did the implication that they should not be in their jobs and that discriminating against them on the grounds of their belief would be a reasonable and proportionate step to promote trans inclusion within [REDACTED] sector as a whole... In the staff session itself, one member of staff forcefully called gender critical people 'transphobic', pounding her hand on the table. She called for the sidelining of those that hold gender critical views within [REDACTED] on the grounds of their alleged transphobia....An earlier mention in the session by me of the Equality Act and the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)'s requirements to foster good relations had resulted in another colleague forcefully declaring the 'sex idealist' ('sex' is an idea) position 'transwomen are women, transmen are men', shaking with emotion as she did so and pounding her fist into the palm of her other

hand... After the session... I was told that people would be glad I had spoken up and that there had been silencing, with colleagues feeling forced into signing an open letter to management on trans inclusion. My head of team told me she was 'devastated' that I had attended the session in only my [REDACTED] week in the job. ... I have since been subjected to more mandatory pronouns, as well as being ostracised by most of my team, told my views (that sex is a real thing and matters in the context of [REDACTED]) are 'toxic' and repeatedly having to listen to ageist jokes (I am much older than most of my team). Another older colleague in my team (ten years older than me) who holds similar view to me about the importance of sex in relation to [REDACTED] has been told she is a 'fascist' in front of others for asking a very mild question about sex-based data and sexual orientation. No one defended her." (Name provided)

One respondent referred to the wider external environment on social media.

"Prior to [REDACTED], I would tweet about new published papers and other research related activities, this resulted in certain followers from one of my disciplines liking and possibly retweeting. Since [REDACTED] I have continued and maintained my research profile, but certain followers no longer like or retweet my Twitter posts. This is not about popularity but demonstrates the chilling effect. People do not want to be seen openly supporting a person who is a member of the first UK and international gender critical research group, for fear of being cancelled themselves and experiencing a chilling effect." (Name provided)

Some made more general observations, such as:

"It is not possible to discuss the various accounts of what makes wrongful discrimination wrong without taking seriously one account which (whether it is correct or not) appeals to the immutability of some of the traits that are bases for discrimination. When the atmosphere is one in which gender ideology is enforced, this is detrimental to full and free intellectual inquiry." (Name not provided)

~

"...it definitely has that effect and many academics I know will not express dissident views openly, resorting to discussion in pseudonymous groups." (Name provided)

~

“This happens daily, in pretty much all contexts at a university. Certain things have become literally unsayable - that trans women are not women is the most obvious one, but there are others.” (Name provided)

~

“There are facts about the world that are clear - someone's age or height or sex were not at all contentious. In the last few years merely asking the question “Are you male or female?” has become contentious and I feel hesitant to challenge in the current climate. I've self-censored at work because I'm cautious of the ramifications of challenging this, even though it seems absurd. The Cass review was a factual, evidence-based review by a senior academic and has been well received by the BMJ amongst others. Yet some of my colleagues have signed a letter opposing it [REDACTED]. Again, this seems absurd but I've self-censored at work because I'm cautious of the ramifications of challenging this.” (Name not provided)

Self-censorship: responses from those disagreeing with the gender-critical position

The responses from this group were less likely to raise problems in the immediate working environment compared to those in the GC group. Almost half of these responses focussed on the external environment, with experiences on or due to social media identified specifically as the main issue in several cases.

Concern about the environment inside their own workplace was raised by a similar number. In a few remaining cases it was unclear whether the response was raising issues with the internal or external environment. The comments from this group tended to provide fewer specific examples: we have included below most of the material provided by this group where permission was given for quotation by the respondent.

One respondent reported severe personal impacts. Their response is provided in full.

“Due to bullying and harassment, complaints, legal threats and actions taken against me by 'gender critical' (gender exclusionary) colleagues I have been unable to write or speak publicly about research with trans populations that I have been involved in for years. I have been too afraid to take part in discussions, conferences and networking opportunities for fear of hostility to myself and my family. Due to legal and institutional requirements I have been isolated and forced to maintain confidentiality about what has happened to me. Whereas the

narrative about 'gender critical' academics being silenced and no platformed has had support and visibility in press and media. We need better legal protection for trans and non-binary people especially given the rise in strategic litigation against public participation (SLAPPS) that are silencing trans perspectives.” (Name not provided)

As this was an anonymous case who did not consent to further contact, we were unable to seek further detail about what sort of events had occurred here, to set alongside the detailed accounts provided by gender-critical respondents. Taken at face value, this is an equally serious case. In the absence of any detail however, it is not possible to tell how far this case is a mirror image of those reported from respondents in the gender-critical group, or how far it engages with a different perspective on what should be expected by or from those working in higher education. The claim regarding SLAPPS is a general claim rather than a claim about personal experience and is unsubstantiated. The claim that ‘we need better legal protection for TNBGD’ people is taken from the FGEN template for this section, which also makes a generic claim that ‘gender-exclusionary people’ will ‘try to sue for defamation’. It would aid understanding of the issues here for university managers if a case like this could be shared in the same level of detail as those of some of the gender-critical cases.

Given the claim of legal and other constraints on providing further information, it merits noting that the review offered the ability to submit responses with complete anonymity, so that there was nothing to prevent a person from describing the specific nature of any legal or other constraint that they were under, and providing some non-identifying general background to that. A number of respondents were able to provide relatively detailed material without identifying themselves. The various recent employment tribunal cases listed in the introduction to this report moreover demonstrate that cases that include allegations of severe workplace harassment against colleagues can be pursued without confidentiality conditions being imposed.

A common theme in this group was that references to research in this area on social media led to hostile reactions, meaning these researchers no longer use social media to discuss their research, advertise seminars or recruit participants. One respondent commented that hostility on social media was not from other academics, but that they thought academics supporting the gender-critical view should do more to call out such behaviour.

“My experience of discussing a range of issues related to [REDACTED] is that gender critical feminists police social media excessively. There are strands of my research that I now do not post on Twitter/X because I know that gender critical feminists will accuse me of horrific things - such as supporting child abuse or condoning rape because I discuss [REDACTED – topics related sex education].

While gender critical academics rarely engage in this activity themselves, I never see them call out their followers for engaging in such behaviours.” (Name not provided)

~

“The heightened scrutiny of trans people and trans-related issues among the media and various malicious actors has had a chilling effect on me and my colleagues. The certainty of harassment and vitriol from anti-trans voices makes even contemplating a research project on sex and gender a far greater investment of wherewithal and patience than it ought to be. Furthermore, the long track record of anti-trans public figures engaging in litigious pursuit of those who deign to criticise them has often inhibited open discussion and the contemplation of further research.” (Name not provided)

~

“Having seen my work taken out of context online and misused to demonstrate points that are totally not what my work is showing, I now feel very apprehensive about publishing. Witnessing how someone can make a YouTube video “explaining” my work as an argument that [REDACTED] is in some way dangerous, when this is not at all what my work shows, makes me not want to share future data.” (Name not provided)

~

“I am frightened of social media harassment or harassment at meetings or by email since I teach sexual health for trans and non-binary people to NHS staff, [REDACTED] medical students and research students. There has never been any problem at all in my classrooms (i.e. with students), in fact the teaching is very highly rated by students. I chose to run recent gender and sexuality seminars in person only, so that we could establish a trusting atmosphere with careful agreements on mutual respect. I did not issue an open invitation on social media (X) as I usually would. So yes, I am self-censoring (as a [REDACTED] who believes in the right to safety and freedom of expression for everyone).” (Name provided)

~

“I am a trans man who works in HE. I have had medical treatment that has changed aspects of my sexed biology, including my sex hormones, my reproductive anatomy, and my phenotypical sex. I meet

the description of gender reassignment under the equality act, which clearly refers to such changes as being changes in aspects of sex. I am generally indistinguishable from other people with my acquired sex, which guidance on the EA2010 says means I should generally be treated as that sex. For purposes such as equal pay, in my view it makes obvious and correct sense to treat me as a member of the sex that everyone around me considers me to be. I feel like there is a narrative being strongly pushed within HE and society at the moment that does not recognise these biological changes in my sex, and in some cases seeks to deny the possibility that people can change legal sex. I feel that I am unable to speak out about the fact that I do not now consider my sex to be the sex assigned at birth, and that I do not consider the concept of a single "biological sex" to make sense in the context where sex is made up of chromosomes, anatomy, endocrinology and physiology and people such as myself have changed some elements but not others. I have completely come off some social media platforms because I am concerned about the levels of hostility to trans academics and people expressing my views. (Name provided)

~

I have received abuse via social media for researching trans inclusion, and persistent vexatious FOIs which have clearly been designed to produce negative stories e.g. within local press. Abuse has included threats of violence as well as broader abusive commentary about me and my work. I am no longer on most social media, and my partner is often concerned about me continuing to do the work that I do.” (Name provided)

~

“It has become harder and harder to express gender-inclusive views in work and classroom settings. There seems to be an expectation of neutrality or balance so that any critique of a view I find to be gender-exclusionary is potentially deemed to be bullying. This is disappointing in an environment where there should be robust critique. In one institution where I worked even the display of trans flags to support the community as part of Pride week was condemned as bullying. There does not seem to be proper recognition of the negative impacts of this hostile environment created by gender-exclusionary views on staff, students and community members who are LGBTQIA+ and their allies. I attended one event where the focus seemed to be on supporting the gender-critical speaker rather than LGBTQIA+ people

in the room who were frequently silenced; I had to leave as I found the atmosphere upsetting and did not feel safe to express my views. Even mentioning that I was a scholar of gender studies at lunchtime was met with hostility.” (Name not provided)

~

“As a bisexual cis woman at a Lecturer position, I have been bullied by self-identified as 'gender-critical' professors because I defend the view that transwomen are women. The same goes with uses of Twitter etc.” (Name not provided)

~

“Fear for my safety after coordinated attacks from anti trans actors including writing to my work place, searching my online history and death threats.” (Name not provided)

~

“I was intimidated by representatives of the [REDACTED – third sector campaign group].” (Name provided)

~

“I have encountered homophobia and transphobia on a consistent basis during my career as an academic in [REDACTED], including senior colleagues making derogatory remarks about queer and trans people and their academic pursuits. As a result, I have long not felt free to pursue queer and trans research without fearing judgement and damage to my future academic career.” (Name not provided)

~

“I have repeatedly had to be careful in professional contexts how I frame, express and share relevant research. Scrutiny feels much higher on me as a non-binary person, and I have to be careful what conversations i invite so I don't end up exhausted by continually having to defend the basic human rights of myself and my trans partner. One particularly upsetting part is that I feel I have to moderate my queerness, to avoid being seen as anti-feminist despite years of feminist campaigning, publication and events organizing in the VAWG and Reproductive rights space.” (Name not provided)

~

"I feel scared vocalising my support for trans inclusion in certain spaces, in light of the various tribunals and the kind of discourse and encouragement happening on (but not limited to) Mumsnet." (Name not provided)

~

"My work on trans-affirmative [REDACTED] routinely leads to hostile attention on social media and in mainstream press. The latter has caused me to receive credible threats of violence. As a result, I have turned down invitations to collaborate on several projects that I feel do not have sufficient measures in place to protect participants from such harassment." (Name not provided)

~

"It is a concerning time to be a researcher on LGBTIQ+ topics in the UK due to harassment and hate from anti-trans and "gender critical" actors. These attacks are vitriolic and coordinated, and make it frightening to be public about trans inclusive research and show up as a queer woman and trans inclusive researcher. I have had research aimed at trans communities disrupted by a mass of false responses (mostly gibberish) designed to overwhelm, meaning that I had to spend days manually cleaning the data of these. I have also faced abuse on Twitter/X and have now left the platform due to this. I also direct people not to publicise my research there. I am extremely careful about what language I use as so much as mentioning the word "trans" in calls for participants can result in abuse and threats of violence. Obviously this has had a chilling effect on my research and I have had to resort to recruitment through community networks rather than open calls." (Name not provided)

Others made general claims, such as:

"People have suffered personal harassment from gender exclusionary and conservative groups. Both within and outside clinical practice/academia. Gender "critical" beliefs are discriminatory, not "critical" in any capacity, and are based on biased gender-exclusionary beliefs." (Name not provided)

~

"It can be difficult to discuss gender and inclusion health publicly because gender critical people are often very intimidating and vocal, sometimes aggressive." (Name not provided)

~

“It feels increasingly difficult to discuss issues of sex and gender at [REDACTED] for fear of upsetting so-called gender critical academics, many of whom are prominent on social media (X, formerly Twitter) and will happily mobilise large groups of aggressive and anonymous profiles.” (Name provided)

Self-censorship: FGEN template

Twelve respondents who disagreed with gender-critical views used the FGEN template, either partly or in full. The suggested template text is shown below.

- According to Stonewall’s “LGBT in Britain Trans Report, half of trans and non-binary people (51% and 50% respectively) have had to hide or disguise the fact that they are LGBT at work because they were afraid of discrimination
- Chilling is the way people with gender-exclusionary views are attacking TNBGD folk, people’s basic human rights are under attack and being taken away.
- TNBGD people and allies have to be careful with the language they use and what they say in case gender-exclusionary people come after them or try to sue for “defamation.
- Participation in academic activities: TNBGD students and academics may be forced to refrain from participating in discussions, conferences, or networking opportunities due to bias, discrimination or hostility.
- To mitigate this: we need better legal protection for TNBGD people, inclusive policies, training programmes, advocacy

3.2 Bullying, harassment and ostracism

Summary

- Some academics and some students reported concerted campaigns of bullying directed towards them.
- In some cases the consequences were severe, including the loss of positions and careers, as well as serious consequences for mental health and wellbeing.
- In some cases, senior university staff were actively engaged in driving or exacerbating harassment. In others, respondents reported a lack of support.
- Bullying creates wider chilling effects for bystanders.

Respondents were asked to give any examples of bullying, harassment and ostracism (such as colleagues or students cutting ties).

Fifty-five people provided a response under this heading. Twenty-nine were from those who agreed with the gender-critical position, while 26 were from those who disagreed. Of the latter, 15 provided an individual response, and a further eleven provided a response using generic wording from the FGEN template.

First, a general comment. It is important to distinguish between pointed and even harsh critiques of ideas, which are perfectly legitimate and indeed form part of the university's *raison d'être*, and *ad hominem* attacks on individuals, which are unscholarly and can even constitute, in some instances, unlawful harassment. Though this distinction is conceptually clear, in practice the two elements are often mixed: legitimate commentary and illegitimate attacks can coexist within a single intervention. Furthermore, in specific cases the dearth of detail and the lack of corroborating evidence may make it difficult for fair-minded outsiders to distinguish reliably between the two elements. For these reasons, respondents' claims of being subjected to bullying and harassment, on both sides of this issue, should be taken with some caution. This caution is particularly important when the claims being made are generic or lacking in detail.

Bullying, harassment and ostracism: responses from those agreeing with the gender-critical position

The accounts received under this heading from this group were often highly detailed and a number were willing to be named.

Kathleen Stock, former Professor of Philosophy at the University of Sussex, provided us with a detailed account of her experiences. We first report her account in full below, given the importance of fostering understanding of what happened in this case.

"In 2018, stickers were placed on my office door at Sussex, saying "No TERFS on our turf". There was also a small protest at a University Diversity and Inclusion event about me, at which I was not present. Around this time, I was advised about the emergency phones on campus, a spyhole was put in my office door, and at graduation I was taken aside to be told how to get off the stage in case of an emergency.

In 2018, I co-authored a letter to the Sunday Times criticising the overly close links between Stonewall and UK Universities. In the week after the letter's publication, the then Chair of the Sussex University LGBT staff network posted a link to a petition entitled "LGBT+ Inclusivity in Higher Education: Who are the victims?" on the Facebook page of the network, of which I was at the time a member. Her aim was to attract signatures for this petition, on whose text she also said she had "consulted". The text of the petition indirectly referred to me as author of the Sunday Times Letter, and claimed that I had used "manipulative language," and promoted "conspiracy theories" "under a false claim of victimhood". Feeling ostracised, I left the staff LGBT group immediately.

In July 2018, following an interview with me in the Brighton Argus, Liam Hackett, CEO of Ditch the Label (an anti-bullying charity) and a noted Sussex alumni used in Sussex University publicity campaigns, tweeted several times about me, including: "She's desperate for the attention: it's a juxtaposition to her dull, hateful and morbid life". He then filmed himself parcelling up and sending me a T-shirt saying "Trans women are women", described me as a "very angry lecturer at Sussex University" and tweeting with the link to the video to his thousands of followers: "well this will learn her". After I informed the Provost, he and the Head of Communications met with Hackett. They then informed me that Hackett had claimed in that meeting that, since posting the tweets, he had been severely harassed by my twitter followers. I witnessed no evidence of this, nor did Hackett claim that I

had done anything to encourage such harassment. At the time of my leaving Sussex, his picture remained up in the foyer of the Business School.

From 2018-2023, a number of Sussex University faculty tweeted out defamatory or strongly critical commentary about my character. These included the following tweets from a Gender Studies Professor (a small selection):

- On November 20th 2018, the day after which, with the agreement of School management, I sent an email to Philosophy students explaining my academic position and how it would not adversely affect their academic freedom to criticise my arguments nor my professional interactions with them, the Gender Studies Professor tweeted: "Feeling so sad and sorry that people calling themselves feminists continue to perpetuate discriminatory and violent ideas about trans people, both situating them as perpetrator and denying that they suffer. Sending love and solidarity to my trans and non-binary followers x"*
- On 7th June 2019, the day on which I was quoted in a Daily Telegraph article criticising UCU General Secretary Jo Grady for using a "TERFblocker" mass Twitter blocking tool, the Gender Studies Professor tweeted: "I don't use T*RFblocker as I'm mostly left alone these days. But I know why trans folks and allies do. These women zero in on a target and attack it relentlessly. They are numerous and organized. It feels awful to be the focus of their rage. Block away, my friends".*
- On 13 September 2019, the Daily Telegraph published an interview with me, detailing some of the protests and no-platforming I had received for my view. That day, the Gender Studies Professor tweeted, clearly identifying me to anyone aware of my interview, and implying that I was a danger to students: "Of all the awful things about trans-exclusionary feminism, it's the claims of victimhood I find the worst. In my experience these women enjoy unprecedented institutional protection: trans people and their allies are silenced and scared. We are being gaslit and its so painful". "I don't know what to say to trans students coming to Sussex, following today's article. I am so sorry. I'm sharing our statement of solidarity with last year's @TPrideBrighton - here are some of the trans allies on campus if that reassures you at all".*
- On July 13th 2020 the Gender Studies Professor tweeted: "Of course gender-critical feminists are racist and ableist: their politics*

based on entitlement to define, speak for, and dominate others makes all sorts of awful things possible".

- *On 9th December 2020, the day on which I gave oral evidence on Gender Recognition Act reform to the Women and Equalities Parliamentary Select Committee, alongside some trans academics, the Gender Studies Professor tweeted, referring to me and two other academics as "cis charlatans": "Imagine a government on GRA reform that pits trans experts in law and healthcare against cis charlatans who think people are trans because of Judith Butler and you'd have a perfect picture of the state of things in England right now. Solidarity with trans people always".*
- *On 5th January 2021, the day on which my OBE was announced, the Gender Studies Professor tweeted: "Sending my love to my UK trans followers today - you know why - I really don't know what to say. Again, I don't know what to say except that I'm fighting a losing battle in my institution and am heartbroken for my trans colleagues and students".*
- *On 9th January 2021, the Gender Studies Professor tweeted: "I'd be interested to hear how many people with a prominent 'free speech warrior'* at their workplace - whether that's a racist, a transphobe and/or another flavour - have been subject to threats or official complaints from said warrior after criticising them in public.*bigot". They then added, with obvious heavy sarcasm: "Any resemblance to my own workplace is, of course, entirely coincidental".*
- *On Feb 8th 2021, the Gender Studies Professor tweeted, naming me explicitly underneath the tweet: "A very well known colleague is deep into this of course - if anyone is wondering why I have largely withdrawn from my institution in the past few years, the absolute impunity with which this person behaves is a major part of it."*

In October 2018, two days after the Guardian published an article which discussed my personal experiences after I had criticised proposed changes to the Gender Recognition Act, the Gender Studies Professor described above placed trans flags in the pigeonholes of all faculty in the school of Law, Politics and Sociology (LPS), asking them to put them on their doors as a gesture of support for trans people. In their email accompanying the flags to all faculty, they mentioned "negative media coverage around the proposed reforms to the Gender Recognition Act" which they claimed was making "trans students feel unsafe". Individuals in LPS wrote to me to say they did not wish to put up the flags, which they perceived as politicised, but felt they had to, given that the absence on a corridor door automatically suggested

some kind of critique. I later had to teach in this building; it was indeed festooned with trans flags.

In 2018, an open letter by "Pride in STEM" was launched against the online magazine The Conversation for publishing an article by me criticising gender recognition act reform (December 2018)

Also in 2018, a lecturer at Goldsmiths initiated a plot to have me (among others) fired for my beliefs, as reported in The Times Sept 8th, 2018

In 2018, a group of Philosophy undergraduate students set up a public Facebook group called "Sussex Philosophy Students in Solidarity with Trans Students". On this page, students openly described me by name as transphobic, otherwise defamed and mocked me, and discussed how best to silence me using University policies, data protection law, and other means. Also in 2018, the Director of the Centre for Gender Studies posted a supportive message on this Facebook Page, expressing (among other things) regret about the 'hostile atmosphere being fostered by current "debates" around the rights of transgender people.'

In 2019, after a review of mine of a book by philosopher Serene Khader was published in the Notre Dame Philosophy Reviews (NB not a book on trans issues), a philosophy professor from MIT wrote to every member of the board of the NDPR to complain about my being invited to do the review, and to ask them to review their policies moving forward so that a similar mistake wasn't made again.

In 2019, a student at Sussex University published a defamatory article in the online student newspaper The Sussex Tab. I subsequently pursued the Tab for defamation and extracted an apology and costs from them. At the time of reading the article, I tweeted (to the Tab, not to the student author) "This is not OK @TheTabSussex and I will be seeking legal advice". I also "liked" some tweets that were critical of the article. On the strength of this, the student author of the piece complained to the University, alleging that my tweet had subjected her personally "to mass online abuse and harassment" which was now a "safeguarding issue" and that "it was highly unfair for someone with a following and platform the size of Kathleen's to use it to direct such abuse towards me." As a result, I was subjected to an extended formal complaints process that lasted months. The complaint was eventually fully dismissed, but I believe that it was obviously vexatious from the start. I later heard from the Pro Vice-Chancellor for Teaching and Learning that the student was taking her complaint to the Office for

Students/ Ombudsman. I was told nothing further. On 16th July 2020, I was informed by a manager that I was now the subject of a further complaint from a student who claimed that "requests for student support were ignored" by me. This complaint emerged the day after an article critical of me had appeared in the Brighton Argus. At the time, I was told that I would be kept "appropriately informed" of developments - again, I was told nothing further.

In 2020, I became aware of a Sussex student's social media account in which they referred approvingly to my death (they posted a public Instagram picture - still available - of a man with a gun to his head, over which they had laid the words "LAY YOUR WEARY HEAD DOWN KATHLEEN"). Other posts on the same account referred to me by full name. I also believed the same student to be behind a parody twitter account, set up in my name with a picture of me, which encouraged people to throw milkshakes at me at a talk. On the basis of both of these things, I made a disciplinary complaint against the student in February 2020. In July 2020, after a delay of several months, I was contacted by the disciplinary officer for further details. On 28th September 2020, 7 months after I first made the complaint, I was told that the matter had been "fully investigated" but that I was not entitled to know the outcome of my complaint.

In January 2021, a USC graduate student published a blog post containing several misrepresentations of my position and criticisms of my character. The essay was (at the time) retweeted 1,500 times, often by senior philosophers in the field.

In January 2021, following the announcement of my OBE, 600 philosophers and other academics signed a petition accusing me of transphobia.

In September and October I was subject to a sustained campaign of intimidation from protestors on campus, who said they would come to campus every day until I was fired or resigned. Posters were placed in major thoroughfares describing me as a transphobe; stickers saying the same were placed in the bathrooms I used; a manifesto defaming me was distributed throughout my building; an open day was disrupted with a large protest, graffiti and flares, and there were several sub-protests. The nature of the protest was widely described in the press at the time. In tandem with a statement by Sussex branch of UCU that expressed approval of the campaign, I was eventually caused to resign." (Kathleen Stock, former Professor of Philosophy, University of Sussex)

Another named respondent, Professor Michael Rainsborough, stated he was pressurised into stepping down from his role as Head of Department at King's College London after organising a speaker series which involved gender critical speakers:

"On account of organising the speaker series mentioned at section 7, I was subject to a systematic effort at intimidation. In part, this effort at intimidation/harassment constituted verbal confrontations with the [SENIOR MANAGER] and the [SENIOR MANAGER]. This took the form of being called aside after Faculty meetings to be berated; formal meetings with the [SENIOR MANAGERS] that subjected me to interrogations about the speaker series, and attacks on my professionalism (which included being called naive, disingenuous and bringing my department into disrepute); phone calls from the [SENIOR MANAGER] who also pressurised me to not proceed with the rest of the speaking events. The campaign culminated in February 2019 when I was prevailed upon to step down early from my Head of Department role by the [SENIOR MANAGER]. I also interpreted this as part of the campaign of harassment and persecution for having in large part defied the college management over holding the speaking event, which involved gender critical speakers. As part of this persecution I was denied my final month's Head of Department's salary uplift, an act pure spite. After I stepped aside, I was shunned by colleagues. Most wished to avoid me, I guessed, because they saw me as too dangerous to be associated with. Some colleagues whom I had been close to cut ties and ghosted me completely and I never spoke to them again. Many simply avoided me, or showed awkwardness in my presence. Apart from a few genuine colleagues, the vast majority ... refrained from contact. Only one or two reached out privately to express their regret at what happened and how badly they believed I had been treated. In early 2023, I left the College for a new position elsewhere. Despite over 25 years of service working for the Department, including occupying senior level roles (HOD, Deputy HOD, etc), and contributing significantly to the building and success of the Department of War Studies over the years, I wasn't provided with either any formal farewell events, or even any acknowledgement in any form. A few colleagues messaged privately to express their sorrow at my leaving, but the Department/Faculty and College levels of management assiduously ignored my impending departure. Although I did not wish for, or need any of, these people's validation, I simply regarded it as telling. Those who left or retired from the department having served for far less longer and without much in the way of distinguished achievements to their name, were accorded

far more recognition. To me, this was the final conclusion of their ostracism campaign.” (Professor Michael Rainsborough)

Cathy Devine gave an account of her experience of being bullied and harassed by a US lobby group regarding work she was undertaking on behalf of a Canadian public body asking the opinions of female elite athletes.²⁴⁷ An open letter attacking her included the objection that she referred to ‘biological males’ (the open letter is included in the Appendix 1 (2022-1). It states: 'Throughout the survey, Devine uses the term "biological males", code for a trans-exclusionary position, which deliberately demeans and devalues trans women's identities and humanity'). This illustrates the way in which social media creates an opportunity for bullying to cross international borders.

“I have been subject to intense bullying and harassment by an American activist/lobbying group called Athlete Ally despite the work being commissioned by Sport Canada. The Canadian High performance Female Athlete Survey commissioned by Sport Canada was subject to a breach of the survey distribution protocol and confidentiality by one respondent. The survey was forwarded to an American activist/lobbying group Athlete Ally which then attempted to close the survey down and get the research project defunded via an Open Letter to Sport Canada and the Sports Minister. The letter termed the research 'anti-transgender', claimed it perpetuated 'discriminatory views', and described one of the research team (me) as 'biased'. The Open Letter was signed by two of the respondents to the survey. The Open Letter could be considered to be targeted harassment and bullying of one of the research team via ad hominem attacks on her research and academic reputation, and may have had a chilling effect on female high-performance athlete participation. I commented briefly about its effect on me for a piece in The Critic. As a consequence of the leak, the research team added two further layers of security to the survey in order to protect the integrity of the data, but fortunately most of the data had been collected by this stage and so this ultimately did not affect the project to any significant degree. Indeed, it served to support one of the over-arching themes raised by respondents, that is, the on-going attempts to silence both feminist researchers with a 'gender critical' research frame, and female athletes. Following this, some of the high performance athletes who responded to the survey reported that they had received an email from

²⁴⁷ See also: Dillon, S. (2024) 'The cost of dissent.' The Critic.
<https://thecritic.co.uk/the-cost-of-dissent/>

AthleteCAN, the association of Canada's national team athletes which describes itself as 'the only fully independent and most inclusive athlete organization in the country and the first organization of its kind in the world' informing them that this survey was 'transphobic' and that they should not participate in the research. It is likely, unfortunately, that this email will have compounded the fear that female athletes feel in contributing to this policy discussion, and contributed to silencing them. The research team heard that following the Open Letter from Athlete Ally at least one current athlete had been too scared to complete the survey even though she had wanted to do so ..." (Cathy Devine).

Bullying took a clear emotional toll on respondents.

"The main way in which my research work has been hampered is by bullying and harassment of me by colleagues [REDACTED]. This has had a lasting psychological effect on me, and has undermined my ability to work...Although the network was not closed down by the University and continues, the campaign against us was partly successful, and the [REDACTED] senior management was culpable for adding to the toxifying of our research by declaring it 'harmful', with no evidential base. The attacks on our research had no academic or intellectual merit at all, and they were generally not couched in academic or intellectual ways. This made their effect more, rather than less pronounced, since there was little to argue with." (Name provided).

One respondent who preferred not to be quoted directly (but provided their details) stated that students had told them that the LGBTQ+ network at their institution was seeking to have the respondent sacked and was creating a dossier against them. The same respondent stated that they had been repeatedly denounced on social media by a university administrator in an EDI role.

Another academic faced objections when they were appointed to an EDI role, due to their gender-critical views.

"I was appointed into an EDI (equality, diversity and inclusivity) management role in my university, which prompted a lengthy complaint from colleagues (many of whom were not in my part of the university) about 2 open letters I had signed and tweets I had sent (all deemed transphobic). The letters were misrepresented (e.g. one was about the treatment of Kathleen Stock and the other was about the effects of Stonewall's advice on carrying out research, see above), and no tweets were shared. This complaint was not supported, but the

chilling effect of having colleagues (none of whom approached me directly) complain to my dean and my line manager has made it much harder for me to do my role, which I have carried out over the next 4 years and continue to do, as I believe it is important and we do have much to do to make [the university] more equitable, diverse and inclusive, across all protected characteristics.” (Name provided)

Several submissions cited experiences of individuals being ostracised for their gender-critical views within their institutions.

“I signed an open letter to our VC about whether we should review our membership of Stonewall's Diversity Champions scheme in view of its implications for free speech, and our capacity to conduct research. As a result of that letter, many colleagues with whom I work signed a letter calling us 'transphobic'. I was trolled online, had my picture distributed at a protest and felt generally unsafe. I no longer go in the building where most of my colleagues work because I feel unwelcome.” (Name provided)

~

“My university recently set up a women's health research group - that's right up my street, so I signed up. I couldn't make the first meeting, but the minutes suggest the very first thing they did was talk about how inclusive they wanted it to be and came up with a form of words ie they wanted 'women' to mean 'anyone who feels they can relate' . Broad to the point of absurdity in my view, so I bowed out. I didn't challenge this one, as there's only so many hours in a the day and you have to pick your battles. I did later email the group with a flyer about Jo Phoenix coming to our town to speak about her court case, in case anyone with an interest in sex and gender would like to attend. I immediately got a reply from one group member, implying I was making the university unsafe for trans people by drawing anyone's attention to the talk. The person who emailed me took care to copy in 22 other people, just so my implied transgression was publicly noted.” (Name provided)

~

“A considerable number of colleagues have stopped talking to me and look away when they meet me at the corridor. It is my understanding that this relates to my activity as free speech champion and Deputy Director at the [REDACTED] where I organise events and invite prominent guest speakers.” (Name provided)

~

"I briefly worked as a Graduate Teaching Assistant on a postgraduate module which covered REDACTED. When the seminar discussion turned to the provision of puberty blockers, one very vocal student began to speak forcefully to the rest of the group, citing debunked research findings (such as REDACTED). This preceded the Cass Review but at the time, the NHS guidelines on puberty blockers had recently been updated to reflect the lack of evidence around their long-term safety. When I raised my hand and calmly made this point in an attempt to offer some balance to the discussion, the senior academic leading the class glared at me, swiftly moved the discussion on and would not look at me or speak to me for the rest of the session. Later, she forwarded two papers expressing pro-trans stances to the whole seminar group, which this student had asked her to circulate. I believe she was fearful of negative feedback from this student (and possibly others) following my comment and was therefore doubling down. She barely spoke to me for the remainder of the module, did not thank me for my work (as she had done effusively when we'd worked together before) and I was never asked back to teach on the module. I consider this to be ostracism...More importantly though, I remain highly concerned about the lack of balance on courses such as this, and the way in which the loudest students, sometimes with extreme views, are allowed to dominate discussions unimpeded when it comes to gender." (Name provided)

~

"I have been ostracised by most of my team, told my views (that sex is a real thing and matters in the context of domestic abuse and sexual violence) are 'toxic' and have repeatedly had to listen to ageist jokes (I am much older than most of my team). Another older colleague in my team ...who holds similar view to me about the importance of sex in relation to domestic abuse has been told she is a 'fascist' in front of others for asking a very mild question about sex-based data and sexual orientation. No one defended her." (Name provided)

~

"I was due to give a talk at a conference at my institution. Colleagues organized a demonstration after spreading misinformation about the content of my talk and put pressure on university management. I withdrew the paper." (Name provided)

~

“One of my own students sent an email telling me off and copying in her entire cohort plus many of my colleagues. She also copied in a [REDACTED] student [REDACTED] who was not one of my students. This person sent many long, long emails to me, often in the middle of the night, sometimes several hundred words or more, often copying in colleagues and various management. The head of HR specifically told me NOT to forward them to him as he didn't want to see them in case it caused issues later, ie he didn't want to do his job. I later discovered that this person had caused trouble for several other staff, but no-one told me this at the time.” (Name provided)

~

“Because of my gender critical beliefs some of my colleagues have been spreading rumours about me being transphobic, they have been recruiting new colleagues against me, writing formal complaints, making freedom to speak up calls etc. This harassment has been happening over a year now, however my clinical director and our trust's medical director did not stop this (they were able to if they wanted), just were passively watching; the senior manager of Trust encouraged the activists by validating their claims and ignoring my pleas for help and ignoring my grievance.” (Name provided)

One respondent noted that witnessing campaigns against a colleague has chilling effects for the wider scientific community, with serious consequences.

“I was awarded a significant prize by a learned society, which triggered a small but focused campaign (both online and to the society) as I had provided expert testimony in 2020 to a judicial review. Again, this was deemed transphobic and by extension, that I was generally accused of hostility to LGBTQ+ people. The society dealt with the complaint robustly and my prize and lecture went ahead, but the chilling effect of trying to prevent scientists from submitting expert testimony was very marked: notably, none of the other UK experts in this field were prepared to provide the expert testimony (all of whom were more expert than me). There was no suggestion that what I had said was wrong: indeed the evidence I provided was supported by the Cass review in 2024. However the attacks were simply that I had said it at all.” (Name provided)

One respondent noted the lack of consequences for colleagues guilty of harassment and discrimination, and the lack of responsibility taken by management.

“...even though your name has been on public facing discriminatory documents, you can still be rewarded for your research through promotion. In my opinion, this signals that bullying and harassment is not taken seriously, and because of confidentiality, very few people in the institution actually know what is going on with the bullies and what (if any) actions have been taken... I believe university managers are fearful of upsetting the gender affirmative staff at [REDACTED]... It demonstrates poor leadership... that university managers are not able to stand up to employees to stamp out discriminatory behaviour... There has been no compassion towards [REDACTED], and instead, we have been punished through the process...” (Name provided)

Others wrote about being vilified by colleagues for their views:

“I was accused by a colleague at a public event of 'making her students feel unsafe on campus'. when pressed, the colleague pointed to my having signed a letter a few years ago in support of freedom of speech in the context of gender critical views. more broadly, this was highly upsetting and caused me to avoid campus for over a year.” (Name provided)

Another respondent wrote that calling colleagues ‘terfs’ had been normalised on campus, including on posters prepared by a student standing for election.

A student wrote about being bullied and harassed by their PhD supervisor and other academics:

“I have faced significant harassment and obstacles that have profoundly impacted both my personal and professional life. These experiences have included nuisance Freedom of Information (FOI) requests, some of which were highly invasive, seeking my home address and personal contact details. This invasion of privacy has been deeply unsettling and has created a sense of vulnerability, insecurity and a fear for my safety and that of my young children. In addition to these FOIs, I have been the target of abusive threads and direct messages on Twitter (now X). The harassment online has been relentless, with vitriolic comments aimed at discrediting and intimidating me. This cyberbullying has extended to attempts to undermine my academic work, including nuisance appeals against ethics approvals for projects that have a gender-critical focus. The harassment was not limited to online interactions. I endured two years of harassment from my PhD supervisor. My research project focused on single mothers within a small and well-defined population, consisting of explicitly natal women. Despite the clear scope of my

research (and irrelevance of the trans debate to my project), I was persistently pressured to include trans women in my study population. My supervisor insisted that I devote considerable time and energy to exploring literature on trans women, even when it was clear that my sample would not include any trans women. This insistence not only diverted my focus, time and energy but also misaligned my research from its original objectives. Additionally, I was repeatedly singled out and compelled to sign respect charters before attending any research events, further isolating me from feminist events within the university. Ultimately, the persistent harassment led me to request a change in my supervision team. I provided evidence of the bullying through email communications, and my complaint was upheld, validating my claims of mistreatment. The harassment escalated when I advertised for participants for a separate research project that focused on interviewing health professionals with gender-critical beliefs. My colleague and I were subjected to extreme online bullying and harassment. We were labelled 'transphobic', 'white supremacists', and accused of seeking to promote 'genocide' against people who identify as transgender. These accusations were not from anonymous accounts but from high-profile academics, some of whom held the title of professor in our field. This public vilification by respected members of the academic community was particularly damaging and distressing, casting a shadow over my professional reputation and creating a hostile environment for me online. I closed my account. These combined experiences have had a detrimental impact on my well-being and academic productivity. The pervasive harassment has created an atmosphere of fear and anxiety, severely affecting my ability to focus on my work. The professional consequences have been significant. The pressure to conform to certain ideological positions has stifled my intellectual freedom, while the public attacks have damaged my professional standing and hindered my ability to conduct and publish my research. This has made me reluctant to research sex and gender further." (Name provided)

Another respondent stated they had been ostracised by their supervisors for their 'gender-critical' views, resulting in having no supervision for a year.

One respondent stated they were targeted for their gender-critical views by trainee counsellors at a clinic they managed.

"I helped set up [REDACTED]; a community-based charitably-run counselling and psychotherapy service which offers clinical placements to trainee counsellors, many of whom attend

[REDACTED] University. In recent years several trainees have resigned from the clinic and attempted to set up a boycott by [REDACTED] university on the grounds that I am transphobic and a practitioner of conversion therapy. None of these trainees knows me or my work. But they have been influenced by a series of derogatory online posts by organisations such as 'transgendermap' and transiness.com which falsely claim I am transphobic and practice conversion therapy. My true crime is that I have written about my work with people who have regretted their transition and that I have advocated ordinary exploratory therapy for people thinking of making permanent changes to their bodies they could come to regret. All this is in line with the recent Cass review." (Name provided)

Professor Sarah Pedersen wrote about the way in which she was treated by her colleagues and students at her institution:

"I am aware that students have made the choice not to take modules I teach. When I was denounced on an international list-serv relating to my subject area, it was interesting who did and did not contact me to check on my mental health. Some of my closest colleagues chose to completely ignore what I was going through, which has impacted on the way I perceive them to this day." (Professor Sarah Pedersen)

Bullying, harassment and ostracism: responses from those disagreeing with the gender-critical position

All the submissions from this group which gave permission to be quoted are provided in full below.

One respondent stated they had been targeted for their beliefs by colleagues: this is the same case highlighted in the previous section as one for which having some greater detail would enable a proper comparison with the detailed accounts of several of those who hold the gender-critical position.

"I have been subjected to bullying and harassment from 'gender critical' colleagues for years. This was organised in private communications by individuals who wanted to push me so far that I would go off work sick. I have also experienced colleagues calling for me to be disciplined and fired. I have taken extensive sick leave due to the health and wellbeing impacts this has had on me. My home has been targeted with 'standing up for women' stickers calling me a misogynist and sex predator. As a survivor of domestic and sexual violence, this has been particularly triggering and upsetting." (Name not provided)

Another stated that senior academics had bullied and censored their work on feminist studies. (This respondent repeated this response under five separate headings in their submission).

"As said before, senior academics self-referred to as 'gender critical feminists' have coordinately bullied, censored, and belittled me and my work on feminist studies. This is despite most of these academics never had an interest in the field of feminist theory or practice, never published anything on the field, never taught on related courses; and all of the sudden decided that they know better than those of us who have a track record of experience in feminist studies." (Name not provided)

One respondent stated that members of their organisation had received death threats due to undertaking 'trans inclusive' research.

"In an organisation sometimes conduct research for as a consultant, we have to be extremely careful about what language we use as anything deemed as violating the views of anti-trans groups/gender critical people will be attacked (through social media, letters to funders/commissioners etc). Members of my organisation have received death threats and have been doxed due to trans inclusive research. Other PhD students funded by my research body have also

had their research and names dragged through the press for trans inclusive research. There is a culture of bullying trans inclusive academics and researchers online, in the press, and active threats of violence. This seems to be deemed acceptable and as necessary to "protect women", while many of those being attacked are like myself cisgender women. Needless to say, this culture of language policing and attempted censorship makes research difficult and is personally damaging." (Name not provided)

Another repeated a comment they had made in an earlier section:

"I have encountered homophobia and transphobia on a consistent basis during my career as an academic in [REDACTED], including senior colleagues making derogatory remarks about queer and trans people and their academic pursuits. As a result, I have long not felt free to pursue queer and trans research without fearing judgement and damage to my future academic career. I have had to listen to homophobic, transphobic and otherwise discriminatory rants without any satisfactory ability to hold people to account for their discriminatory views." (Name not provided)

In one case, a respondent characterised as harassment the institutional response to their having sent a critical email to speakers about an event.

"Colleagues coordinated a campaign of harassment against me when I objected to a transphobic event organized on my university campus. My objection took the form of some polite emails to speakers to explain to them how the event was viewed – as threatening, demeaning, and rendering the campus unsafe – by LGBTQ+ communities. Senior colleagues launched a grievance against me and arranged for Freedom of Information requests to be made by external individuals in an attempt to bully me into silence." (Name not provided)

One response appeared to echo part of the FGEN template response for the 'complaints' section (see Section 3.7).

'When people have raised reasoned objections to gender "critical" (exclusionary) events on campus, they are subject to bullying and harassment by receiving grievances against them from colleagues, and Freedom of Information inquiries coordinated from outside the institutions in an effort to silence them.' (FGEN template)

One respondent stated that the rise of 'gender critical' views had enabled colleagues to express discriminatory attitudes towards trans individuals and another found seeing internal communications about gender-critical research difficult:

"The rise of gender conservative (misnamed 'gender critical') views has seen colleagues emboldened to evince discriminatory, prejudiced, and often cruel attitudes toward non-cisgendered individuals and staff. The titanic volume of demonising rhetoric and manipulative disinformation against trans people has been staggering." (Name not provided).

Others made very short comments with no further detail:

"I am constantly harassed by gender-critical people." (Name provided)

~

"Death threats online." (Name not provided)

One respondent appeared to describe their own decision not to work with others:

"I am now unable to work with several previous close collaborators due to their 'gender-critical' views and, in some cases, activism." (Name not provided)

Of the respondents who did not consent to be quoted, one stated that receiving emails containing gender-critical views felt like a form of harassment. Another said that details of conversations had been shared without permission, while another described a colleague beginning to treat them negatively and blocking their suggestions in meetings, after they disclosed their trans status, and that they had eventually left that job. Another found the way that two senior colleagues responded to emails mentioning certain words harassing. One other simply alleged that harassment was all due to gender-critical people.

One respondent stated that students had commented positively on their institution's 'trans inclusive' approach and none have raised any objections.

"Students have comments positively on our trans-inclusive approach. None have raised any objections. A number have expressed surprise that there could even be an issue." (Name provided)

Bullying, harassment and ostracism: FGEN template

Of those who disagreed with gender-critical views, eleven respondents used the FGEN template response. One respondent used the FGEN template recommended for the university administration section, which was an adjacent category in the original pro forma: it was not clear if this was done intentionally or in error. The template response is shown below.

- Overt discrimination, erasure, questioning existence, microaggressions, harassment, misgendering, exclusionary practices, abuse are common experiences fueled by those with gender-exclusionary views (or so called gender-critical views)
- UK has become an extremely hostile and unsafe place for TNBGD people, impacted by relentless violent attacks from those with gender-exclusionary views
- According to Stonewall's "LGBT in Britain Trans Report":
- Half of trans and non-binary people (51% and 50% respectively) have had to hide or disguise the fact that they are LGBT at work because they were afraid of discrimination.
- One in eight trans employees (12%) have been physically attacked in the workplace (by colleagues or customers) in the last year.

3.3 Barriers to publication

Summary

- Publishers face both internal (staff) and external (activist) pressure not to publish gender-critical work.
- Some journals have guidance which makes it impossible to refer clearly to sex categories.
- In some cases, journal editors have allowed decisions to be swayed by factors other than scientific and scholarly considerations.

Fifty-one people provided a response under this heading. Twenty-seven were from those who agreed with the gender-critical position. Fourteen of those who disagreed with that position provided an individual response, and further ten provided only a response using generic wording from the FGEN template.

Barriers to publication: responses from those agreeing with the gender-critical position

One respondent (Kathleen Stock, former Professor of Philosophy, University of Sussex) noted that publishers have refused to publish gender-critical content, and in some cases this is because they have come under pressure, including from their own staff and contributors.

“In 2019, Oxford University Press USA decide not to go ahead with a collection of interviews with women philosophers after its curator refused to remove my and Holly Lawford-Smith's interviews from the collection.

In 2020, the proposal for my book Material Girls: Why Reality Matters for Feminism, was rejected by every publisher bar one (including by Oxford University Press). Several publishers praised the proposal but said they could not publish it because of the problems they would face from others in their own organisations. (The book, once published, has been widely praised in broadsheet reviews, has gone on to sell tens of thousands of copies, and been translated into four languages, with three more translations to come; hence I do not think this is a matter of worries about argumentative quality, or potential sales.)

In 2022, after I submitted an invited essay on "The Importance of Referring to Human Sex in Language" (submitted in 2021) for a special issue of the journal Law and Contemporary Problems, published by Duke University's law school, eight student editors resigned from the journal rather than be associated with the essay.

The remaining student editors elected not to work on the issue in protest, and they voiced their objections in a note appended to the journal's masthead. The essay was eventually published despite the protests, though considerable stress was caused to the issue editors.” (Kathleen Stock, former Professor of Philosophy, University of Sussex).

The policing of language and concepts, including disallowing references to biological sex, and imposing language and associated conceptual frameworks rooted in gender-identity theory, was noted as a problem by several respondents.

One respondent who preferred not to be quoted directly (but supplied their name and contact details) had had a commissioned article rejected by the commissioning journal. This respondent stated that the journal editor sent a legal notice from the publisher's lawyers claiming that to publish the article might breach the 2010 Equality Act on the grounds that failure to describe women as 'cis-women' could constitute unlawful discrimination against trans people.

“Many of the journals I submit to have ideologically based guidance on sex and gender in their 'guidelines for authors'. They incorrectly state that sex exists along a spectrum.” (Name provided)

~

“I collaborated with a [AFRICAN COUNTRY] post doc on research about girls and young women with [REDACTED] disease in [AFRICAN COUNTRY], and the way in which their symptoms were exacerbated because, unlike boys and young men, after school they were expected to continue to contribute to household duties such as cooking and cleaning. Young men reported being able to rest to conserve their energy at home so that they could better manage their schooling. We used the term biological sex in the paper, though we also discussed gender roles and stereotypes as these were pertinent. The paper was rejected by an editor who wrote that the journal 'wanted to move beyond the gender binary’” (Name provided)

~

“Journals seeking use of more inclusive terminology, that essentially erases the word 'woman' or 'mother' - this is not appropriate as much of the work involves populations where the concept of being a woman and being a mother is intrinsic to their sense of value within a community. Furthermore language describing a person in terms of physiological or anatomical processes is seen as offensive in our

communities (person who menstruates, etc). Some of the proposed terminology from journals is simply not correct. For example 'chestfeeding' - this is biologically incorrect, as feeding occurs via the mammary gland, otherwise known as the breast, in both males and females. One does not lactate from the chest." (Name not provided)

~

"I have had great difficulty in getting articles which centre biological sex and a feminist analysis of the impact on female athletes of the inclusion of males with transgender identities in female sport accepted for publication in humanities and social science journals. In scientific journals collecting baseline data on a range of variables including binary sex is commonplace and unremarkable, however, when it comes to discussing girls and women's human rights as a sex in a range of policy areas including sport, it now appears acceptable to negatively review purely on the basis of an evidence-free denial of binary biological sex and the minority view that reference to biological sex is transphobic, reference to the opposite sex is transphobic, transwomen's bodies are female if they describe them as such, and so on." (Name provided)

~

"It is hard to get things published if you don't accept gender identity ideology. Peer reviewers often comment on what they perceive as lack of inclusivity if you just use terms like 'women'. People pretend like this is a confusing term now, which needs clarification." (Name provided)

~

"I've had reviewers suggest I should use 'gender' instead of 'sex', despite the fact that the paper reported on data collection that had used 'Sex' with only male/female as options." (Name not provided)

One respondent noted that their sub-field (Philosophy of Sport) overall had a good record compared to many other disciplines and sub-disciplines in the humanities. However, the respondent reported having a paper rejected by the British Journal for Sports Medicine (BJSM) on spurious and ideological grounds.

"In rejecting the paper, the BJSM engages in coerced speech, insisting on the use of terms like 'cisgender' 'trans woman' and opposing the use of terms like 'male' and 'female'. One barrier to research in this area is that editors and other academics impose language which is ideologically loaded and reject work that does not adopt their preferred

terminology. Since the language is theory- and value-laden, this amounts to an insistence that heterodox views obscure themselves in the terminology of the positions that they criticise, thereby blunting the criticism, making the argumentation unclear, and erecting ideological barriers to publication.” (Name provided)

Disciplinary and sub-disciplinary norms differ, and journals in the field of gender studies were perceived as particularly hostile. For example, one respondent pointed out that the journal ‘Gender, Work and Organization’ tweeted (in June 2021) attacking the Open University Gender critical Research Network. Such overt political statements are unlikely to encourage confidence in an impartial editorial process.

Evidence of biased practices within academic journals were noted by some respondents. In some cases, the identities of the authors, as opposed to the content of the submission itself, appeared to colour editorial judgements. Dr John Armstrong and Dr Michael Biggs provide detail on three cases, two of which involve *BMJ Open*.

“I have had two papers rejected by journals even though all the referees in each case recommended publication. I submitted subject access requests which revealed that in one case the editor's view on the paper was coloured by my twitter feed which is gender-critical, and in another case it revealed that the editor considered my co-author to be a trouble maker and that the article was likely to receive complaints. Both papers were on the Athena Swan scheme and critiqued it from a gender-critical perspective.” (Dr John Armstrong)

~

“In 2023, BMJ Open published an article on ‘Demographic characteristics, long-term health conditions and healthcare experiences of 6333 trans and non-binary adults in England: nationally representative evidence from the 2021 GP Patient Survey’. The survey used the same question on gender identity as the 2021 Census of England and Wales, which I knew to provide implausible results. I emailed the corresponding author with an enquiry about the data, but she did not provide an answer. I then submitted an online comment to BMJ Open, querying the validity survey’s measurement of the trans population. The journal promises to post comments—which it calls ‘rapid responses’—within two weeks. But the journal neither posted my comment nor notified me of rejection. It took three emails, a formal complaint, and five months to obtain a bland rejection email from the editor,[REDACTED].

I then submitted a subject access request to BMJ to obtain any internal emails discussing me. Two emails were especially revealing. The editor had initially written ‘This reads as quite snarky to me and I don’t think we should publish it. I understand their point, which might have some validity, but the tone is off-putting.’ A subsequent email revealed the editor’s bias: ‘His comment was offensive ... He’s known for being transphobic. In his comment he portrays trans individuals as uneducated and implies that they weren’t able to understand the question about gender identity on the census so answered incorrectly.’

These emails provide a fascinating insight into the editorial bias within a top academic journal. The editor refused to post my comment because of my political views, despite acknowledging that it ‘might have some validity’. My comment raised a legitimate scientific question about the quality of the data underlying the BMJ Open article. My critique of the question from which these data were derived was subsequently published as a peer-reviewed article in Sociology, the flagship journal of the British Sociological Association (‘Gender Identity in the 2021 Census of England and Wales: How a Flawed Question Created Spurious Data’). An extended version of my comment to BMJ Open was published as a letter in Archives on Sexual Behavior (‘England’s GP Patient Survey Provides Unreliable Data on Transgender Adults’). The Office for Statistics Regulation eventually ruled that my criticism of the question was correct, and ordered the Office for National Statistics to stop using it.

Note that [REDACTED] completely misunderstood the argument of my comment, getting it backwards. I pointed out that non-transgender people who had poor English were more likely to be confused by the question and to mistakenly answer ‘no’, thus becoming erroneously classified as transgender. I have never stated—in this comment or anywhere else—that transgender people are ‘uneducated’. Indeed, I would expect transgender people to have higher levels of education than the overall population. Presumably his emotive response to the subject prevented him from comprehending my comment.

One final irony is worth noting. The BMJ Open article claimed that people who identify as transgender are more likely to have dementia, which has serious implications for transgender medical interventions. My critique of the survey places a large question mark over this finding, because it might simply reflect the fact that people with dementia were more likely to be confused by the flawed question and so be erroneously classified as transgender. It is possible that BMJ

*Open has caused unnecessary alarm to transgender people.”
(Dr Michael Biggs).*

Several further examples were provided of editorial decisions which appeared to be influenced by factors unrelated to academic rigour.

“Before the closure of GIDS at the Tavistock Clinic, I endeavoured to publish a piece in the British Psychological Society outlet DCP Forum. This was agreed by the editor and due to be published but it was then spiked by the Comms Team inside the BPS. By contrast the editor was instructed to write an apologia for GIDS from its previous head, Bernadette Wren.” (Name provided)

~

“One high-impact journal, in particular, has a policy of not publishing any articles on trans healthcare unless they have been reviewed by a transgender layperson or a third-sector organisation that advocates for gender-affirming approaches to healthcare. This policy creates an additional layer of gatekeeping that is nearly insurmountable for perspectives that critique or question affirmative models. It means that the potential for my research to be published in reputable and influential journals is limited, reducing the visibility and impact of my work. The effect of this barrier has been deeply demoralising. The inability to fully participate in academic discourse, combined with the restricted opportunities for publication, undermines my academic progress and the broader dissemination of my research findings. It hampers my ability to contribute to critical discussions in my field and diminishes the potential impact of my scholarly work on public debates and policy development related to gender healthcare.”(Name provided)

~

“An article of mine [REDACTED] was withdrawn from publication by the publisher [REDACTED] following a complaint from an ex-patient turned trans-activist, who recognised herself in an anonymised description of an event that involved her in the article...Prior to withdrawal, the article had won an international award [REDACTED]. I offered to re-write it excluding all mention of the event the ex-patient objected to. [THE PUBLISHER] rejected my offer.” (Name provided)

~

“The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) is the largest therapy body in UK with 67K members. Myself and a group of BACP members called The BACP Pushback Group have been asking them to publish articles which do not just affirm medical transition but that set out the dangers and call for articles in their monthly magazine Therapy Today to be more balanced, and to include pieces on exploratory therapy. They have consistently ignored us for 3 years! They continue to publish pro gender ideology articles, celebrating LGBTQAI identities and encouraging us to comply with this ideology.” (Name provided)

For some respondents, the ‘chilling effect’ meant that they did not attempt to publish on sex and gender.

“I have given up on academic writing, as I know from the experience of others that it would be impossible to publish anything 'honest' in the field of gender, and if I published through alternative means it would result in career impacts.” (Name provided)

~

“I don't dare write on this subject of women/sex/gender so it is self-censorship. I have seen what has happened to other colleagues (Kathleen Stock, Jo Phoenix) and I simply do not think I could handle that level of hostility or bullying without a supportive university environment.” (Name provided)

In another case, fear of repercussions led to the withdrawal of a co-author.

“With a team of academics from around the world, I led the writing of a paper on the importance of sexed language in maternity which was published in 2022. Four of my coauthors were UK-based. One of these withdrew from being a coauthor at the last minute because of fear of professional repercussions. In particular she was concerned about how her head of school would treat her if she was an author on this paper. She is a full professor...” (Name provided)

Barriers to publication: responses from those disagreeing with the gender-critical position

Those who did not agree with the gender-critical position were concerned more with the general public reaction to publications, or additional work required in anticipation of that, rather than barriers to getting or staying published, compared to those taking the gender-critical position.

One respondent in this group emphasised that they had faced no barriers to publication.

“This survey is biased because you are asking only about barriers. I have been doing research which relates to sex, gender, sexuality and sexual health for [redacted] years and have never had any issues with publication...It is important that we specify 'cis gendered women' and 'cis gendered men' in our writing rather than take this for granted, and address the invisibility of research relating to trans people.” (Name provided)

Most respondents in this group did however argue they faced barriers in this area. Ten of these provided responses they were willing to have quoted: these are all provided in full below, other than where detail is redacted as marked to protect anonymity.

Of the remaining responses, there were two further with substantial content from respondents who did not consent to direct quotation. One of these cited the difficulty of reconciling comments from reviewers with strongly conflicting perspectives and claimed to have had an article rejected instantly due to bias against one co-author (no further detail was provided).

Brief responses included “vested interests from reviewers who have financial incentives from looking trans-friendly”. The meaning of this response is unclear given that the respondent’s other responses refer to “institutional transphobia”. Another simply stated “I could get no data.”

Further comments included:

“I have experienced homophobia and transphobia when trying to publish academic papers within the field of [REDACTED], including rejection on the very basis of applying a queer and/or transgender perspective.” (Name not provided)

~

"I have experienced a transphobic reviewer who tried to get me to remove references to trans people and studies in the review process."
(Name not provided)

One respondent objected to being asked to cite gender-critical sources.

"I have experienced peer reviewers who insist on my referencing particular 'gender-critical' researchers in my submitted and previously commissioned work. In particular I have been asked to reference Kathleen Stott [sic], despite her having at that time published no academic research on gender whatsoever. I have had to withdraw my work despite it being specifically commissioned from me and find alternative publication as a result of these demands." (Name not provided)

One recounted that anticipated hostile reaction had led to a more protracted and expensive process.

"I have had incredibly scrutiny over public-facing documents. On a recent funding project about trans inclusion, we went through 8 months of edits after the initial 'launch' date of the publication because the client was worried about backlash from gender critical groups. The publication date was pushed five times. The report went through 8 layers of editing and sign off. These demands by the publisher resulted in approximately £30k of unfunded work by the research team just to get the research out there." (Name not provided)

One respondent had been asked by editors to redraft to strengthen their paper against anticipated criticism.

"I have been asked by more than one journal editor to edit my papers to defend my trans-affirmative approach to [REDACTED], even when reviewers have not asked for this. One editor explicitly stated that this was because they were afraid of a backlash from the trans-exclusionary mainstream media." (Name not provided)

Hostile media and social media reactions were noted by a number of respondents.

"I have received online abuse, hate mail through the post, and had a research contract cancelled because my inclusive research on [REDACTED] was featured in [REDACTED]. It provided fleeting 'clickbait' to mock it (essentially deriding the views of those young people on which we were simply reporting), but the consequences for

me were serious including contributing to me being forced out of my job.” (Name not provided)

~

“I have received abuse writing about gender & inclusion whenever there is the vaguest mention of trans experiences. it makes it hard to engage in public dissemination because of fears for my safety and wellbeing.” (Name not provided)

~

“Harassment after using my name publicly in trans research. Received death threats from anti trans people and also media attention.” (Name not provided).

Another respondent who did not wish to be quoted said that they had received correspondence objecting to the language they had used in publications.

Barriers to publication: FGEN template

Of those who disagreed with gender-critical views, ten respondents used the FGEN template, which is shown below.

- Certain journals and organisations hold negative biases against TNBGD people and/or research, which leads to discrimination and rejection in the selection process.
- Gatekeepers (e.g., editors, reviewers) serve as a barrier to publishing as they may hold gender-exclusionary views or are concerned about potential backlash from those with gender-exclusionary views.
- TNBGD authors are rejected based on their identity rather than the quality or relevance of their work.

3.4 Barriers to data collection

Summary

The failure of organisations to collect accurate data on sex was highlighted as a barrier to sex-based analysis.

Forty-four people provided a response under this heading. Twelve agreed with the gender-critical position. Of those who disagreed, eighteen respondents provided an individual response and twelve provided a response using generic wording from the FGEN template. A further two respondents did not state or imply a view.

Barriers to data collection: responses from those agreeing with the gender-critical position

Respondents who believe that data collection on sex is important commented on how common it has become for survey instruments to confuse sex and gender, including within academia.

"I frequently see data collection tools (from colleagues and students) that use 'sex' and 'gender' interchangeably, and frequently use 'Gender' and then give options of 'male' 'female' 'non-binary' 'trans' etc." (Name not provided)

This confusion between sex and gender was reported to be reflected within organisational data collection systems, with repercussions for data on trans people as well as data on sex.

"The organisation in which I work has a data collection system which asks about "gender" - male/female/other which doesn't allow for the disaggregation of data according to sex and gender identity as something separate. This means we don't know if the female category includes those who self ID as female which will skew the data. It also means we don't have data on any specific needs of trans people because they are not identified as such. I'm thinking here health impacts or service outcomes. I have been told the system will be changed to reflect sex and gender as two different things, but at the moment the data is undermined by a lack of clarity." (Name provided)

Data collection within the NHS and health research failing to capture sex was highlighted as a particular concern.

One respondent commented on the importance of sex in the context of data on domestic abuse.

“...I am unable to collect data on sex in both [NATIONAL DATASETS], despite sex being an important factor in the context of domestic abuse and sexual violence... both [DATASETS] feed into the ONS's DA bulletin.” (Name provided)

Anxiety was expressed about the repercussions of challenging the practice of only asking about ‘gender’ not sex.

“The baseline participant sheet asks about gender, not about sex, and as part of the options includes a free text field. So we won't know the sex of the participants in the social intervention being studied... Another colleague thinks this is "stupid" but neither of us have said anything. We don't want to jeopardise our working relationship with the team.” (Name not provided)

One respondent stated that asking for ‘gender’ rather than binary sex had effectively led to the exclusion of those respondents providing minority responses from the analysis.

“In a survey of almost 700 US respondents, we included different gender options and over 5% of respondents gave answers which weren't male or female. Given that sex/gender emerged as a major explanatory variable, this lack of precision caused quite a problem and lowered our statistical power.” (Name provided)

One respondent had been prevented from carrying out research into the number of transgender and non-binary patients in an NHS autism clinic, through a process which included legal misinformation.

“As part of my university work, I was required to carry out a research project within my NHS placement. For this (as requested by the clinic), I was due to look at the number of transgender and non-binary patients within an Autism clinic, within a project to better understand their potential needs. This data was easily accessible within the electronic filing system. Using patient data in this manner for the purpose of service review is standard practice, although required NHS Trust approval.

However, the Trust's Research and Development Team (RDT) repeatedly questioned my motivation for wanting this data, and were very hostile towards me. They blocked me from collecting this data, through a series of escalating tactics which were very intimidating for me as a student. This culminated in the RDT stating that my project

proposal was illegal, and that the Trust lawyers forbid it, because it would be breaking the Human Rights Act (under right to private life) and the Gender Recognition Act. This was of course I believe incorrect information.

After I sought help from my University, the RDT and lawyers backed down, thereby granting me approval. I informed the clinic, who were initially pleased. However, after they had a pre-initiation meeting with the RDT (without me), all relevant members of the clinic abruptly withdrew their support for the project, citing a lack of time (although no significant further input was required from them). I believe that the RDT had intimidated the clinic staff, and pressured them into withdrawing their support. I was consequently unable to access this data.” (Name provided)

Barriers to data collection: responses from those disagreeing with the gender-critical position

Several responses under this heading from this group did not provide information on data issues specifically, but commented on barriers to research more broadly. For example:

“Having worked within gender equity research for a decade, I have found in the past 3 years things are far harder than they ever were. Organisations that do fantastic trans inclusion work are terrified about participating in research in case they receive a pile on from the press or on Twitter. They have still taken part, but it has been a lot more complex - for example last year it took four hours of meeting with one company to arrange a 45 minute focus group. Sign off has gone all the way to director level. Every time this has happened, participants have been clear it is not because they do not believe in trans inclusion, but they are scared of the current environment.” (Name not provided)

~

“I have found that organisations and individuals are very anxious about participating in research about inclusion because they have come under fire from vocal gender critical advocates on twitter & as a result of speeches and statements by gender critical government ministers. this has made research very hard in the last 5 years.” (Name not provided)

One respondent from this group challenged the premise of the question on the grounds that they had faced no barriers to data collection.

“This survey is biased because you are asking only about barriers. I have been doing research which relates to sex, gender, sexuality and sexual health for [redacted] years and have never had any issues about data collection. I'm not sure what this question is getting at.”
(Name provided)

One respondent acknowledged that both sex and trans status should be collected, but denied the existence of a problem with data collection on sex.

“Information about sex is always and reliably collected as standard, so I do not face the same issue using this data as it is widely available and robust. I have seen no decrease in data about sex in recent years. Ideally sex, trans status, and gender identity (as well as sexual orientation and other characteristics) should all be collected to provide the most robust demographic data and allow us to focus on the needs of different communities.” (Name not provided)

Some responses objected to data collection on binary sex.

“It is therefore vital in my view that the methodology for research on sex and gender moves beyond treating "sex" as a simple binary variable and acknowledges the multiple dimensions of both "sex" and "gender" (endocrinological, behavioural, physical, societal) that impact our outcomes of interest.” (Name provided)

One respondent who did not wish to be quoted was concerned that clear data was not collected on transgender identities, making it difficult to get consent to projects concerned with inequalities affecting this group.

Another argued that surveys they had organised had received multiple responses objecting to their approach to data collection:

“In surveys where I have included options for participants to describe their sex and then their gender identity, gender exclusionary participants have flooded the survey and not filled in the questions on gender identity, in some cases leaving messages in full text boxes to let me know that I should only be collecting data on biological sex. Whereas people who are not gender critical don't seem to have an issue with providing data on their sex assigned at birth and gender identity. Which actually gives more information and more robust data.”
(Name not provided)

Barriers to data collection: FGEN template

Twelve respondents who disagreed with gender-critical views drew on the FGEN template. In addition, some respondents made similar points in their own words to the template supplied by FGEN, particularly the first two points. The FGEN template response is shown below.

- Personal safety and well-being, e.g., when start collecting data, researchers name goes out there and they can be put in a vulnerable position where they are subjected to harassment, bullying, utter torment online from gender-exclusionary people/trolls
- Additional resources are needed to build trust with participants because of all the hurt and damage caused pathologisation, medicalisation, gender-exclusionary people.
- The validity and reliability of data can be compromised if participants/researchers feel pressured to conform to gender-exclusionary norms - as could be the case with this survey; questions worded in a biased way - leads to biased findings. The survey itself only being distributed through channels with other gender-exclusionary people, again leads to biased findings.

3.5 Barriers to holding events

Summary

Gender-critical respondents noted a number of key barriers to holding events:

- Co-ordinated campaigns of complaint opposing the event taking place
- Intimidation in response to events taking place
- Unreasonable management demands and lack of management support in the face of complaints or protests
- Refusal of individuals and organisations opposing gender-critical perspectives to take part, coupled with demands that no event should take place without their inclusion.

Forty-three people provided a response under this heading. Twenty-one respondents agreed with the gender-critical position and 22 disagreed. Of the latter group, 12 provided an individual response, and ten provided a response using generic wording from the FGEN template.

Barriers to holding events: responses from those agreeing with the gender-critical position

Some instances of attempted and actual disruption of have already been well-documented. One well-known case is the attempt to show a film at the University of Edinburgh which took three attempts after physical protests prevented the first two; the event proceeded on the third attempt only with exceptionally heavy security. Some of the examples given below relate to cases already reported, but respondents have added detail not previously in the public domain.

One respondent who asked not to be quoted directly (but provided their details to the review) had organised a seminar series which attracted a spurious complaint. When attempting to organise a subsequent seminar series, the university made unusual demands, including the demand to give details of how each speaker had been chosen, and that speakers should not talk about the debate on sex and gender. The respondent was told they would be answerable to any complaints. The respondent decided that they could not organise the seminar series under these conditions.

Respondents noted that gender-critical speakers and events were targeted with complaints designed to shut the event down or create difficulties for the organisers.

“At my own university, in March 2020 we had a petition circulating (shamefully signed by staff and students) to prevent Selina Todd coming to give a talk on her book about the playwright Shelagh Delaney.” (Name provided)

There were several examples of intimidation, including violence.

“I was a speaker at the event at Edinburgh University where Julie Bindel and Rosa Freedman were attacked. There was an hour-long briefing before the event by security which covered what to do if the stage was rushed, if there was violence or if there was abuse. Some of the panel were left so shaken by the briefing they were actually unable to stand up to speak.” (Professor Sarah Pedersen)

~

“CAN-SG (Clinical Advisory Network on Sex and Gender) of which I am a member, in March 2024 faced the cancellation of their booking to hold their conference on evidence based gender medicine "First do no harm " at 30 Euston Square, London (venue owned by RCGP - Royal College of General Practitioners) due to vociferous online protests by a small minority of RCGP members and transactivists. Only the threat of legal action caused the RCGP to change their mind and honour the booking contract. Despite additional security the conference attracted masked protesters who tried to storm the building and disrupt the conference. Online social media postings tried to portray the conference organisers and speakers as ' transphobes, bigots and conversion therapists' damaging both the reputation of the organisation and individuals.” (Name not provided)

Abnormal management demands and lack of management support were a common feature reported by respondents.

“...we were required to submit a risk assessment document for every seminar. This was because our seminars were designated as especially risky. This was a further burden, and not necessary: all our seminars were held online, and there was no risk to anyone.” (Name provided)

~

“In brief, in 2018-19 I ran a speaker series at King's College London - entitled Endangered Speeches - to promote civil discourse around academic debate, with invited speakers from outside the College. The series was organised through all the proper channels utilising the

professional events team in my Department of which I was Head at the time (the Department of War Studies). In the few days prior to the first event in November 2018, by Dr Joanna Williams of the University of Kent, a petition was raised against her visit on the grounds that she was - absurdly - in favour of killing trans people. Although the event with Dr Williams passed off successfully... Both the [SENIOR MANAGER], and the [SENIOR MANAGER], brought pressure upon me to cancel the other speaking events. I refused on the grounds that this was free speech/free inquiry and made it clear that I resented being pressurised over what should be a basic precept of university life (the freedom to debate viewpoints). ... Although, the College management allowed the subsequent speaking event to proceed, it was subject to aggressive oversight by the [SENIOR MANAGER]... In sum, after the holding of the first event with Dr Williams, the reaction of the College/Faculty/School administrators was not to offer support to the event organiser in the usual way but to pressurise them, and impose unusual - and to my mind - deeply unpleasant demands and requests. (Professor Michael Rainsborough).

~

“On three occasions I had to fight to organise events on free speech... In 2022 I organised a workshop [REDACTED] on a recent Court of Appeal case (Miller v College of Policing). Among other prominent guests was Dr. Debbie Hayton, a prominent [gender-critical] trans person²⁴⁸. This triggered a severe backlash from the so-called LGBTQ Network at [REDACTED]. They claimed that the event would be transphobic because Dr Hayton, ie a trans person would attend... The event went on finally, but I was requested that neither I nor my guests share any information about this event in the public domain, supposedly to keep our guests safe. My guests at the workshop, prominent journalists, barristers and academics were of course not amused by that.” (Name provided)

~

“In February 2020, I co-organized, together with three academic colleagues and co-founders of the UCL Women's Liberation Special

²⁴⁸ Debbie Hayton has written extensively on transgender issues. For example: <https://debbiehayton.com/2024/02/14/i-went-through-an-agonising-operation-because-i-thought-becoming-a-woman-would-finally-make-me-happy-then-i-had-a-devastating-revelation/>

Interest Group, a conference entitled "Women's Liberation 2020", to mark 50 years since the first Women's Liberation Conference at Ruskin College, Oxford, in 1970... About a week before the Christmas break, the Registrar contacted us to say that she would not allow us to advertise the conference or to put tickets on sale as she was not satisfied that a full risk assessment had been undertaken. As this was a major event, with high profile speakers and delegates planning to travel from all over the UK, holding back publicity and ticket sales until the New Year would have seriously jeopardized our planning. Nevertheless, we agreed to hold off ticket sales, and worked intensively, in coordination with the conference office and the security team, to meet the various obstacles that UCL management began to place in our way. We were asked to record every session at the conference, and to hire extra security to cover every room used for our over 30 parallel sessions, thus leading to prohibitive costs that could have only been met by charging a far higher ticket price, making the conference far less inclusive and accessible. We were told that we should invite further speakers to each panel to present an alternative view-point so as to ensure "balance". As we noted in a letter to the Provost [then Provost Michael Arthur] at the time, it is hard to imagine what would qualify as an "alternative view" on a panel entitled "Ending Violence Against Women and Girls". We were told that we could not use the UCL logo on any publicity for the conference, in spite of the fact that it was being hosted by a recognized UCL SIG, with departmental backing and funding. When we approached the Press Office to ask that they include the conference in their events listings, we were told they would not do so as it did not have the UCL logo. We agreed to many of the proposed security and chairing arrangements, noting that we were already complying with the UCL code of practice on freedom of speech, which we sent out to all ticket holders and speakers as a condition of booking. We could not agree to some of the demands made by UCL management, such as commissioning a further independent risk assessment by an external consultant, for which we would be charged £3,000, or having security guards posted outside every parallel session room. While all WPUK [third-sector partners to the conference] events are recorded, and we had already planned to record all the plenaries, we could not agree to record all the parallel sessions and workshop, some of which involved facilitators who were survivors of sex trafficking and domestic abuse or workshops on similarly sensitive topics. These demands continued in the weeks leading up to the conference, necessitating hours of stressful meetings and phone calls, on top of our regular jobs and in addition to the work involved in organizing a large conference.

Although we continued to work closely with the conference office and security team, who were professional and helpful in their assurances that they would be able to handle the event, including any potential security risks, uncertainty and threats hung over us right up to the morning of the conference. We were told that the Registrar's office could not commit to allowing the event to go ahead, and that they would assess the situation on the day and send all 950 delegates away if it was deemed unsafe.” (Name provided)

Staff LGBT+ networks, which are supported and resourced by universities, had a role in organising opposition to events. Management demands for ‘balance’ have given an effective veto on events taking place in some cases.

“a few days after publicity for the event went live, I received a circular email from the Staff Pride Network (SPN) of which I was and still am a member, sent to its 600+ members. It is maybe relevant to mention at this point that I am a lesbian, that the SPN is funded and supported by the University as a resource for all LGBT+ staff members and research students, and as such formally represents that constituency on University committees. The first circular email said the SPN was “deeply disappointed” about a “problematic event” and promised more details later. [...] they sent a further circular email [...] which mischaracterised the event, made hyperbolic assertions about its likely effects, made erroneous and factually incorrect claims and threatened an official complaint “if lines are crossed” which considering where the lines had been drawn, they would inevitably be.” (Name provided)

~

“Between 2018-22, several attempts to allow me to participate in public university discussions were foiled because no speaker could be found who would debate me. It was usually stipulated that I could not give a talk on my own, that I had to have an opponent - since there was no such opponent, the event could not go ahead.” (Kathleen Stock, former Professor of Philosophy, University of Sussex).

~

“I had applied to my Department for funding to run an event with speakers from both sides of the debate over sex/gender, with a view to developing constructive dialogue. However, no one I approached on the other (non-gender critical) side would agree to participating in

an event, with several stating that while they felt a constructive dialogue would be helpful, they felt they couldn't participate in an event with people who hold opposing views as doing so in the current climate would be experienced as hostile by trans people. In discussion with my Department we agreed that, in the absence of voices from all sides, we could not run this debate as a public event as an event representing voices from only one side would be heavily protested. Instead I proposed an alternative closed (invitation only) event to discuss contexts in which sex matters independently of questions of gender identity, which my department agreed to fund. The event was held off campus and not advertised, so that we were able to have a productive discussion without being disrupted by protest. Our decision to run a closed event was vindicated as, coincidentally, another high profile gender critical individual was invited to speak to a student society on the same day. The event attracted a large protest, which was advertised approvingly by the University's EDI team on their mailing list on the assumption that all right thinking members of the university community would be horrified that such a person had been invited onto campus.” (Name provided)

~

“In March 2022, Health Education England (HEE), which is the NHS body that oversees medical education, prevented an academic conference entitled "How Can Child Psychiatrists Support Gender Questioning Young People," from taking place. ...Shortly before the conference was to take place, Dr. Hilary Cass published her Interim Review ... The publication of this report made the conference even more timely. Organizing the conference program to hear from a diverse range of views was very challenging. Many organizations refused to attend, stating they would not appear at the same conference as other organizations, which they considered "anti-trans." Mermaids, Gendered Intelligence, Stonewall, and Educate and Celebrate all refused to attend, despite us meeting them and explaining the importance of us hearing from them directly. In line with that logic of respectful inclusivity of views, we asked a range of organizations to present... In the weeks leading up to the conference, the committee was deluged with complaints from all quarters. People we had invited to speak but who had turned down our invitation repeatedly contacted us, the Mental Health Trust, and Great Ormond Street to complain that the conference was still going ahead. Many of the complaints included untruths and (unrepeatable) libellous comments. Some of the complaints came from individuals and bodies

with significant roles, such as [REDACTED] (who had turned down our invitation to speak)..., [The conference was cancelled the day before it was due to take place].” (Name provided)

Barriers to holding events: responses from those disagreeing with the gender-critical position

Respondents who disagreed with gender-critical views expressed a feeling of threat and disruption from ‘dangerous others’ when holding events. The grounds for this fear remains to be clearly evidenced, however. Numerous events have been held by those who do not agree with the gender-critical position across UK higher education in recent years where all the details have been publicised in advance through mailing lists, social media and/or other means. Despite this, we are not aware that a case has ever been documented of threats to prevent or disrupt such an event, or of such events being prevented or disrupted by protesters, or even of a peaceful protest against such an event.

Only two specific claims were made. One, that a specific gender-critical activist had tried to prevent a respondent from giving a talk to a local Labour Party branch, and another (who did not agree to be quoted) alleged illicit filming of an event by an attendee, and sharing of footage, but gave no further detail. Some respondents appeared to conflate the presence of attendees who may ask critical questions with disruption. Violent threats are referred to in some responses, yet no specifics were provided. All the individual responses which agreed to be quoted are provided in full, other than one which was not about events (it alleged that a person had had their teaching hours cut).

“Over the past few years myself and colleagues have experienced threats when organising events from anti-trans and gender critical individuals and groups, so now must be careful with advertising. We have also had to create safety plans due to the violence threatened by anti-trans and gender critical groups. It is honestly terrifying at the moment and I don’t understand why such a level of hate is being directed toward trans inclusive researchers and trans communities - particularly as everyone I work with are also passionate about defending and advancing women’s rights and, especially in health, recognise the importance on data on sex as well as gender identity!”
(Name not provided)

~

“I chose to run recent gender and sexuality seminars in person only, so that we could establish a trusting atmosphere with careful agreements on mutual respect. I did not issue an open invitation on

social media (X) as I usually would. We gave careful consideration to security issues to guard against anti-trans disruption. The event was wonderful - amazing to see a room full of people who are working so hard to make people's lives better through healthcare (especially those who are marginalised including trans and non-binary people)." (Name provided)

~

"Trans and gender inclusive events that I have attended have often needed to be kept secret until the last minute to prevent disruption from gender critical and gender exclusionary people. They often make attendees feel very unsafe." (Name not provided)

~

"Extremely difficult for the UCL trans society to publicise events for their community without risking the attendance of potentially dangerous others." (Name not provided)

~

"It has become difficult to hold events which are supportive of the LGBTQIA+ community, especially those from the trans community. Gender-exclusionary scholars and activists have created such a hostile environment it is uncertain whether we could ethically hold an event and be able to keep those from trans communities in particular safe. We are not just talking about emotional abuse but physical violence - for example, women who do not necessarily embody 'womanhood' in displaying stereotypical femininity have been beaten up on trying to use women's toilet facilities. Because of this we have felt compelled to move such events online, however there is still a very high risk of people joining who do not believe in the existence of trans people and whose intention is to disrupt the event and display hostility." (Name not provided)

One respondent cited the need to consider the risk of being sued as a constraint on organising events.

"The aforementioned litigiousness of anti-trans voices has more than once given pause when considering whether and how to platform speakers and speech critical of them. The threat of legal action being taken, should the anti-trans speaker object, to public statements in opposition to their views has been raised and altered decisions as a result." (Name not provided)

One respondent mentioned adverse comment on social media as an issue in its own right.

“When holding trans inclusive events I now have to be ultra careful about how media, especially social media, are managed. Mumsnet, for example, monitors some information and invites pile ons by its gender critical / transphobic followers. It doesn't feel like there is freedom of speech for those who are trans inclusive feminists.”
(Name not provided)

One respondent cited university rules as having prevented the organisers from feeling able to proceed with an event, and another mentioned provision for those with transgender identities at events.

“On one occasion a university at which I was co-organising an event made it explicit that we could not have a code of conduct which prevented misgendering of our trans speakers, as they believed (erroneously) that this would be discriminatory towards attendees with gender-critical beliefs. This meant we could not fulfil our duty of care to our invited speaker, and were forced to cancel the event.” (Name not provided)

~

“There is still a perception that transgender identity is not sufficiently common to merit specific accommodation to ensure inclusivity, e.g. making it clear that event attendees are welcome to use the toilet that they feel most comfortable using, or to providing options for specifying pronouns on name badges.” (Name provided)

Barriers to holding events: FGEN template

Of those who disagreed with gender-critical views, ten respondents used the FGEN template, as shown below.

- Focus is on protecting TNBGD speakers/attendees from others who deny their existence (and some who attend with the intention of disruption)
- Have to organise security/extra steps for in person events
- Have to be careful how and where events are advertised
- Spaces not being suitable for (e.g., toilets, access for those with disability)

3.6 Institutional policies and training

Summary

- A common theme was that policies and training were often both ideological and unlawful. Policies and training often conflicted with the 2010 Equality Act. They also conflicted with academic freedom. In some cases, it was perceived that prioritising guidance from external bodies had contributed to this. A lack of legal knowledge among relevant senior staff was also seen as a factor.
- Policies and training were perceived to prioritise gender-identity theory and trans issues at the expense of both sex and all other protected characteristics.
- 'Inclusive' policies led to exclusion for some women.

Forty-one people provided a response under this heading. Twenty-six were from those who agreed with the gender-critical position, fourteen were from those who disagreed, and one was from a respondent who did not give or imply a position. Of the 14 who disagreed with the gender-critical position, six provided an individual response, and a further eight provided only a response using generic wording from the FGEN template. The respondent who did not give or imply a position wished only to comment favourably on a project they were currently involved with on gathering sex and gender identity data in health settings.

Policies and training: responses from those agreeing with the gender-critical position

In both training and policies, ten respondents reported concerns that gender identity was being unfairly prioritised over sex. No respondents reported concerns of gender identity being overlooked in favour of sex.

Three reported concern that due to the prioritisation of gender identity, a disproportionate amount of time and money is being spent on policies and training relating to gender identity.

Kathleen Stock relates the influence of Stonewall on university policy at Sussex.

"In November 2018, Sussex University launched its Trans and Non-Binary Equality Policy Statement; an accompanying press release explained that this had been published as part of the university's work as a Stonewall Diversity Champion and in order to demonstrate the University's core value of "inclusion". The Statement contained the clause: "The curriculum shall not rely on or reinforce stereotypical

assumptions about trans people, and any materials within relevant courses and modules will positively represent trans people and trans lives". To my mind, this was an obvious infringement of academic freedom, which would have a chilling effect. I made the point to HR and management, but nothing was done. Generally, it seemed clear to me that Sussex management prioritised doing better in the Stonewall Equality Index over any concerns about academic freedom; and the former goal was frequently stated on the website and in management emails. FOIS from this period also suggest that Stonewall was significantly influencing university policy, giving them feedback about entries to the Index and saying what language should be changed in future to get a higher rating." (Kathleen Stock, former Professor of Philosophy, University of Sussex)

Misrepresentation of the law was a common theme of responses.

"Our institutional policies frequently misstate the law. For example, our current EDI training aimed at all staff and required for promotion excludes the "reasonableness" test in determining whether something is harassment ²⁴⁹ The effect of this is that someone in our research ethics team can then feel it is appropriate to say that using the word male as described above is "misgendering" and goes against our policies on inclusion." (Name provided)

Respondents also pointed to factual inaccuracies, bias, and unsubstantiated claims in training.

One respondent reported that 'active bystander' training appeared to reinforce the opportunity for dominant voices to weaponize offence in order to shut down discussion.

²⁴⁹ Note: The Court of Appeal held in *Pemberton v Inwood* [2018] EWCA Civ 564 at [88] that the definition of harassment in the Equality Act 2010 must be interpreted as follows: In order to decide whether any conduct falling within sub-paragraph (1) (a) has either of the proscribed effects under sub-paragraph (1) (b), a tribunal must consider both (by reason of sub-section (4) (a)) whether the putative victim perceives themselves to have suffered the effect in question (the subjective question) and (by reason of sub-section (4)(c)) whether it was reasonable for the conduct to be regarded as[3] having that effect (the objective question). It must also, of course, take into account all the other circumstances -- sub-section (4) (b). The relevance of the subjective question is that if the claimant does not perceive their dignity to have been violated, or an adverse environment created, then the conduct should not be found to have had that effect. The relevance of the objective question is that if it was not reasonable for the conduct to be regarded as violating the claimant's dignity or creating an adverse environment for him or her, then it should not be found to have done so. See: <https://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWCA/Civ/2018/564.html>

“I attended a training course organised by my department and delivered by an external provider about becoming an “Active Bystander... We were told in no uncertain terms that if someone expresses offence at something we have said, we must immediately apologise. When ... attendee made a reference to how, with certain subjects, taking offence is often weaponised, the speaker swiftly changed the subject. When I tried to follow up on this by asking a question about what to do if we felt someone was demanding an apology without good reason, the speaker's unequivocal reply was that it didn't matter if I (or another person) didn't think we'd caused offence, we must simply apologise because the other person said we'd caused offence. Courses like this have contributed to an uncomfortable and threatening working environment in which I feel pressured to kowtow to the most dominant voices. As a precariously employed disabled woman, I find this particularly troubling as it merely serves to reinforce existing inequalities.” (Name provided)

One respondent gave an example of a policy which appeared to promote no-platforming of gender-critical speakers.

“...a colleague drew my attention to content which had appeared on the student-facing section of the University's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) website, and which it emerged had been copied from a document entitled “Recognising and Countering Microaggressions Against Trans And/Or Non-Binary People [...]”. There were multiple problems with the content uploaded: for instance, it presented core tenets of gender-identity theory (e.g. that sex is assigned at birth and can be mismatched with an individual's “true gender identity”) as though they are unassailable truths, promoted a contested position on changing the law as though it were straightforward and necessarily held by all right-thinking people, asserted that the phrase “reasonable concerns” (which appeared in scare quotes) was used by bad faith actors as a cover for transphobia, and cautioned against inviting speakers “who are seen as transphobic or trans-hostile” (which given that any gender-critical speaker is wrongly smeared in that way, and given the framing of the document, clearly was a caution against inviting any gender-critical speaker). The material appeared on a student-facing part of the website, and I later learned that it the source document been used by colleagues in the University's Institute for Academic Development (IAD) for the purposes of training and development of teaching staff since September 2020.” (Name provided)

In some cases, the problem was a lack of consistent enforcement of policy, for example regarding bullying and harassment.

“... there are existing institutional policies relating to bullying and harassment. The problem that occurred [REDACTED] and beyond is that these policies were not enforced by managers and HR personnel. [REDACTED] It is difficult to comprehend how HR cannot and choose not to undertake their role appropriately, especially when such positions and that of university managers range between £150K-400K. Training is needed throughout all universities delivered to everyone regarding the accuracy of the law, what constitutes discrimination and prior to academics moving into leadership positions additional training should be undertaken.” (Name provided)

The disproportionate focus of EDI activities on trans issues was noted.

“The policies and training in my institution seem heavily skewed towards awareness of trans issues, which affect a tiny number of employees, as opposed to women’s issues (pregnancy, childcare, elder care, menopause) which affect huge numbers of employees.” (Name not provided)

~

“Self ID is prevalent in every policy incl menopause. Training is extremely biased and probably bordering on illegal in relation to 'gender or trans training'. Sex is never mentioned as a protected characteristic.” (Name provided)

Some women reported exclusion due to policies including males in the female category.

“I have self-excluded from campus for many months as far as possible due to the removal of women-only loos. I am a survivor of sexual assault by a senior male colleague and cannot use mixed-sex facilities.” (Name provided)

~

“My organisation was completely stonewall captured. I know lesbian staff who stopped attending the LGBTQ+ staff groups because they were constantly being told they were hateful by requesting women or lesbian only spaces/events. I attended gender diversity training with colleagues and there was a one sentence mention that there may be some conflicts between women’s and trans rights. No other mention

of that. We were encouraged to push for gender neutral toilets and language, despite my work being on sex based oppression and a serious issue in the university of female students experiencing trauma from sexual violence.” (Name provided)

~

“In the past there have been workshops for women (e.g. leadership workshops for women in academia). These have always been advertised as for people who 'identify as women'. I find this incredibly offensive as I believe I cannot identify in or out of my sex and suggest otherwise is offensive. This has meant I have not signed up to these workshops.” (Name provided)

Policies and training: responses from those disagreeing with the gender-critical position (policies and training)

Two respondents who disagreed with gender-critical views reported that there was a need for more training on 'inclusivity' and working with trans and non-binary people. Another suggested that a lack of institutional policies, including on data collection, left trans and gender non-conforming people unprotected.

"Policy of not forming an opinion or providing guidance on handling gender and sex demographic information and how to balance the right to hold gender-critical belief should be balanced against the right to exist as a non-gender confirming or trans person, has left people unprotected, and the three Trans and gender non-conforming staff leaving the organization, and the one gender critical person remaining." (Name not provided)

Policies and training: FGEN template

Of those who disagreed with gender-critical beliefs, eight respondents used the FGEN template response, as shown below.

- Institutions might have policies and training in place, but when institutions feed into the hands of gender-exclusionary people, these policies become meaningless.
- If policies are actively enforced and supported by senior management, then there is no point - lip service.
- Policies that protect/reinforce gender-exclusionary beliefs, are policies that enforces discrimination.

3.7 Complaints, including co-ordinated complaints

Summary

- Complaints against individuals, motivated by their gender-critical views, took a toll on respondents' energies and wellbeing.
- Institutional responses to complaints were often perceived as unhelpful.
- Respondents perceived a complaint to have occurred when critical comments about an individual were shared with an institution in some way, regardless of whether this was done through, or led to, any sort of formal complaints process.

The personal impact of being subject to sustained hostile comments was a common theme.

Thirty-eight people provided a response under this heading. Twenty-two were from those who agreed with the gender-critical position, 16 were from those who disagreed. Of the latter, seven provided an individual response, and a further nine provided only a response using generic wording from the FGEN template.

Complaints: responses from those agreeing with the gender-critical position

Almost all the responses from this group provided an account of one or more instances of being subject to a complaint, bar two exceptions. Of the latter, one respondent shared a blog that listed them among speakers at an event to which an activist group objected. The second respondent made a more general observation:

*"I have seen many of these but mainly passed on to me by sympathetic colleagues or expressed on the internet by strangers to a third person. The system excludes the victim as far as possible."
(Name provided)*

In over half the cases providing examples, the respondent worked in higher education. Other professional settings, most commonly health-related, accounted for most of the other responses. In one case the complaints related to a voluntary position held in a third sector body.

"I was elected as Chair in the same year as my book came out. This led to demands from trans activists that I be removed. My branch contacted the head of the organisation in Edinburgh and was advised that, because of my views, the branch might find it difficult to get funding from the Scottish government. I felt that the only thing I could do at that stage was to resign my position. I am a leading researcher

in this area in Scotland - my research is award winning. It is a pity that the charity can no longer benefit from my expertise.” (Professor Sarah Pedersen)

In higher education, complaints were about both teaching and research, in one case seeking to prevent a specific piece of research. Most cases involved students, but some also involved staff. For example:

“When the talk was advertised, a colleague in another Department emailed her entire Department to let them know that I was 'anti-trans' and the event would be an unsafe space. I wrote to the colleague in question asking if she would be willing to meet privately to discuss her concerns... The colleague replied "Unfortunately I do not trust your intent as your record for being anti-trans is extensive and harmful. Any "misreadings" of your position are your own fault and you will need to do extensive reparative work to change that."” (Name provided)

~

“one senior member of my Department... berated me and claimed that I had lost the support of the College management for my support of the concept of academic freedom... It was evident that several colleagues, including [redacted] had made representations to the Executive Dean and indeed had had meetings... behind my back. This was, I discerned, part of a coordinated plan to oust me as Head of Department.” (Name provided)

External activists were also cited in a number of cases.

“[redacted], a minor trans celebrity, tweeted out my vice-chancellor's email address with instructions to call for me to be sacked and for my research to be wiped from the university depository. Some people phoned the university and called in an ethics review - this meant my research had to be removed from the depository while the ethics review was conducted. Although this is standard procedure, this was reported as "university withdraws transphobic research". Some people also made up identities as American scholars and contacted industry publications to complain about the research and say it was clearly transphobic. Although the American institutions later said these people were nothing to do with them (if indeed they existed), the articles featuring their comments were not taken down.....” (Name provided)

One respondent included copies of emails that had been sent seeking to have themselves and others removed from an event:

“There is no possible way in which this event can possibly be a “safe environment” for LGBTQ+ and especially trans participants if you platform individuals who promote hate speech and misinformation. Indeed, I would argue that this action potentially contravenes your public duty under the Equality Act to promote good relationships between people with protected characteristics. I strongly recommend that you cancel this event and re-consider this approach. If the panel and the event go ahead as planned, you are likely to face significant opposition from patient groups and people with actual relevant expertise in this area. My concern is that the event, as planned, will promote extremist ideologies and harmful practices such as conversion therapy. It may also be putting any young people you have invited to speak at the event in danger, by placing them at risk of doxxing by anti-trans campaigners. I would appreciate any reassurance you could offer about steps the organizing team for this event is making to ensure that these dangerous practices are not promoted by an NHS body” (Name provided)

Around half of the cases referred to some sort of institutional reaction to the complaint, with a formal response in one-third. Only one reported that a complaint had been upheld in a formal setting, which related to the identifiability of an individual case cited in an academic publication. A number of respondents highlighted that they were not given the chance to comment on complaints.

“I have lectured at the [REDACTED] on [REDACTED] for many years (nothing to do with gender). Last year the university received a complaint from a student asking why they had invited a transphobe to teach. The university held several meetings to discuss ‘the situation’. I was not informed of the complaint or the outcome, or given a chance to explain my views, instead, they discussed representations of my views published on a transactivist website. I heard about this from a far distant third party where gossip had spread that I was a transphobe and shouldnt be platformed.” (Name provided)

Another respondent reported that his Vice Chancellor launched a formal enquiry after a complaint about his critiques of another academic’s work on social media, despite no evidence being submitted that his critique fell outside scholarly norms. The respondent suggested that it would have been more appropriate for the VC to respond to the complaint by simply stating that academics are protected in the expression of their academic views.

Regardless of the formal institutional reaction, respondents commonly cited the impact of being targeted for complaints:

“the stress caused to me by this year's worth of coordinated complaints, with their veiled threats to have me ejected from my job, was considerable.” (Name provided)

~

“These complaints were either targeted or as a result of the lies told on campus that we were inherently transphobic, bigoted, nazis etc. which meant that students were misinterpreting anything we said about sex and gender as inherently bad. Some colleagues had meetings with these students and our colleagues but eventually I just responded by saying if they wanted to make a formal complaint they could, otherwise my colleagues could watch my teaching back and make their own minds up. But this was exhausting and demoralising.” (Name provided)

Complaints were also cited as affecting the broader climate within institutions:

“complaints led to a 'fact finding' exercise by the Trust and nothing has been found, however this has stifled all discussions in the team and no one feels safe to think about the patients holistically.” (Name provided)

Even where complaints were eventually not upheld, formal processes could be prolonged. Vexatious complaints taken seriously by management led to an experience of ‘the punishment is the process’.

“The complaints contained clearly false allegations on matters of fact and attributed words to me that I had not used. They were clear fabrications... These complaints should have been ruled out as malicious and without substance at an early stage. Instead, I have been under investigation for many months, but with no claims being upheld against me.” (Name provided)

Informal processes were also criticised, however, as being vulnerable to a lack of rigour:

“it seemed to me that the informal route meant appeasing the student ie agreeing with her interpretation of events, so that she did not pursue the complaint through formal channels.” (Name provided)

Complaints: responses from those disagreeing with the gender-critical position

In this group, one provided a detailed example and three made more general statements about their personal experience of being subjected to ongoing criticism related to their work. One respondent who had not been subject to complaints themselves, argued that others they knew had been.

Two of these responses were not willing to be quoted. This included the response providing a specific example, which described a student who had submitted a complaint about the language the respondent used in teaching, and then shared that complaint with another staff member and on social media. The person's manager did not uphold the complaint but took no action against the complaint being shared, and advised that the person teach something about which they felt less strongly. The other response which cannot be quoted made a general claim that those with GC views are responsible for complaints.

The remaining individual comments are provided in full, except where these are repeat comments already made in previous sections. As for the GC cases above, a common theme for the individuals concerned was the impact of being subject to sustained criticism:

"I have been targeted by coordinated grievances for disagreeing with gender exclusionary views. This has taken a serious toll on my health, wellbeing and career. I know I am not alone in facing this and many talented trans and non-binary academics and researchers have chosen to leave academia/research careers as a result." (Name not provided)

~

"Gender-critical people, in particular, members of [gender-critical feminist organisations], constantly complain about me - the vast majority of allegations are untrue. I have also been the victim of the right-wing media on many occasions." (Name provided)

~

"Not personally, but a colleague has recently faced a coordinated campaign of false complaints against their medical license after appointment to a national research council focused on trans health. We know that this has also happened to several other colleagues working on trans focused research and is a significant cause for concern. These complaints centre around being trans inclusive and "erasing sex", the latter of which is provably false as these researchers

do collect data about sex as well as gender identity (and other demographic factors).” (Name not provided)

~

“I have had data questioned, at a senior level because it did not meet the expectations of gender-critical colleagues. Despite data with the same standards and veracity about other demographic markers going unremarked.” (Name not provided)

Complaints: FGEN template

Of those who disagreed with gender-critical views, nine respondents used the FGEN template responses, which is shown below.

- Many TNBGD researchers/academics have had targeted personal attacks from academics and others who disagree with their very existence, this takes its toll on a person and we/the field has lost a lot of talented researchers/academics as a direct result of this.
- When people have raised reasoned objections to gender “critical” (exclusionary) events on campus, they are subject to bullying and harassment by receiving grievances against them from colleagues, and Freedom of Information inquiries coordinated from outside the institutions in an effort to silence them.
- Students have had complaints launched against them by senior members of staff (including Professors) claiming they had breached a staff social media policy to which they are not subject.

3.8 Management behaviour

Summary

- Reported management failures ranged from a lack of support to active intimidation and discrimination.
- There is a perception that management and EDI staff were insufficiently familiar with relevant legislation and its implications.

Complaints procedures were perceived as inadequate and seen as being used to fob off respondents rather than tackle deeper issues.

Thirty-seven people provided a response under this heading. Twenty were from those who agreed with the gender-critical position, while 17 were from those who disagreed. Of the latter, eight provided an individual response, and a further nine provided a response using generic wording from the FGEN template.

Management behaviour: responses from those agreeing with the gender-critical position

Multiple respondents report feeling unsupported by university management, particularly in situations involving bullying or harassment. There is a perception that management avoids addressing complaints, ignores or downplays issues, and sometimes even contributes to an environment where bullying and intimidation are prevalent. In contrast to those disagreeing with the gender critical position (see below), all of the respondents with gender-critical views reported negative experiences, although a very few positive comments about management support were included in entries under other headings.

“The management at my university were cowards, unwilling to deal with their own bullying staff and students. I was offered no support from management over a 4 year process dealing with this issue. I was clear in my resignation letter that the failure of the university to deal with this issue was the main reason for me leaving academia after 25 years [...]” (Name provided)

~

“My experience has been that University [...] managers have failed to uphold the rights of students and staff who hold gender-critical and similar views such as mine (the holding and expression of which are protected under the Equality Act). They have not maintained institutional neutrality, most evidently through the University’s formal support for the Staff Pride Network which promotes gender-identity

theory as unassailable truth and which enjoys resourcing and institutional representation with no parallel body within the University advocating for gender-critical perspectives. I believe managers have failed to intervene effectively when 'no-debate' tactics have been used to chill freedom of expression and academic freedom, leading to the exercise of what is sometimes known as the 'heckler's veto'. This has contributed to a hostile environment for staff and students holding gender-critical and similar views, and has severely impacted my ability to do my job." (Name provided)

Respondents who sought action from management were directed to use formal complaints procedures, which were time consuming and ineffective.

"I have tried repeatedly to use the University's procedures to address these situations without success (or the expectation of success): the procedures themselves (formal complaints and grievances) are time-consuming and retraumatising, as well as leading nowhere." (Name provided)

~

"When I had complaints that I had been bullied and harassed upheld, nothing was done, because the Executive Dean held them to be 'trivial'. This meant that the behaviour in question continued. The University covered up these outcomes. In particular when I stood up to the person who had bullied and harassed me, I was myself given a disciplinary warning and placed under an indefinite gagging order, where I was placed on a 'reduction of duties' and expressly forbidden from any communication with any member of my faculty either verbally, by phone calls, or by electronic means. I was also subject to a formal warning. This all arose from my unwillingness to respect the confidentiality of a disciplinary process when no action was taken against the person who bullied and harassed me: that is, my unwillingness to respect a cover up. I made it clear to the person who had bullied and harassed me that I noted that the charges against them had been upheld, even if no action was taken against them, and I was sanctioned for this". (Name provided)

~

"In my view, this situation arises from a failure on the part of the university to understand that there is indeed a genuine assault on freedom to research: a concerted attempt to stop research taking place that some gender identity theorists do not like or agree with. The

methods used to secure this silencing are very varied, both formal and informal". (Name provided).

As mentioned in other sections (e.g. Holding events), multiple respondents reported that university management would prioritise potential reputational damage in their behaviour around disagreements and controversy.

Respondents reported concerns that management often failed to respond to legal and ethical concerns, and did not have a good grasp of the law or of relevant academic and policy debates. EDI teams were mentioned in this regard.

"[EDI executive] did not really understand the brief of her job and did not see the discrimination, bullying, or harassment been experienced by [REDACTED] as a concern or an issue. This is extraordinary and horrifying. [...] What maybe constitutes inclusion, will/may likely result in exclusion for others and ensuring a key balancing act between the PCs [Protected Characteristics] is key here." (Name provided)

Some respondents reported experiencing intimidation from senior university staff members instead of support for their work.

"Faced with a Twitter pile on, the managers decided to withdraw my research from the university depository. I was called into a management meeting (all these people were way above my pay grade, I had never met any of them before). I was basically told to agree to a statement being released to say I was sorry to have caused offence. I disagreed with this and the statement was kind of watered down a bit but I was fundamentally not sorry at all because the research was perfectly valid. It was all done in a massive rush and panic that left me unable to have time to think or to invite any one else into the meeting in order to represent my interests." (Name provided)

~

"During my grievance hearing on the research ethics issue above, I was invited to a meeting with 6 members of senior staff where I was told that a member of the research ethics team had received an abusive email and I was told that this was a consequence of my actions, although I did not send the abusive email. It was acknowledged in my grievance outcome that the intimidatory nature of this meeting was not appropriate." (Dr John Armstrong).

~

“[...] despite [the event] passing off successfully and without incident, it was made clear to me by the [REDACTED – SENIOR MANAGER] that he was highly displeased with this initiative. [...] I was subject to a series of aggressive and intimidatory interactions involving the Faculty and School management. This included a verbal confrontation after a Faculty Executive meeting in which I was accused by the [SENIOR MANAGER] of bringing my department into disrepute. Quite why was always left indistinct, beyond the sense that the [SENIOR MANAGER] disliked the views of the speaker concerned. [...] Yet again, no substantive reasons were provided for these assertions, other than vague allegations, that the speaker series was somehow controversial and that it should not proceed further. Pushing back on their positions, seemed to infuriate these College managers, who did not have any coherent responses to my suggestion that the speaker series was well within the scope of academic debate. They appeared incensed that anyone should show any kind of initiative. Overall, I found management behaviour to be unprofessional, and intimidatory, and was at least in part intended to inhibit discussions about sex and gender and other matters.” (Professor Michael Rainsborough).

Respondents reported that institutional management played an active role in creating barriers to academic freedom in the area of sex and gender. On some occasions, this was described as a blanket stifling of discussion, and in other examples this was described as targeting gender-critical views.

“They set us up for major conflicts by promising too much to unreasonable and demanding students and effectively speech policing everyone else.” (Name provided)

~

“There is no forum for open debate amongst staff - occasionally open email discussions take place amongst colleagues at School or Faculty level, but these get closed down.” (Name provided)

Alongside suppressing the views of other individuals, some respondents reported that their universities also actively imposed their own political views. All-staff emails from senior staff were one mechanism.

“My Head of Department circulated an email strongly encouraging us to put pronouns in our email signatures. I did not comply but found this disturbing as an example of attempting to compel me to signal allegiance to a highly contentious and unscientific political opinion.” (Name provided)

There were concerns that a lack of neutrality may make gender-critical individuals feel more vulnerable and exposed.

“This makes me feel very 'unsafe' as a woman with gender critical beliefs. By doing this I feel he has made his opinion clear on this topic and that he is not neutral. I also feel I would not get any support if I were to experience any bullying for expressing my beliefs. It also makes me feel if there ever was a situation where there is a male person (who identified as a women) in my work toilets then my concerns would not be taken seriously. NB I am a woman who has experienced sexual violence so wanting female only spaces is very important to me.” (Name provided)

~

“...one frequently receives emails with pronouns in the signature or containing signatures featuring logos based on the progress pride flag. It is alienating to receive emails that show an overt political opposition to your views when corresponding on entirely unrelated matters, for example perhaps simply making a request from IT services. If one has publicly spoken about these issues, it feels very uncomfortable to receive such emails. As another example, the university promotes "LGBT Allyship" which is a thinly veiled way of encouraging campaigning on behalf of Stonewall - indeed campaigning on behalf of Stonewall is given as an example of allyship. Our EDI training currently states that "Allyship" is an essential component of good leadership.” (Name provided)

Management behaviour: responses from those disagreeing with the gender-critical position

Three individuals in this group responded to this section specifically to report that they have not experienced any problems with management behaviour at their institution. and wished to instead to report *positive* experiences with their management. For example:

“I have felt very much supported regarding my allyship of transgender people.” (Name provided)

Other responses were provided, but did not contain information relevant to this section (e.g. focused on experiences of homophobia).

Management behaviour: FGEN template

As noted above, of those who disagreed with gender-critical views, nine respondents used the FGEN template, which is shown below.

- TNBGD individuals and allies get no support from management when being attacked by anti-trans and gender-exclusionary people
- Lack of support from management in handling anti-trans attacks, has led to projects being shut down, funding being lost, direct and huge impact on people's mental health leading to long periods of sick leave, and in some cases, the loss of talented individuals from academia and research.'

3.9 Barriers to career progression

Summary

Some respondents detailed serious consequences to their careers, while others had self-censored in order to avoid negative career consequences.

Thirty-seven people provided a response under this heading. Eighteen were from those who agreed with the gender-critical position, and 19 from those who disagreed. Of the latter, ten provided an individual response, and nine provided a response using generic wording from the FGEN template.

Barriers to career progression: responses from those agreeing with the gender-critical position

Of the 18 respondents who agreed with gender-critical views, two-thirds were based in HE; of the remainder, half were health professionals, with other responses from the arts, media, and independent research.

Four respondents gave specific detail of personal impact. One person provided a detailed account of being subject to prolonged complaints and hostile reaction within their institution. The response noted both that invitations to a range of activities normally seen as a core aspect of an academic career had fallen away, and that the stress of dealing with a hostile working environment had had an adverse impact of their ability to work, to the detriment of their career. Another respondent detailed losing specific forms of media work. Two respondents agreed to be quoted and are provided in full here:

“I have no doubt that if I'd stayed and continued to speak out, that I would not have been promoted to a full professorship. I was told to keep my head down. Not put my head above the parapet. That I should stop engaging with social media - despite all the impact requirements of my post which required it.” (Name provided)

~

“As relayed above, as consequence of the events I describe in earlier sections [these related in detail objections by senior colleagues to speaking events organised by the respondent] I was compelled to step down early from my role as Head of Department. Overall, the events that I relay above played a part in me choosing to leave the College for a position elsewhere.” (Name provided)

Two respondents anticipated career progression problems based on their own past personal experience. Both were engaged in research on health. One who did not

consent to be quoted described in detail problems experienced within their institution related to their PhD research which led them to expect that it would probably not be possible to pursue a career in their preferred area of research. The other described being investigated “for expressing concern about gender overriding sex in supposedly sex-specific leadership training”, adding they had been “ostracised” for asking their organisation “to collect data on sex, which is important in the health service I work in.” They concluded:

“I feel I now cannot apply for any other job in my enormous health Trust so has severely limited my career in the NHS in my whole region.” (Name provided)

One respondent was concerned about problems others might face based on their own experience:

“I am in a senior position. I won't be needing to apply for promotion again and am highly unlikely to move jobs before retirement. So I was confident that this accusation of transphobia would not damage my career (though it was certainly stressful). My main concern was that this could happen to anybody and a more junior academic, who does have their promotion and long term career prospects to worry about, could be very adversely affected by totally unjustified accusations.” (Name provided)

A number of respondents anticipated specifically that their career progression would be adversely affected by university policies. Several mentioned the impact of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) policies.

“I am a PhD student. I am supposed to do 10 calendar days of formal research training per academic year as per my funder. 5 of these are now compulsory trans awareness training.... As a lesbian I found some aspects of the training offensive. I am not a transphobe, I wish nothing but well to my trans peers, and I am aware that some of them have a very difficult time. But I do not appreciate being told, whilst my research clock is ticking, that my sexual orientation is transphobic. I am spending all this time on trans training when I need to be attending training sessions that will help me deliver the skills I need to finish my project to a high standard. This is clearly a barrier to career progression (and refusing to go would also probably be a barrier to career progression...).” (Name provided)

~

"The promotions process at King's explicitly rewards staff for work on Stonewall schemes and other work that is consistent with the universities approach to EDI which is exemplified by this Stonewall membership. All academic staff members are required to write a diversity statement as part of the promotions process and I found it concerning that my diversity statement ran against the college policy."
(Name provided)

~

"EDI now features as a criterion in person specifications for jobs. This means, particularly when the institution parrots lines of thought that come from Stonewall, that political criteria are being used in recruitment." (Name not provided)

The general position taken by colleagues or parts of the institution caused other respondents to anticipate barriers to career progression.

"The effect on my work and motivation has been immense - I do not feel I can do honest research anymore and therefore it is affecting my ability to progress various research projects. The chilling effect is also crippling for wellbeing, creativity and productivity." (Name provided)

~

"Dissidents have no chance of career progression or even retaining the job they've got." (Name provided)

One further respondent expressed concern that the key staff involved in the promotion process in their faculty had signed an open letter condemning colleagues for expressing gender critical views.

A final group of respondents anticipated general problems, due to the wider climate:

"I ... feel that if I am open with my views that people will not want to work with me, I will not get any funding for future projects and employment. I believe this from watching many academics face harassment and bullying over the last few years. Academia has not felt like an inclusive space for people like me and it often makes me think about leaving." (Name provided)

~

"Within the arts, I feel like my career won't progress if I express any view to the contrary that "trans women are women" etc" (Name provided)

~

"I am fearful that if I expressed any view other than 'trans women are women' it would harm my career progression." (Name not provided)

~

"Since being made redundant... because the university I worked at... was cutting staff numbers, I have felt unable to apply for academic jobs because of my research specialism and the now hostile environment for 'gender critical' academics in universities. Because I was following a PhD by publication pathway, this has meant I have been unable to finish my doctorate and progress my research career despite the significant reach of the research I have had published since 2017 whilst working, primarily on a voluntary basis, outside the university sector. This has also, of course, involved a significant loss of earnings and pension contributions." (Name provided)

An early career researcher who had observed the experiences of more senior academics generally argued there needed to be more support to help early career researchers undertake research in this area while feeling safe and supported.

Barriers to career progression: responses from those disagreeing with the gender-critical position

Two respondents in this group described personal impacts without providing specific detail of what had occurred; one of these is a repeat response, the other is provided in full below.

“My career has been derailed by the actions of 'gender critical' academics in my workplace. I have been forced to take long periods of sick leave which has impacted on my CV making it difficult to get promoted or apply for jobs elsewhere. This has effectively meant that I am stuck and am forced to continue to survive a hostile work environment or quit.” (Name not provided)

One respondent was concerned that senior staff would block their progress:

“[my] department is run by gender critical people, unlikely to find a job there. am considering moving away / to industry.” (Name not provided)

Some attributed general career problems to their research perspective: these comments are again provided in full.

“As a scholar working on queer and trans topics, feel that I have been prone to precarious employment for the sake of a department's optics, while my queer- and trans-inclusive research was for a long time not taken seriously enough to warrant permanent employment.” (Name not provided)

~

“Research on gender generally is taken less seriously than other areas which affects progression”. (Name not provided)”

~

“My research is on gender, inclusive of trans and intersex people, and getting funding to continue it has thus far been impossible.” (Name not provided)

Two respondents anticipated problems due to the environment in general. Both related to working on health matters. One who felt they could no longer pursue a career in the NHS, due to the wider climate on the issue, did not wish to be quoted. The remaining response stated:

“A significant reason why I am not pursuing promotion or more senior roles is because I am concerned about the hostility i would receive as

a trans person working in a health related field who believes that legally trans people can and do change sex, and that for many medical and biological purposes (not all, clearly), trans people will also have characteristics of their acquired sex.” (Name provided)

Barriers to career progression: FGEN template

Nine respondents used the FGEN template, either partly or in full. This is shown below.

- TNBGD individuals face several barriers to career progressions stemming from societal attitudes, institutional practices, and interpersonal interactions.
- Overt and covert discrimination, erasure, questioning existence, microaggressions, harassment, misgendering, exclusionary practices all serve as barriers to career progression for TNBGD.

3.10 Research ethics processes

Summary

- Ethics committees have objected to data collection on sex and to the use of language which refers to sex
- An ethics committee has blocked research on detransitioners
- Barriers posed by ethics committees affect both academics and students.

Thirty-six people provided a response under this heading. Fourteen respondents agreed with the gender-critical position and twenty-two disagreed. Of the latter, ten respondents provided an individual response, and twelve provided response using generic wording from the FGEN template.

Research ethics: responses from those agreeing with the gender-critical position

James Caspian provided an account of research on detransitioners being blocked by an ethics committee.

“As a psychotherapist specialising in working with patients at a private gender reassignment clinic I became aware that there were a growing number of people who had sought to reverse the surgery they had as part of a gender transition. As part of a self funded Masters degree at Bath Spa University in 2016 I applied for permission to research this group to find out more. Gender Reassignment Surgery includes surgery to the genitals, and for women changing to male, often removal of the breasts. I wanted to talk to the people who regretted their GRS and then had surgery to try to reverse the original surgery. There is no research into this phenomenon, and it is needed to develop insight into why this is happening and to learn from these peoples' experiences. I was invited by the hosts to bring my findings to the European Professional Association of Transgender Health conference in Belgrade in 2017. This was not to happen, as the university vetoed my research. Initially the university ethics committee had given me permission to begin the research, and later I asked to widen the original proposal (which had been approved by the ethics committee) to include people who reversed their gender transition without necessarily reversing the surgery. This was because at first it was difficult to find people willing to speak openly about their reversal - one person said they were too traumatised to talk about it - confirming the need for the research. I was also contacted by a spokeswoman for a group of young women in the US who had

transitioned to male, had their breasts removed, then reversed the transition. They wanted me to know that they didn't reverse their surgery, and so wouldn't qualify for my research. I then decided to include those who reversed transition without reversing surgery, as there appeared to be a growing number of people in this group too, and yet there was little current research or discussion of this in the gender field. In November 2016 Bath Spa University refused my re-application, fundamentally on the basis that it might attract unpleasant comments on social media, which they said might be detrimental to the reputation of the university. In January 2017 there was a final ruling which supported this decision and the university also refused to refund me the fees which I had paid when I requested them back. (They were later ordered to refund part of them by the Ombudsman but never did). The Ethics Committee wrote the following in their final refusal: "The Sub Committee supports the Dean of IfE in declining this application. The student himself concedes a request to WPATH might cause offence and lead to him 'coming under attack'. If he is attacked then so is the University. We see no point in causing unnecessary offence and the student should rethink the nature of his thesis." (James Caspian)

One respondent noted that their university was treating data collection on sex as 'high risk'.

"2020 Our local ethics committee announced that we should be collecting data on gender identity, and not on sex, unless they went to the central high risk ethics board. Obviously, it's fine for people to collect data on gender identity if that's what they want to know, but absurd to require people to get high risk ethics approval if they want to know the biological sex of their participants." (Name provided)

Several submissions described instances where ethics committees objected to research on the grounds that the research used the concept of sex and/or proposed to collect data on sex.

"A research ethics application of mine was not approved because it began by saying I intended to look at views on "when males should be able to compete in the female category in athletics". This was described as "misgendering" and I was told I needed permission from my faculty dean to conduct the research and would need to get input from our EDI team on both the wording of the survey and of the ethics application itself. Since my university submits to the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index and our EDI team has said in training that sex is a spectrum with intersex in the middle, I felt that I could not

conduct the research under these conditions. I have raised a grievance, which was rejected.” (Dr John Armstrong)

~

“We run a cohort study and have had to battle to include what we think are the appropriate questions on sex and gender.” (Name provided)

The research ethics committee states one must collect information on gender identity rather than sex. This presupposes all people have a gender identity and believe in it.

“I was denied ethics approval because my project expressly stated 'females at birth' as a criteria due to women's anatomy differences in the area being studied. I had to change wording to 'anyone identifying as female' but suffered lots of pushback from women who would have taken part in my study but now didn't feel I was including them.” (Name not provided)

~

“As an organisation that collects a lot of domestic abuse data, we frequently work in a research consortium with many universities and other charities. We have developed a new ethics process which all partners to current and future research internally and externally will have to adhere to. A research pack underpins this new process. The original version of the research pack had advice on how to collect demographic data. It did not mention sex at all, and required all data collectors to follow a principle of self identification at all times. Here is how it instructed users to collect data on sex/gender:

How do you identify your gender? •Woman •Man •Non-Binary •Prefer not to say •Prefer to self-describe - please specify Do you identify as someone with a trans history/Do you identify with the sex you were assigned at birth/ Is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth? •Yes •No •Prefer not to say

This way of collecting data ended up in the Research Pack as a result of a training session [REDACTED] called 'Queering Survey Data' from [REDACTED], who instructed us [REDACTED] that all the best practice guidance ... is not to ask about sex unless absolutely necessary in a medical setting. The Research Analysts writing this Pack followed this advice. This is a problem in a domestic abuse research setting such as ours, as domestic abuse and sexual violence data is some of the most skewed by sex data around. Sex is arguably

the most important factor in both victimisation and perpetration of domestic abuse and sexual violence.” (Name provided)

Another respondent, who preferred not to be quoted directly, stated that their university’s EDI unit had guided staff to be cautious about asking questions on sex in surveys or other forms of data collection as these questions may be ‘problematic’.

Some cases involved student research.

“One of my PGT students submitted her ethics application. I had read and supported her application. She was going to interview women about their body image and the impact of media. The ethics committee feedback was that she needed to make the research inclusive of those who either aren’t biological women (ie men) or those who don’t identify as women. She was advised not to use the term ‘female form’, as that was exclusionary. I responded very robustly to the Co-chairs of the Ethics Committee, as I considered their feedback to not have anything to do with research ethics, but rather to be based in ideas about gender ideology, which were not shared by everyone, including the student and, myself.” (Name provided)

~

“Last year (2023), I experienced for the first time two ethics committees taking a hitherto new interest in the socio-demographic questions of my MSc students’ proposed surveys. One ethics committee focussed on sex/gender. In this survey we had proposed the Census sex question with a slight amendment, plus the Census gender questions: 20. What is your sex? (This would be the sex you were registered at birth as shown on your birth certificate.) Male Female 21. Is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth? Yes [Go to question 23] No 22. Please tell us your gender identity: _____ The ethics committee review had little to say about the main survey, their main response related to the sex/gender questions: “In the survey, under Q20 about sex/gender, we would propose a re-write that in a way that doesn’t run the risk of participants being put off without reading past Q20. At present, it reads: What is your sex? And then explains: the sex you were assigned at birth. This inadvertently seems to suggest that the sex assigned at birth automatically is the sex one has as an adult. This is true (with some limitations) when speaking about ‘biological sex’ - for example, transwomen will have a higher risk of breast cancer due to oestrogen supplement etc. A better way would be to start off with a more neutral question like, ‘How would you describe your sex/gender’

or 'Your preferred gender' and then ask about 'Biological sex' or 'Sex assigned at birth.'” (Name provided)

In one case, an ethics committee member was rebuked for suggesting a female-only sample would be appropriate for research on a particular project.

“A PhD student had submitted her ethics application. She was planning to research a health condition which manifests itself differently in men and women. Her research project was only about women with this condition, but she had said she would include trans women. She was given feedback by me which queried the wisdom of this because the condition affected biological males and females differently. If she was going to include biological males that would likely skew/invalidate her results. She took great offence at that and made a complaint of transphobia against me. The Director of Graduate Studies investigating the complaint agreed with the student that she shouldn't have been given transphobic feedback by the ethics committee. I agreed that transphobic feedback would have been awful, but I maintained then, and still do now, that my feedback was not transphobic in any way. The student was reassured that the whole of our School would be given some training on how to be less transphobic and she agreed not to formally escalate her complaint.”
(Name provided)

Some submissions raised concerns regarding discriminatory views among ethics committee members, for example, a university ethics committee chair who had signed a letter opposing a gender-critical research network, and questioned how staff who overtly oppose gender-critical research can be seen as impartial in this context.

Research ethics: responses from those disagreeing with the gender-critical position

Of the respondents in this group who made individual points, some emphasised that they perceived no problem with ethics committees.

“This survey is biased because you are asking only about barriers. I have been doing research which relates to sex, gender, sexuality and sexual health for [REDACTED] years and have never had any problem with the [REDACTED] ethics committee.” (Name not provided)

~

“I am delighted that our Research Ethics processes are not restrictive when it comes to research in which sex and gender may be relevant.” (Name provided)

However, others in this group stated that they had faced barriers from ethics committees.

“I have experienced difficulties in progressing gender-inclusive research with an ethics committee. My integrity as a researcher was questioned with no basis. There was an assumption I would only want to recruit participants whose views corresponded with my own, with nothing in the paperwork to suggest this.” (Name not provided)

~

“Research ethics processes are often fundamentally concerned about protecting the institution from harm. As such, there have been times when I have conducted sexualities research related to bullying in school where I have had to put in far greater controls than other similar research.” (Name not provided)

~

“As someone who researches LGBTIQ+ communities in [REDACTED], I had to add additional information about how I would keep them safe and factor in the mental strain of the current climate on trans people. This exemplifies how detrimental current attacks on trans and non-binary people have been to their wellbeing. It was also much harder to recruit trans and non-binary participants due to low trust in researchers at present.” (Name not provided)

Research ethics processes: FGEN template

Twelve respondents used the FGEN template in relation to this heading, as shown below.

- Ethics committees have people with discriminatory views (gender-exclusionary) who try to steer the research in a damaging and dangerous direction for participants, or who try to exclude TNBGD people from the research by ensuring questions asked do not include them.
- Makes it harder to get research approved, especially when the people approving the research hold negative biased discriminatory views towards population of interest, and in some cases don't believe in the existence of the population
- If someone has a view which denies the existence and realities of an entire population, they have no place sitting on an ethics committee
- Some ethics committees consider "how would this play out in the Daily Mail" when assessing applications thus inhibiting TNBGD inclusive research
- Unhelpful suggestions from reviewers who are gender-exclusionary
- For example, it has been suggested to include details of anti-trans organisations (including those who support conversion therapy - an illegal and banned practice) in a list of supportive organisations for research where the participants were TNBGD people.

3.11 Compelled speech

Summary

- Compelled speech was reported to be embedded in university training and policies.
- Compelled speech was also promoted via messaging from university management.
- Many respondents saw 'pronoun circles' and requests for pronouns to be declared as requirements for an affirmation of faith.

Thirty-five people provided a response under this heading. Eighteen were from those who agreed with the gender-critical position. Six of those who disagreed with that position provided an individual response, and a further 11 provided only a response using generic wording from the FGEN template.

Compelled speech: responses from those agreeing with the gender-critical position

Compelled speech embedded in training was a common theme.

"On 28 May the University of Exeter sent out in its Weekly Bulletin an "inclusive practitioners commitment", which all staff were invited to sign. This commitment included: "1. I will respect and affirm trans staff and students. Including their pronouns and chosen names; and 2. I will seek out LGBTQ+ people's contributions to my discipline, especially if they are under-represented within it. When referencing transgender and non-binary experts I will respect their identities, names, and pronouns." Readers were told that "by signing the commitment, you will be able to display a badge (staff profile, ... email signature), as well as appearing in a optional directory". I regard this as a serious breach of institutional neutrality. Universities should not take sides in controversial debates. It might also be argued that it amounts to compelled speech, insofar as staff who do not sign the commitment will be easily visible and open to harassment." (Dr Edward Skidelsky)

Other respondents stated that this pressure sometimes included tactics such as misinformation about the law:

"I am required to use preferred pronouns and was told in training that this was the law." (Name provided)

~

"The introductory module on EDI that all staff must do online demonstrates the clear intention to compel speech. It embodies many of the misrepresentations identified in the Reindorf Review. There is a question that staff can only get 'right' if they agree that they are 'required' to refer to a female student who announces that she identifies as male as 'he'. Staff are required, if they are to score 100%, to agree to uphold the institution's EDI policies and the Equality Act 2010. There is a separate checkbox for each. This cannot be done when the policies are inconsistent with, or misrepresent, the Act." (Name not provided)

It was reported that ideological training affects students as well as staff.

"on arrival all new students are given mandatory training (it isn't really compulsory, as nothing happens if they don't do it, but students aren't told that). It's an online module, which tells them the importance of respecting everyone's pronouns, believing people when they tell you who they are, etc. It is a clear signal from the university that this is the only acceptable approach at this institution. Staff aren't compelled to say or do anything, but we are regularly requested to display our pronouns, always have a pronoun round at the beginning of meetings, etc. The vast majority of staff do not do this and nothing happens as a result, but it sets a tone." (Name provided)

One student reported pressure from supervisors who had been trained.

"My supervisors have been on "trans training". In the supervision after their training they both recited one after the other that "trans women are women, not all women have vaginas". I was supposed to say it next. It was like being compelled to recite the catechism at school. I didn't say it, but it was awkward, and I feel like I have been walking on eggshells ever since." (Name not provided)

University policies and 'guidelines' were seen as contributing to compelled speech and ideological enforcement.

"The messaging from central university is very clear and has been set by activists. ... there is a kind of "rainbow taskforce" (i.e. transactivists) and people are actually paid and given workload points to be part of it. Their self-decided guidelines say things like, avoid using terminology like "biological sex" and that anyone should use any bathroom they feel comfortable using. In the department we have

been "requested" to "respect students' preferred pronouns" and then asked to discuss it openly during a dept meeting." (Name provided)

Some respondents reported pressure to declare their pronouns, and this was experienced as political pressure, because declaring pronouns is associated with endorsement of gender-identity theory. 'Pronoun circles' at the start of meetings were perceived as a declaration of faith. Three respondents reported pressure to do this during in-person meetings.

"Session leaders have tried to force me to give pronouns. I have refused." (Name provided)

Another academic reported that if she had refused to declare personal pronouns in meetings it would have jeopardized their job.

Respondents reported being pressured to declare pronouns in email signatures, often by senior staff:

"The previous VC sent out an email asking us to share pronouns in our email." (Name provided)

~

"My Head of Department circulated an email strongly encouraging us to put pronouns in our email signatures. I did not comply but found this disturbing as an example of attempting to compel me ...to signal allegiance to a highly contentious and unscientific political opinion. [...]" (Name provided)

The requirement to use certain language in academic projects was a common theme.

"In some collaborative projects, feeling compelled to use terminology that I do not believe to be correct or helpful. Feeling that it is no longer a matter for scientific debate, and that only one stance on this can be considered acceptable. This is poor science. The universities and academia are supposed to be places of free speech and of debate, of the acquisition of knowledge and evidence. However, on language pertaining to sex and gender, it seems that such free speech and debate is not allowed. I find this very frightening and potentially very harmful." (Name not provided)

Other types of potential compelled speech reported by GC academics included in a clinical-related role, where they felt compelled to agree with how patients see themselves, by being prevented from discussing or voicing concerns:

"These cases in children bring up huge moral, ethical and philosophical questions, but we aren't allowed to ask or discuss any of these questions because if we do then we are somehow "anti" trans. There is a feeling that you are either for or against. [...] I was advised that we should never explore or challenge these patients' thoughts and beliefs about themselves and instead leave it for the Tavistock Clinic clinician." (Name provided)

Another academic (who preferred not to be quoted directly but provided their details to the review) experienced pressure from a faculty committee to put trigger warnings on gender-critical reading list material.

One academic reported pressure for compelled speech via student complaints:

"Trying to teach students about sex-differences is difficult when you cannot define sex accurately without complaint. It's terrifying to discuss female-specific health issues/barriers and not be able to mention differences between men and women. Academia has become impossible for researchers who study or teach about women's health (female sex!)." (Name not provided)

Compelled speech: responses from those disagreeing with the gender-critical position

Responses from this group included one not specifically concerned with speech or language, stating "It feels increasingly difficult to be pro-trans on campus, without the threat of coordinated attacks from a mixture of GC academics, high profile anti-trans campaigners, and anonymous twitter trolls."

The remaining responses were concerned with pressure to use or not use certain expressions when discussing sex and gender identity.

"I feel like I am frequently expected to uphold a definition of sex as being biological and gender as being social that I do not believe and that is not currently what the law says. I do not believe that this definition reflects the complexity and diversity of trans biologies, and I think it upholds a false and unhelpful delineation between the biological and social that is associated with oppression of women and of LGBTQ+ people. I accept that other people may hold other beliefs, but I feel like I am being railroaded into being told I cannot hold my own, or respond to surveys, HESA data collections etc in the way that I genuinely feel is true and correct." (Name provided)

One respondent reported pressure from collaborators regarding language and another felt under pressure to phrase things in a particular way.

"I have been outvoted on use of gender inclusive language in papers, under the argument that "the public wouldn't understand it"."
(Name not provided)

Two responses felt unable to use their preferred terminology.

"I am often not able to use the language I want to about trans inclusion because of the backlash it can receive. I have had to learn to phrase things in incredibly cautious ways to adhere to the normative landscape." (Name not provided)

~

"with public policy work, I have found myself forced to used language advocated for by gender critical people. for example, this has included being compelled to not use incredibly well established phrases like sex assigned at birth." (Name not provided)

An expression of psychological distress runs through many of these responses.

"I have been forced to explain my views on sex and gender (whether some thing is or is not transphobic/my own gender identity) and tolerate misgendering in increasingly hostile spaces. This has resulted in epistemic injustice, public humiliation, mocking and denigration of my own identity and views in the institution, social media and press. This brought me to a place where suicide felt like the only way that I could be heard." (Name not provided)

Compelled speech: FGEN template

Eleven respondents used the FGEN template, as shown below.

Being repeatedly forced to explain/justify your existence/ the existence of an entire group of people

3.12 No platforming and discrimination against you as a speaker

Summary

- No-platforming was often covert, making it impossible, even for its targets, to be sure of the extent of the phenomenon.
- Some academics reported that they had been no-platformed on multiple occasions.
- Unsuccessful attempts at no-platforming still had consequences for speakers and others.
- Some academics have experienced a form of McCarthyism, in the sense that they are prevented from speaking on any topic, not just sex and gender.
- No-platforming has wider consequences for the careers of no-platformed speakers.

Thirty-three people provided a response under this heading. Of these, fourteen agreed with the gender-critical position, and nineteen disagreed. Of the latter group, eight respondents provided an individual response, and eleven provided a response using generic wording from the FGEN template.

No-platforming: responses from those agreeing with the gender-critical position

Most responses from those agreeing with the gender-critical position cited one or more specific cases of an attempt to prevent an event from going ahead, often mentioning co-ordinated protests. The attempt to prevent an engagement going ahead was successful in around half the examples provided, although in the remainder there was often still substantial disruption, including delay, relocation and/or a need for additional security.

Universities were most commonly cited as the location of these examples, but events hosted by a council, a learned society, professional associations and a looser network of scholars and activists were also included. The difficulty of knowing for certain this has happened was cited by more than one respondent; it is “done behind your back so it’s hard to prove. I only found out about the one time because a colleague tipped me off unofficially.”

Some respondents reported multiple experiences, notably Kathleen Stock, former Professor of Philosophy at the University of Sussex.

“NB - some of the instances noted below were ones where my proposed talk had no direct or specific bearing on trans issues. Over time, my name became a byword for moral contamination, no matter what I was talking about.

- *In January 2019, an academic talk of mine on sexual orientation, at the University of York was protested by students at the venue (Jan 2019).*
- *In June 2019, a campaign was launched by "Minorities in Philosophy" against an academic talk of mine, on sexual orientation, to be held at the Aristotelian Society, resulting in a need for increased security.*
- *In November 2019, an invited talk at the Royal Institute of Philosophy Annual Debate, on "diversity", was targeted unsuccessfully for a no-platforming campaign by well-known youtuber Philosophytube.*
- *In January 2020, following protests, a talk of mine on gender norms to the Philosophy Department at UEA was cancelled, and rearranged by zoom in 2021*
- *In February 2020, following protests, the format of a keynote invitation to me by the University of Hertfordshire was modified to include a trans speaker on the platform with me. (The whole event was eventually cancelled due to Covid.)*
- *In December 2020, following complaints by a fellow invitee after the roster was announced, I was no-platformed from an online lecture series by Leibniz-Zentrum Allgemeine Sprachwissenschaft (ZAS), Berlin.*
- *In April 2021, after a research talk of mine at my own Philosophy Department was advertised, with no specific bearing on trans issues, postgraduates advertised a rival event to happen at the same time, entitled "Philosophy and Anti-Trans Thought" advertising through the main university email systems. For several years, the invited speaker (a graduate student) had broadcast an extraordinary volume of hostile commentary about me, often tweeting in derogatory terms, for example calling me a bigot. I cancelled my own talk in response, as I felt unable to do it in the circumstances. At this talk (attended by a colleague who made notes) were 30-40 people, many of them faculty from my School and the wider University. These included a Head of Subject Area and a Deputy Head of Subject Area within my School; the Chair of the LGBT staff network who was also a colleague in my School; a member of the School EDI Committee; two School UCU reps; and the Professor of Gender Studies whose tweets and flag-purchasing are described*

elsewhere in this submission. During her talk, Peterson named me frequently. She claimed that I did not "act like an academic" when I gave oral evidence in Parliament to the Women and Equalities Committee; that I and others were "building a narrative" with our academic authority, using the mainstream press, and "kicking up dust"; that I and others were "attacking a medical consensus" re gender identity and the treatment of dysphoria; that I had "decided that you can do conversion therapy on gender identity" whereas in fact trying to change somebody's gender identity is "not appropriate", and puberty blockers are "not experimental"; that I was a conspiracy theorist who believes in a "trans lobby"; that I and others were providing cover for anti-Semitic conspiracy theories via our criticism of certain funders to trans activist organisations. During the Q&A various allegations were made by others. A graduate student said (falsely) that I had "threatened her with defamation" when she was news editor of the student newspaper. A member of faculty asked whether "there was an overlap" between my views and "Men's Rights Activists". In short, this was not an academic event designed to critically scrutinise my philosophical arguments about sex and gender, but rather an event set up in advance, from the title and wording of the invitation onwards, to harm my reputation amongst attendees, and to encourage others to participate in this reputational harm.

- In 2022, my participation in a debate at Cambridge Union was protested (the topic of the debate had no bearing on trans issues). A speaker on the same side of the house as me switched sides to denounce me.
- In 2023, my participation in a debate at Oxford Union was protested, both outside the venue, and inside where a protestor glued herself to the floor.
- Between 2018-22, several attempts to allow me to participate in public university discussions were foiled because no speaker could be found who would debate me. It was usually stipulated that I could not give a talk on my own, that I had to have an opponent - since there was no such opponent, the event could not go ahead.
- In 2019, the blog of the Institute of Art and Ideas removed an online symposium ("The current transgender debate polarizes Western societies like no other") to which Holly Lawford-Smith and I had contributed, alongside Julie Bindel, and academics Robin Dembroff, Susan Stryker and Rebecca Kukla. These latter three contributors had complained publicly about "non-consensual co-platforming", causing the organisers to remove it. The piece was later put up only with the

first three contributors, including me.” (Kathleen Stock, former Professor of Philosophy, University of Sussex).

One respondent reported being ejected from an online seminar for asking critical questions in the Q&A chat box. This was characterised as ‘disruptive questioning’. This effective veto over critical questions appeared to violate academic norms.

Some respondents reported in detail unsuccessful attempts to have them de-platformed:

“I am an Australian academic. I was invited to speak at the 5th European Conference on Preconception Care and Health to be held at UCL in late 2022 about sexed and desexed language in relation to preconception health. My presentation was a plenary and the title of my presentation was 'Desexing the language of preconception care: does it matter?' When the program including my presentation was announced, the organisers received what seemed to be coordinated complaints about my presentation being transphobic, racist and colonialist. Some of those complaining dug into my publication and other history and sought to discredit me as a speaker. Because my long-ago PhD was in plant physiology it was said that I was not qualified to speak on the topic. The conference organisers were supportive as was the provost at UCL who said that the university has a free speech policy that should be upheld. The organisers responded by providing additional time for discussion following my presentation. There was no problem at the actual conference. Later in my UK trip a women's rights organisation had arranged for me to give a presentation in Edinburgh. The venue (a church) cancelled the booking at the last minute and the event had to go ahead at another (more difficult to get to) venue.

I was in the UK again in July-August this year. The first week in August is an international breastfeeding promotion event called World Breastfeeding Week and the theme for this year was on closing the gap in breastfeeding inequalities. One of my areas of expertise is in breastfeeding support for the most vulnerable mothers and babies, including those who interact with the child protection system and the criminal justice systems. I was asked to speak at an event in one of the most deprived parts of the UK for World Breastfeeding Week about how breastfeeding can support mothers with vulnerabilities to provide their best possible care to their babies. However, the local hospital would not allow one of their rooms to be used for the event because of my 'views on inclusive language which is not the approach of the

Local Maternity and Neonatal System.' I was not going to be saying anything about language." (Karleen Gribble)

A further very detailed account of multiple incidents of de-platforming was submitted by a respondent who did not wish to be quoted.

A respondent who preferred not to be quoted discussed how a planned invitation could not be taken up because when permission was sought from the university, there was no response, up to and past the date of the event.

Effects were reported beyond the specific events described. More than one respondent noted that regular invitations to speak on their main area of research had considerably reduced:

"I was asked to speak about my book on gender-critical feminist at a city council event for International Women's Day. I was then cancelled on the grounds that members of the council workforce found me and my views upsetting. This was part of a wider campaign in Scotland against me which led to a 'dossier' of my crimes being compiled. This ranged from speaking at a panel at Edinburgh University with Julie Bindel as a co-panellist, and speaking at a Woman's Place UK event to retweeting Johann Lamont and wishing Maya Forstater 'good luck'. It was claimed that younger members of staff in various DEI roles in the city were frightened of me. While I am often asked to speak at events organised by gender-critical women, I have noted my invitations to speak at more general academic events, particularly in the area of media studies, have declined considerably." (Professor Sarah Pedersen)

Another noted that their contribution to their field had also been more generally sidelined:

"Scholars speaking at recent online events on the topic of [REDACTED] - on which I am an internationally recognized scholar - have drawn on my published work while expunging all acknowledgement of it and references to it in their talks." (Name provided)

The impact on the ability to feel confident that future events would go ahead was mentioned by a respondent who had already been subject to attempted removal from one event programme after a complaint.

"I was invited to be a keynote speaker at [REDACTED: conference on topic unconnected to this issue] at my Alma Mater in 2023. I was excited and thrilled to be able to share my research thoughts with

colleagues. However, a person who I have known for nearly 20-years reported to one of the conference organisers that I was a transphobe because of a Tweet that I had posted. This information came to light through personal communication between the organiser and I, I was informed that the accuser's wife had seen a tweet...on my Twitter thread, and based on that, I was a transphobe, and I should be uninvited. Upon been informed of this, I identified the respective Tweet - which was shared with the conference organiser, and I also informed the organiser that if I was to be uninvited that this would count as discrimination and deplatforming. I am led to believe the organiser sought guidance from the respective institutional policies and it was determined that I had not contravened any part of the policy. Further, the planned plenary pertained to an area of specific interest which sits outside gender critical discourse.” (Name provided)

Those who have been no-platformed and publicly vilified experience the ongoing effects of being deemed ‘risky’.

“Most universities now require risk and security assessments for all invited speakers and depending on the specificities will often require extra security arrangements. Because I have been cancelled (from Essex University) and suffered unlawful bullying and discrimination from The Open University, I have become a risky speaker. This is both a cause of frustration (for me) and a tax (extra time filling in forms and liaising with security, extra costs of providing security) on any university, department, research group that wishes to invite me to speech. I have included this as a barrier to research – but recognise this is another impossible to quantify barrier. It is impossible to know about all the invitations I have never received because either those who would like to invite me felt disinclined to do so because of the paperwork, the issue with security or the problem of being associated with me.” (Professor Jo Phoenix)

No-platforming: responses from those disagreeing with the gender-critical position

The responses from this group did not record any specific incidents of de-platforming affecting respondents, although one believed they had been generally excluded from involvement relevant research. The individual responses from this group which gave permission to be quoted are provided in full:

“As interested stakeholders, we have not been included or invited to be involved in research so any data that might be brought by parents of Trans, NB and gender questioning children has not been factored in unless we are actively engaged with groups that are gender critical or hostile to trans folk and their families. You cannot be de-platformed from events that you have been actively excluded from from the outset.” (Name not provided)

~

“mostly in foreign conferences” (Name not provided)

~

“As above, I was essentially bullied off Twitter/X by anti-trans and gender critical actors.” (Name not provided)

~

I have declined to sit on a [REDACTED] panel addressing trans staff wellbeing because I did not want to face harrasment at work. Also my partner is trans, and anti-trans discourse hits us personally, literally every day. It feels so regressive to have to fight for basic rights (freedom of expression). (Name provided)

The responses that did not give consent to be quoted did not give specific examples. One referred to general discrimination and non-platforming in academia of those with transgender identities, historically and in the present. Another said that they felt their expertise in working with this population was sidelined and the voices of this group under-valued. One asserted only that gender-critical feminists' reaction to criticism was the principal barrier to research.

One which did not give consent to be quoted added to this additional comments arguing strongly against the right of those with gender-critical views to be platformed, on the grounds that such views were discriminatory and akin to extreme forms of prejudice based on religion or race.

No-platforming: FGEN template

Eleven respondents used the FGEN template, as shown below. We assume that the reason for singling-out UCL relates to the fact that the Principal Investigator on this Review is employed at UCL.

- Gender “critical” beliefs are discriminatory, not “critical” in any capacity, and are gender-exclusionary beliefs
- Lots of TNBGD speakers and allies (at UCL) come under attack by people with gender-exclusionary views, e.g., under the guise of asking questions, they call the speakers' very existence into question. No one should have to explain or justify their existence, it's horrific’.

3.13 Student experiences

Summary

- Many of the issues reported in other sections affect students as well as staff. These include: the inability to discuss issues openly; inability to refer to sex in their research; training and policies which embed a belief that sex is not relevant.
- Some respondents who disagreed with gender-critical views conveyed that exposure to gender-critical views could make students unsafe.
- Seven respondents worked in higher education (as academics or staff) and agreed with gender-critical views. All of these respondents reported witnessing barriers facing students specifically who hold gender-critical beliefs.

Thirty-one people provided a response under this heading, five of whom were students. Of the 31 respondents, eleven agreed with the gender-critical position and twenty disagreed. Of those who disagreed, ten provided an individual response, and ten provided a response using generic wording from the FGEN template. Of the five student respondents, four agreed with gender-critical views and one disagreed.

Student experiences: responses from those agreeing with the gender-critical position

Four of the students commenting in this section agreed with gender-critical views. All four reported personal experiences of barriers (as opposed to reporting witnessing barriers of others). None of the four felt able to be named, and two requested not to be quoted directly. One further student comment reported here was made in another section.

One student referred to both a lack of single-sex facilities and to bullying by peers.

“There is a sexual violence problem at universities. Female students who are victims-survivors were not using the gender neutral toilets because it was traumatic. There was a culture of bullying allowed to exist from the institution which prevented many students speaking up. Those of us who were gender critical would be approached by these students who were policing their contributions in class for fear of being bullied themselves.” (Name provided)

PhD students reported pressure to change their work.

“I was told by my PhD supervisor that the section of my thesis which deals with gender needed to be checked through by a particular

colleague (who is a very vocal trans rights activist) to make sure I'm "not saying anything too controversial". This effectively means my work can be censored by someone holding what I consider to be very extreme political and ideological views. I therefore find myself in the difficult position of wanting to write a thesis I feel is rigorous but knowing I will likely be heavily criticised and/or ostracised for doing so. My department employs many of its former PhD students and so I feel that if I am to improve my chances of working there in future, I need to hide my gender-critical views entirely." (Name provided)

~

"My project is broadly concerned with women's history (I don't want to say anything else as I can't take the risk of being identified) and I am really worried that it will be unpublishable unless it is "queered" - and I am being pressured to adjust my methodology accordingly." (Name not provided)

Academics also reported on the fears of their students and the way in which students are affected by university policies.

"Two PhD students have informed me that they feel unable to discuss this issue publicly until they have a permanent job. Our faculty EDI lead informed me that she had instigated a policy that all students in our Chemistry department must declare their pronouns. She also introduced a compulsory EDI course for Chemistry students which subtly indoctrinated students, misrepresented equalities law and contained factually incorrect information about EDI matters. This course was endorsed by the second most senior staff member of the university." (Name provided)

~

"Students are under great pressure to avoid using 'male/female' in their studies. It makes identifying the subject of their work very difficult and is watering down findings. Women (female sex) are again having their needs ignored by these research requirements and female students are struggling to research or study subjects which matter to them. It is frustrating and unfair." (Name not provided)

One respondent who did not consent to be quoted noted that complaints from a few students potentially narrowed the curriculum and reading lists available to all. Another said that postgraduate students had told them privately that they did not feel safe voicing gender-critical opinions.

One student referred to a disproportionate emphasis on trans training.

"I am a PhD student. I am supposed to do 10 calendar days of formal research training per academic year as per my funder. 5 of these are now compulsory trans awareness training. (The "training" misrepresents the law, but that is a separate issue!) 50% of my research training each year is about trans awareness. It's frankly absurd. I can see an argument for some sort of formal, even compulsory, DEI training for PhD students - but this should not be annual, it should not be 50% of our research training every year, and it should not only be about one group of people. Trans and non binary students are very well represented in our cohort (much higher percentage than in the general population). I know a couple of non-trans gay men, and no other lesbians. Students with physical disabilities are underrepresented in our cohort. Why are none of the other minority groups included in this training? (I suspect the trans training is linked to the Stonewall Diversity Champions submission, but I have no evidence of this other than a hunch.) To be clear, I am not saying that PhD students shouldn't have "trans training", but this shouldn't be the only "diversity training", and it shouldn't come out of research training time. It should not be 50% of our annual research training every year. (This is especially problematic for part time students. They are obliged to do the full 5 days. Those on 50% pro rata then officially have no formal research training time left...). As a lesbian I found some aspects of the training offensive. I am not a transphobe, I wish nothing but well to my trans peers, and I am aware that some of them have a very difficult time. But I do not appreciate being told, whilst my research clock is ticking, that my sexual orientation is transphobic. I am spending all this time on trans training when I need to be attending training sessions that will help me deliver the skills I need to finish my project to a high standard." (Name not provided)

Student experiences: responses from those disagreeing with the gender-critical position

Of the ten unique responses from individuals who disagreed with gender-critical views, nine consented to be quoted: the other respondent argued that students with trans identities need to see staff who share these identities, citing one who came to them in tears at the end of a lecture, as it was the first time they had felt represented. The remaining answers focussed on students are provided in full. A common theme was mental health and the perception that some students are made unsafe by hearing gender-critical views.

“I teach and have been approached by three students (separately across undergrad and masters programmes) over the past year who were nervous about researching LGBTIQ+ topics in the current climate. They expressed concerns that this would negatively impact their ability to secure research funding/a PhD in future or their career progression. One nursing student told me that he was overhearing homophobic and transphobic conversations on his placement and was questioning whether this career was going to be right for him if colleagues held these opinions. This is not what I hoped my field would be like in 2024.” (Name not provided)

~

“LGBTQIA+ students are being exposed to an environment in which they are not mentally or physically safe because of the dominance of gender-exclusionary discourses. There are high levels of violence, exclusion and discrimination and as a result they are more likely to experience mental health difficulties. I am therefore concerned for their welfare and all this will have a knock-on effect on their ability to study, participate fully in the student experience and achieve their potential.” (Name not provided)

~

“I feel that trans and non-binary students are being placed in the middle of a toxic and unpleasant debate, that is geared towards imposing government and managerial views on sex and gender, rather than attempting to create a supportive and respectful atmosphere for recognising a diversity of views. Pronouns is one example. The Forstater case was useful in making the equivalence between views on gender/sex, and views on traditional marriage. People are at liberty to believe that same-sex marriage is a sin but, in my view, most HE employers would consider it unreasonable for someone with such

views to consistently call 'Mrs Jones' by her maiden name on the basis that they did not recognise her marriage. I would say similar issues apply for deliberately disregarding a student's stated preference on names and pronouns. There are several similar issues, which I think present a barrier to gender diverse students in engaging with academia.” (Name provided)

~

“I do not believe that the rights of transgender and non-binary students are protected to a satisfactory extent. I have witnessed numerous trans students drop out, because the university has been unable to make satisfactory adjustments for them, and has not provided a supportive and inclusive environment for trans people. At worst, I have witnessed colleagues actively discriminate against and bully trans students.” (Name not provided)

“Openly transphobic staff comporting themselves as so-called 'gender critical' advocates have been responsible for repeated incidents wherein students have been made to feel unsafe, uncomfortable in class, and uncertain of their teachers' objectivity in evaluation. Students, too, have incurred the harms associated with the chilling effect of overly litigious anti-trans voices in the media, the mainstreaming of transphobic rhetoric in the guise of so-called 'gender critical' feminism, and the complacency of authorities in the face of rising societal transphobia.” (Name not provided)

~

“I have many trans and non-binary students who are now really struggling with their wellbeing specifically because of the current polemical environment. I have had a number come to me incredibly upset that their lives are being used as a political football with little care for the fact they are human. Sunak's comments when Breanna (sic) Ghey's mother was in the House of Commons was a significant flashpoint. this results in a higher pastoral burden to ensure they have a safe space where they know they will be accepted - and anxieties if those same views get voiced by members of staff, as the impact of hearing that from a trusted lecturer could be devastating for them (resulting in withdrawal, non-attendance etc).” (Name not provided)

“Student union and student representations have reported that many trans and non-binary students have left/do not want to study at our institution.” (Name not provided)

One further response briefly commented that they had “seen professors and academics from various institutions be dismissive of or actively hostile towards students because of their advocacy for trans groups” and then commented at more length on the review itself.

One response was more positive.

“Trans students undoubtedly face barriers. However, in my experience so far, the university and fellow students have been supportive and accepting.” (Name provided)

Student experiences: FGEN template

Ten respondents used the FGEN template. This included the single student respondent, who used the FGEN template responses, with no additional detail. The FGEN template (submitted including original spelling errors) stated:

- Experiences of discrimination, harassment, bullying, rejection, lack support, name and pronoun recognition, lack training for staff, unsupportive/denying staff, lack safe(r) spaces, lack of trans-inclusive content in curriculum - fueled by the gender-exclusionary agenda
- Gender-exclusionary views have a knock on effect – it’s not just an attack on TNBGD folk, it echoes facism and is an attack on rights of LGBTQIA+ people, migrants, reproductive rights - and ultimately freedom and rights for all.
- Physical dangers - e.g., razor blades hidden behind anti-trans posters on campus.

It is important to note that claims that razor blades have been hidden behind ‘anti-trans’ posters or stickers have been made repeatedly by activists over several years. No such incident has ever been confirmed. This appears to be an urban myth designed to incite fear and hostility.

3.14 Barriers to research funding

Summary

- The anticipation of hostility has led some researchers to avoid applying for funding in this area.
- There is a perception that funders may be wary of funding gender-critical work, and ill-prepared to deal with hostile responses (internal and external) to gender-critical applications.

Thirty people provided a response under this heading. Of these, six respondents agreed with the gender-critical position and twenty-four disagreed. Of those who disagreed, fourteen provided an individual response, and ten provided a response using generic wording from the FGEN template.

Research funding: responses from those agreeing with the gender-critical position

Several responses regarding research funding from gender-critical academics focused on the perception that getting funding support would be unlikely.

“This relates to the chilling effect. There are many topics I would like to research and write about, but for which I do not think I would get internal funding support, let alone external funding (and I say this as someone who already has funding from the BA, Leverhulme, AHRC in the past).” (Name provided)

~

“It is impossible to quantify what might have happened had The OU protected the network and the staff. But, my personal plan was to submit a research grant proposal to look at the challenges facing the prison service from an organisational point of view of the then transgender prisoner placement policy – ie the challenges faced by governors, prison staff as well as prisoners. This proposal was never written because I was unable to do it due to a combination of mental health problems and then having to leave The Open University, pursue the case against them at the same time as starting a new job at Reading, establishing a new programme of Criminology and recruiting students and staff. But because of the very public nature of my harassment and bullying and public nature of the employment tribunal, I suspect that any application to the Ministry of Justice for access to prisons will now be denied. I raise this to just note the obvious – the unlawful actions of others have created a situation in which my name

and reputation long precede me. In (politically) sensitive areas of research – such as investigations into contentious areas of criminal justice policy - this acts as a barrier to access. At present, I have not tried to gain access or submit an application for funding because I feel there is absolutely no point.” (Professor Jo Phoenix)

For another, the impossibility of holding events on sex and gender posed a barrier.

“...we had some discussion of applying for a large grant for research on when and where sex matters, but I have held off on applying for this and have instead focussed my research grant activity on less controversial areas of my research as the thought of managing the inevitably on campus hostility that would surround any research events funded by such a grant has been too off putting. The ability to run cross-disciplinary research events are one of the central reasons for applying for research grant funding, so the practical impossibility of running such events is a huge disincentive to applying for research funding.” (Name provided)

One respondent discovered that a government ministry that is also a grant giving body was hosting hostile commentary about her on their internal web pages.

“I was advised that the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory held material on its internal website about me, repeating the unfair comments detailed above [accusations of transphobia]. Not only are these untrue and unfair allegations, but this is a grant giving body, and I could not see how I could ever apply to this organisation for funding and expect to be treated fairly when it is sharing this kind of information internally. After a Subject Access Request in 2023 one of the pages was removed, and after I was told anonymously that there was still inaccurate and unfair information about me on their web site, I approached them again and the second page was taken down. There was no explanation about how the second page was not picked up by the subject access request. Needless to say, that a government research funding body would treat research scientists this way is appalling.” (Name provided)

One respondent suggested that senior staff within a funding body were unprepared for the level of institutional capture and toxicity on this issue, and fearful to speak up.

“Bias in reviewer assessment of grant applications was evident as a major factor influencing rejection of the application by the funder. For example, the rejection letter stated, “There were also instances where the words ‘female’ and ‘woman’ seemed to be used interchangeably”

in a grant application proposing to investigate, "The extent, impacts and implications of de-sexing language in reproductive health communications for women in the UK"

The reviewers also said, "There was a need to more clearly define what was meant by 'de-sexing language'". However our grant application stated, "Clarity of terminology about sexed and de-sexed language is critical for this proposed study. Sexed language denotes the sex of the subject (i.e. woman/female and man/male). Language is de-sexed (a) when referring to body parts or functions, such as 'bodies with vaginas' or 'menstruators' or (b) with 'additive' language such as 'women and birthing people' which alters the referent of 'woman' from one that denotes biological sex to one that denotes gender identity, or (c) when generic terms are used (e.g. 'parents' or 'families' instead of 'mothers' or 'fathers') where the subject matter is sex-specific (e.g. breastfeeding)."

We spoke with the funding body and were told, "[REDACTED] the funding committee was quite a shock, actually, to me. I've never seen people react like that..." (Name provided)

One response (not quoted) related to a successfully funded project which had nevertheless faced barriers including a lack of sufficiently robust support within the university administration.

Research funding: responses from those disagreeing with the gender-critical position

Some individual responses from this group emphasised that they had faced no particular barriers to funding.

“I have not come across any barriers.” (Name provided)

~

“This survey is biased because you are asking only about barriers. I have been doing research which relates to sex, gender, sexuality and sexual health for [redacted] years and have never had any problem with funders (except challenges attributable to the competitive nature of funding applications)” (Name provided)

Others, however, perceived discriminatory views on the part of funders and reviewers. One who did not wish to be quoted cited that the small population involved deterred some funders, while another argued that research they had proposed had been dismissed as insufficiently scholarly or too populist due to a lack of understanding by those in other disciplines. Others commented that:

“If people approving research hold negative biased discriminatory views towards population of interest - TNBGD people (and in some cases deny the existence of such populations) get research approved is extremely hard.” (Name not provided)

~

“Funders unwilling to support grant proposals for research that include or benefit trans populations. previous submissions graded as “outstanding” by 2 reviewers but blocked from being awarded by remaining reviewer without appropriate reason and citing gender critical viewpoints.” (Name not provided)

~

“trans research deemed too political, institutional transphobia” (Name not provided)

~

“It is very difficult to get external funding for research that is led by or inclusive of trans and non-binary populations. One large funding grant that I submitted received three very positive and one very negative review. However, the very negative review was from a person with

gender exclusionary beliefs. This was enough to bring down the scores so that a study that could have provided well needed evidence missed out on being funded.” (Name not provided)

~

“Funding bodies are well-known to be hostile to progressive research on issues of gender and sex. It is much harder to get research funding in these areas, and there is widespread concern in my area that funding on trans and gender non-conforming people will be blocked by gender critical feminists.” (Name not provided)

Influences beyond the research system itself were also cited:

“Have experienced co-ordinated online complaints (twitter) from anti-trans organisations which resulted in a pause on research funding into trans experiences.” (Name not provided)

~

“There has been increasing pushback on willingness to fund trans-inclusive research and research around gender non-conforming experiences internally within the institution. This appears to be directly related to fears within university management of backlash from government ministers, from internal discussions.” (Name not provided)

Research funding: FGEN template

Ten respondents who disagreed with gender-critical views used the template supplied by FGEN, as shown here.

- Funders say they are interested in funding equity, inequality, inclusion and diversity research but when it comes down to it, they often won't (lip service, tokenistic). They are either too afraid of anti-trans/gender-exclusionary people or hold anti-trans views themselves.
- Some funders will not fund work that is too specific to one population, so you really have to spell out how research that is inclusive of the needs of TNBGD people, benefits the entire population. But even when you do spell it out, they often choose not to listen.
- For example, to get funding for TNBGD research, it is often necessary to expand the research other inclusion health groups who have different needs

3.15 Discrimination by administration or services

Summary

- The perception of discrimination by institutions can occur anywhere within the organisation, contributing to a wider chilling effect.
- Where senior staff have taken overtly discriminatory actions, this contributes to a lack of leadership and confidence.

Respondents were asked to give any examples of discrimination by university administration or services, such as IT, communications, human resources.

Twenty-nine people provided a response under this heading. Of these, ten agreed with the gender-critical position and nineteen disagreed. Of those who disagreed, nine provided an individual response, and ten provided only a response using generic wording from the FGEN template.

Administration or services: responses from those agreeing with the gender-critical position

One respondent in this group, who cannot be quoted, described being denounced repeatedly on social media by an administrator in the same institution working on equality and diversity. Another stated that they had been turned down for a volunteering opportunity within their institution after they informed them that they held gender critical views:

“... I was turned down as a prospective volunteer on the interfaith chaplaincy team ... after I told them that I was openly 'gender critical' on social media, under my own name... Apparently knowing that one member of the chaplaincy team didn't believe humans can change sex would make some students feel unsafe at the chaplaincy. I wrote and pointed out that there were sure to be some students at the university who shared my views, not least orthodox Jewish or Muslim women for whom the prevalence of gender-neutral toilets on campus was likely to be a problem, and that perhaps it would be useful for them to be represented... The response from their HR department was deeply unsatisfactory, reiterating that all staff and students had the right to feel safe, and completely failing to engage with my point that enforcing 'safety' by banning any expression of gender critical thought just discriminates against a different group of people.” (Name provided)

One respondent reported that:

“I found out by mere luck that someone in the IT-Department at [REDACTED] University had illegally added the private email address of one of my guests to a list of email addresses that are automatically blocked when they contact members of staff at my University. [The University] later apologised for this blatant violation of GDPR rights.”
(Name provided)

Another respondent wrote about the repeated delays in handling their complaint against their institution, for which they had engaged a solicitor.

One respondent expressed concern that senior academics and those with senior leadership roles had made public statements denouncing those in the institution with gender-critical views:

“...For any gender critical academics or professional service personnel this is very tricky because, there is a culture of fear, deplatforming, and stigma for holding beliefs worthy of respect in a democratic society. It is inappropriate for senior academics and/or professional service managers ... People holding such positions should conduct their daily work practices with professionalism, and not discriminate against junior personnel.” (Name provided)

One response related to concerns about how a professional institution had handled a complaint of transphobia, Another detailed the unwillingness of the management of a private professional organisation to help, after they were subject to complaints.

One respondent wrote about their attempts to encourage their institution to collect data on both sex and gender identity in staff surveys:

“I have been applying pressure for a few years to get the university to collect data on both sex and gender identity in staff surveys, as they were only collecting data on the latter. At first, they didn't budge and said they were just following Advance HE's guidelines. The very day Advance HE changed its guidelines and said it was good practice to collect both, I got straight onto HR and the EDI team to point this out. But it still took them a very long time to change things. Likewise, the personal information section on the staff data system requires people to say what your gender identity is and has an option 'prefer not to say'. I wanted them to add an option 'I have no gender identity' and that was a long battle!” (Name provided)

One respondent however commented, “Actually, my line managers and HR have been very supportive so far” (Name provided).

Administration or services: responses from those disagreeing with the gender-critical position

Respondents in this group reported a range of experiences. Several discussed the experience of engaging with administrative systems. One trans-identified respondent was concerned that they were being compelled to disclose their biological sex in surveys to adhere to HESA standards:

“I am concerned that myself and other trans people are being asked to disclose sensitive information in situations where it is not relevant. For a trans man like myself, who transitioned 20 years ago and who has been entirely perceived as male ever since, my gender identity as male is not sensitive information - everyone knows me as a man and male. Any question or survey (e.g. using the new HESA standards) that expects me to list myself as being female is collecting highly sensitive data about my personal and medical history that I may not want to share and that the university has no reasonable use for - my job does not have a GOR in this regard, and if I am entirely viewed as male, it makes sense for me to be considered as male for purposes like equal pay. I am concerned that guidance in this field is not recognising this, and is tending to go backwards in asking intrusive and unwelcome questions about my history. I have known people be put off applying for jobs in this context (e.g. where questions on sex are made compulsory, with guidance referring to biological or legal sex)” (Name provided)

Another respondent reported that administrative staff had been slow to process requests to update their identity documents:

“On multiple occasions it is taken administrative officials, technical support staff, and other organizations where I work inordinately long to make simple adjustments to allow for recognition and inclusion of non-cisgendered employees and students. Matter as mundane as needing an ID card with an appropriate photo and name/pronoun, being addressed with the correct name, pronoun, and honourific in email communication, and access to gender-appropriate inclusive washrooms and changing rooms have all been slow to arrive and often inadequate.” (Name not provided)

On the other hand, another respondent stated that IT had been very accommodating in changing names and ‘gender’ markers:

“IT have been great as far as I can tell, in accommodating name-changes and changes in gender markers.” (Name provided)

One response stated that the “gender-critical research network” within their institution was unique in being enabled to send university-wide emails without the possibility of individuals opting out.

Another raised the inclusion of news items they disagreed with on this subject being circulated to their work email account (it was unclear whether this was part of a general media cuttings service) and said that legal action used against them in the past prevented them objecting to this. They also argued there was an imbalance in which groups were listened to, as well as raising concerns about physical facilities and the IT system.

“In my own experience I have not been well supported by university administration or services. I have had to put up with news items about trans people from gender exclusionary beliefs/perspectives that I find offensive and invalidating coming directly into my work inbox. However, I am prevented from speaking out about how this impacts on me, as past attempts to speak out have resulted in complaints and legal action being taken out against me, others and/or the institution. There is also a discrepancy between whose voices/concerns are heard and taken seriously by HR. The concerns raised by trans and non-binary colleagues and allies were effectively silenced/ignored and sidelined by coordinated complaints from those with gender exclusionary views, who took an aggressive and legally threatening tone against the institution. There are inadequate facilities of trans people in our campus and the existing IT systems use an outmoded. The only choice we are left with is to leave the institution, which many trans and non-binary staff and students have done in droves.” (Name not provided)

One reported that they had been prevented from speaking to professional staff as a ‘trans awareness trainer’.

“On repeated occasions, HE professional services staff have wanted to invite me as a guest speaker or trans awareness trainer, but have had their requests blocked by senior managers who have explicitly said they are afraid of media hostility if my participation was revealed by an FOI request. One university tried not to pay me for work I had already done, for this stated reason, though they did eventually do so under threat of legal action.” (Name not provided)

Administration or services: FGEN template

The FGEN template used by ten respondents who disagreed with gender-critical views is shown below.

- TNBGD individuals face discrimination in shortlisting, hiring, promotion and retention.
- TNBGD individuals have significantly lower incomes and are more likely to be in poverty, unemployed or working part-time, when compared with cis individuals
- According to McKinsey and co, 2020:
 - Trans adults are twice as likely as cis adults to be unemployed.
 - Cis employees make 32% more money a year than trans employees, even when the latter have similar or higher education levels.
 - Trans staff feel far less supported in the workplace than their cis colleagues do. They report that it's more difficult to understand workplace culture and benefits, and harder to get promoted. They also feel less supported by their managers.
- Often trans individuals who successfully secure employment after transitioning often face challenges in finding positions that match their pre-transition work history and are in the same field they previously worked in.
- Inadequate support for TNBGD staff, students, and visitors (e.g., toilets and changing rooms)
- IT systems with restrictive gender categorisations, and do not accommodate an individuals' names and pronouns (or changes to), which leads to misgendering and discrimination.
- University communications can use language or imagery that excludes or erases TNBGD people and is cisnormative in nature.
- Researchers face challenges in having their research findings accurately represented and promoted by university communications channels due to bias or ignorance.

3.16 Disinvitations from projects or collaborations data

Summary

- Disinvitations and exclusion from previous networks were reported by some academics who agreed with gender-critical views.

Overall, twenty-three people provided a response under this heading. Nine respondents agreed with the gender-critical position and fourteen disagreed. Of those who disagreed, five respondents provided an individual response, and nine provided a response using generic wording from the FGEN template.

Disinvitations: responses from those agreeing with the gender-critical position

Some respondents referred to a lack of invitations to collaborate, rather than disinvitations. Three gender-critical respondents commented on this.

*“It is not so much disinvitations as not being asked in the first place.”
(Professor Sarah Pedersen).*

One respondent indicated that they were prevented from collaborating through ejection from an important society within their field.

Four respondents who agreed with gender-critical views reported disinvitations from pre-agreed collaborative *projects*.

“In 2019, the blog of the Institute of Art and Ideas removed an online symposium (“The current transgender debate polarizes Western societies like no other”) to which Holly Lawford-Smith and I had contributed, alongside Julie Bindel, and academics Robin Dembroff, Susan Stryker and Rebecca Kukla. These latter three contributors had complained publicly about “non-consensual co-platforming”, causing the organisers to remove it. The piece was later put up only with the first three contributors, including me.” (Kathleen Stock, former Professor of Philosophy, University of Sussex)

One respondent explained that she had invested considerable effort in assisting junior colleagues with a project on an unrelated topic before being ejected for her views on sex and gender.

“ ... I received a phone call from one of these colleagues informing me that they would like me to step down from the advisory board and did not wish to continue our collaborative work on the book series. The reason given for this was the fact that I had recently co-authored a short blog-piece ... on the threats to academic freedom from attempts to silence academics (most of whom were women) who expressed dissent from the prevailing orthodoxy in some academic circles on questions of sex and gender. I had also been a signatory to two letters in the Guardian and the Times expressing similar concerns about the climate of intimidation and harassment of "gender critical" feminists. I expressed my astonishment and disappointment, and commented on the irony of the convenors of a project ... conceived as taking a stance against unreflective, uncritical and orthodox intellectual positions, choosing to disassociate themselves from a colleague taking a dissenting position against what had become an ideological orthodoxy within academia. I requested that they put their reasons for asking me to step down in writing. They did not do so, nor did they, to the best of my knowledge, share them with the other members of the advisory board. While I had invested considerable time and energy in working on the monograph and series proposals, as a senior academic, the loss of a publication opportunity and the prestige of membership on an international advisory board for a book series in our discipline was not hugely damaging to my career. However, as I pointed out to my colleagues, this kind of action would have had - and indeed was having - far more serious implications for junior scholars.”
(Name provided)

While these examples related to disinvitations from other academics, other respondents reported external organisations disinviting them from collaboration/association.

“[...] national charitable organisation's response by email I'm sorry that we won't be able to support the development of [project] any further. As I said on the zoom [our national charitable organisation] is unequivocally a feminist and trans inclusive organisation, not least as we have a high proportion of transgender people within our organisation and community. Therefore we cannot support the application of the single sex exemption across a service, product or space.” (Name provided)

One respondent stated that they were given other reasons, which did not make sense to them, and they suspect that the real reason may have been their gender-critical beliefs:

“I was invited to be part of an editorial team for an international sociology journal. I have previously edited this journal 20 years ago. At the time I was initially invited I [REDACTED] and explained [REDACTED] would take a few weeks [...] I was told there was no rush and they would wait for me to get back to them. [...] I then told the other editors that I was someone who believed biological sex to be important in some contexts and that I wanted this to be known at the outset. [...] I was also clear that I had no problem working with others who felt differently, since as a journal editor and board member I have often reviewed and/or published work that I recognised had academic merits but did not represent my personal opinion. After a ridiculous set of email exchanges in which I asked point blank if it was my views that had led to my being disinvited, I was told that 'because of the delay' they had invited someone else and now did not need me. [...]” (Name provided)

Disinvitations: responses from those disagreeing with the gender-critical position

One respondent who disagreed with gender-critical views provided a specific example where an external organisation had opted not to work with them, suggesting that potential reputational damage was a factor.

“I met with an external organization with which I was hoping to work, with another colleague. When they realized that our work was being pilloried and misrepresented within coordinated transphobic evangelical campaigns, the organization opted not to continue the relationship with us for fear that the same would happen to them - even though our perspectives were essentially aligned in being trans inclusive and building on young people's own views”. (Name not provided)

The other comments provided here have been noted in other sections.

Disinvitations: FGEN template

The suggested FGEN template response, used in whole or part by the remaining ten respondents in this group, is shown below.

- Disinvitations have limited people's opportunities for career advancement, as collaborations and project involvement are often critical for gaining experience, building a professional reputation, and advancing in academia or other research fields.
- Coordinated campaigns and smears against, for example, trans inclusive Relationships and Sex Education providers have had chilling effects as schools and other organisations become anxious about being associated with them and education campaigns
- Disinvitations have isolated TNBGD researchers from networks, reduced their visibility and influence in their field.
- For those who work/are hired on short term research contracts, disinvitations lead to immediate financial instability and job insecurity.
- Rejection and exclusion have caused significant stress and anxiety, particularly because it is discriminatory and/or unjust.
- Persistent exclusion from collaborative opportunities leads to decreased motivation, lower job satisfaction, and a sense of futility about your career prospects.
- Disinvitations prevent TNBGD researchers from contributing their expertise to important projects, which then limits the validity of the work and its impact.
- Collaborations fosters innovation and creativity - excluding TNBGD researchers:
 - diminishes the diversity of perspectives and ideas
 - potentially limits the scope and impact of the research.
 - leads to a lack of representation and inclusivity, which are crucial for addressing a wide range of issues comprehensively and equitably.
 - Perpetuates biases and gaps in knowledge, reducing the overall quality and relevance of the research outcome, deprives projects of diverse insights, and hinders the development of new ideas and approaches.'

3.17 Other barriers

We received 32 submissions for this section. Of these, 13 respondents agreed with the gender-critical position and eighteen disagreed and we could not ascertain the views of one respondent. A further respondent did not have a discernible view but criticised the negativity of the review's premiss and wished to speak positively about a project they are involved with. Of the eighteen respondents who disagreed with gender-critical views, eight provided individual responses and ten submitted FGEN template responses.

We have excluded some comments which only provided some additional personal background or substantially repeated responses provided under the previous headings.

Other barriers: responses from those agreeing with the gender-critical position

One respondent made some suggestions for action from universities.

“Universities need to stop pandering to trans activists who stifle legitimate debate on this issue. This includes having measures in place to prevent students from disrupting free speech. They need to stop putting measures in place which prevent students from organising and discussing gender and sex, for example limiting attendance to staff/students and requiring expensive security provision. HR need to read and understand the implications of all the recent court cases: Forstater, Fahmy, Pheonix, Meade etc etc. They need to come out of stonewall and to defend free speech on campus, in teaching and outside of teaching. Students who make vexatious complaints about staff whose teaching they don't like should face some repercussions for their behaviour. University leaders need to grow a backbone.” (Name provided)

Some respondents provided further comment on the atmosphere in higher education or incidents that they had been involved in or witnessed.

“There is a general atmosphere within the university that one should simply not talk about these issues unless one agrees with Stonewall's approach. Colleagues have frequently said they "do not want to put their head above the parapet" on this issue. I have spoken publicly and have raised concerns with senior management. For a long time I either received no response, or when I did a response received dismissive responses which essentially said "this is college policy and

there is nothing you can do". These responses have on occasion also upbraided me for raising my concerns. Although the college does appear to be listening more, to date little concrete action has been taken. The only actions that I have succeeded in getting the college to change behaviours have been when they are provably unlawful: typically this has been training materials that misstate the law in some way. Raising concerns with senior managers who then either dismiss them or fail to act is extremely stressful and I worry about the impact it is having on my career. I feel that I have angered a number of senior colleagues and I simply do not know what impact this will have. I have been explicitly told by one senior colleague that I should talk about these issues less often because it looks bad. In addition, it is very unpleasant to constantly receive communications and see policies that run counter to one's personal beliefs." (Name provided)

~

"The way that I have come to reflect on the experiences outlined above, is that it represented a campaign of 'informal sanctioning' or 'below-the-radar-punishment'. On the surface, the College adhered to their notional legal obligations under the 1986 Education Act to uphold the principles of freedom of expression. In practice, under the surface, College managers enacted a systematic campaign of persecution. Although the speaker series continued for one more event, I have no doubt that a chilling effect was exerted. The fact that I was compelled to step down as HoD also functioned, as a warning to others not to venture onto the terrain that discussed issues relating to sex and gender. I wrote of my experiences here: <https://www.cieo.org.uk/research/university-of-fear/>. With the publication of the Cass Report in 2024, and all the subsequent revelations of the flaws in the treatment of gender questioning children, I feel that I was correct in seeking to uphold the principles of academic freedom, and in issuing the invitation to Dr Williams to speak. Moreover, the conclusions contained in the Cass Report, to my mind, further confirm that the actions of managers at King's College London were deeply unprofessional and unethical." (Professor Michael Rainsborough)

One used this section to welcome the research.

"I am so glad that someone is finally gathering all this information together. I feel the tide is finally turning a bit in universities, but this research could help that along. I daresay that this project will attract a

lot of flak and be condemned as open -sided, invalid, etc.” (Name provided)

One response was a comment about the data fields in a particular health IT system.

Other barriers: responses from those disagreeing with the gender-critical position

We received several lengthy comments here, which we reproduce in full. None recounted personal experience of barriers, but they do provide more insight into the thinking in this group of respondents. Some comments about the collection of data on sex appear to reflect the advice FGEN gave their members about responding to previous strand of this research, which dealt specifically with data collection, rather than this strand.

One respondent made a general point about data collection

“Using a gender binary approach for data collection may overlook the diversity and complexity of gender identities beyond the traditional male/female categorization. This method could exclude individuals who identify outside of the binary, such as non-binary, genderqueer, or genderfluid individuals. By adhering strictly to a binary model, there's a risk of erasing or marginalizing these identities, leading to incomplete or inaccurate data representation.” (Name not provided)

Another argued that there was too much misunderstanding about their discipline and unnecessary division.

“There seem to be a lot of misrepresentations of those researching and teaching in the field of gender - especially the notion that there is a particular 'gender ideology' which is subscribed to. Instead, we deal with the complexities and nuances of gendered lived experiences and try to deepen understanding of multi-layered intersectional inequalities, social identities and expressions. Through history and around the world there have been many societies which do not conform to a binary gender system based on anatomy and to try and reduce gender to this or to deny the existence of other identities and experiences leads only to partial, distorted knowledge and lack of understanding about lifeworlds. It is disappointing to see the small amount of progress made towards gender-inclusivity being undermined and I feel learning about gender in all its diversity in educational settings and beyond is imperative to creating listening, understanding and inclusion. I am also concerned about how gender-exclusionary positions are dividing feminism at a moment when there are important social justice goals (such as tackling unequal pay, gender-based violence and educational disparities) to be working towards. I hope in my lifetime to see bridges being built across the divides to create a better future.” (Name not provided)

Another respondent challenged the premiss of the research.

"I do not understand the premise that: "The loss of robust data on sex in the UK has raised concern." Sex is one of the most standard fields for data collection. I have never seen demographic data which does not include sex, and it is typically trans status and gender identity which are missing fields (alongside other demographic data such as ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation etc). It is vital that we have access to accurate data on sex, trans status, and gender identity as researchers. In humanities I imagine this is less important and will depend on the focus of each research project - but even then the presenters I've heard always are clear about "trans man" vs "cisgender man" etc. rather than flattening these groups into one category as they are interested in differences between them. On that point, as a researcher I am also bemused by the vitriol I've experienced when using the word "cisgender". I need to use this term to be specific about the population I'm discussing, much like heterosexual (which I've never had similar abuse for using), so I'm concerned about that in terms of research accuracy if attempts to censor this kind of accurate language continue. One other point of clarification on the questions below. You state that "Gender-critical beliefs are defined in law as the belief that biological sex is real, important, immutable, and not to be conflated with gender identity." I do not agree with how gender critical beliefs are expressed, as I think these flatten the systemic oppression of women by patriarchy and reduce us to our biological characteristics. As a health researcher who looks at the biological markers of trans people who have accessed gender affirming care, the idea of "biological sex" isn't very helpful when the physiology (including blood work, risk etc.) of my trans patients is measurably different to others of their sex. There are also differences between cisgender people of the same sex, and I am concerned by how this simplistic view of "immutable biology" may impact the quality of health research if taken up widely. However myself, my colleagues who research trans topics, and I don't doubt most trans people themselves, would agree that "biological sex is real and important", and that it shouldn't be "conflated with gender identity". In fact, not conflating sex with gender is central to understanding what it means to be trans or non-binary! It saddens me that people who claim the gender critical label frequently direct so much hate towards myself and my colleagues when our beliefs only differ on technicalities such as where we believe inequality stems from (them: sex, a universal truth defines everything; me: gender as a relational system of oppression that is culturally and historically specific), and who we

focus on and seek to hold accountable for our systemic oppression as women (them: trans people, me: patriarchy).” (Name not provided)

One challenged the way ‘sex’ and other terms were used in the research as “an example of flawed data collection methodology”.

“It is very unclear from the PIS what this survey is actually about. It says "The loss of robust, standardised data on sex in the UK has raised concern among a range of stakeholders, including academics and policymakers. " but there is no indication as to WHO has "raised concern", what that concern might be, and what kind of "loss" is referred to. I am concerned that "standardised data on sex" essentially "erases" trans people from the record, and this is an important concern, as trans people deserve to be as well served by good data as cis people, and any approach to data collection that assumes that their mental and physical healthcare profiles will be typical of those who share the same legal sex assignment at birth is not just bad science, but unethical. However, from the framing of the survey questions, my impression is that the "concerns" referred to in the PIS are not these, and that this survey is, itself an example of flawed data collection methodology regarding research on sex and gender. As an example, I am asked, below, for my "sex" and only two choices are provided. There is no way of knowing whether this is supposed to refer to my karyotype, the information on my birth certificate, or what. There is no option for "prefer not to say", or "other", which means the only way you can collect data on "sex" in this very survey by treating non-responses to this item as "missing data". That data will not be "missing at random". it will be selectively missing from respondents who are trans, or intersex, or, who, like myself, do not consider "sex" a simple question biologically (even though for me, it happens to be fairly straightforward, despite my non-functioning gonads). And yet later you ask if I am "trans", This survey is inherently biased against participation by trans respondents who are likely to feel uncomfortable either responding, or not responding, to the "sex" question, and yet are notionally "included" by virtue of the trans question. I find this unethical, and borderline dishonest. But so you do have the information: I was assigned female at birth; I identify as a woman; I no longer have any functioning gonads. "Gender Critical" question: I note that you ask for a single response as to whether I agree to a position that contains several elements. So to clarify: "Gender-critical beliefs are defined in law as the belief that biological sex is real," I agree that biological sex is real. It is also complex, in that biological sex differentiation is a multidimensional developmental process.

"important, " Yes, biological sex is important. "immutable," Some aspects of biological sex are "immutable" (e.g. karyotype, although even karyotype may not be uniform throughout a person's cells) but most are highly "mutable": biological sex differentiation and biological sex characteristics are the result of a lifelong developmental process, with certain periods (in utero; puberty; menopause etc) in which these characteristics change markedly under the influence of endogenous hormones, and can also change under the influence of exogenous hormones, as I know from my personal, and welcome, experience of HRT. "and not to be conflated with gender identity." Biological sex is certainly not to be conflated with gender identity, which is why it is so important that when a person's gender identity is at odds with aspects of their biological sex, their gender identity should be respected. It is, after all, their IDENTITY. Which is not to say that gender identity does not itself have a biological substrate - in my view we are biological beings and our "identity" has its counterpart in the neural mechanisms by which we form that identity. "Feminist ally" question: Yes, I am a feminist, and an ally of all those who are disadvantaged by the "patriarchy". The disadvantaged includes all women, including trans women; trans men; gay men; lesbians; gender non-conformists, and anyone who deviates from the default potent male archetype. To summarise: This survey is a classic example of the very kind of poor quality data collection methodology that I find so problematic - questions that are framed so as to literally erase/exclude views and responses that do not fit the researcher's framing, and therefore require a long free-text response to address. However, I appreciate that you did, in fact, include such a free-text opportunity. I hope what I have written will help you design better data collection instruments for any future survey on research into sex and gender."
(Name provided)

Three responses were concerned that the research would not attract responses from what one described as "a position of trans inclusion", that awareness of the research would be skewed and it would not look at "how those with so-called gender-critical views are silencing dissent within academic institutions."

Other barriers: FGEN template

The FGEN template, as used by ten respondents who disagreed with the gender-critical position, is shown below.

- 'Call self gender "critical" when there is no critical part thinking whatsoever, complete exclusion and discrimination
- Relentless attacks include: Cass Report, changes to kids gender services, and reviews of adult gender services, changes to NHS constitution, laws regarding same-sex toilets in new buildings
- British media and politicians using TNBGD people as scapegoats to distract from
 - Brexit, handling of the COVID pandemic, cost of living crisis, failings in our police system etc.
- Legal issues:
 - The laws in this country go against International Human Rights Standards, the UN recommends that legal gender recognition procedures should be based on self-determination by the individual, a simple administrative process and should not require individuals to fulfil abusive requirements, such as medical certification - which is a requirement in the UK (gender recognition certificate).
 - The UN also states that minors should also have access to recognition of their gender identity - again, this is not the case in the UK where you have to be 18 or over to get a gender recognition certificate.
 - There are no laws protecting non-binary people.
 - People have no dignity in death - if a person doesn't have a gender recognition certificate, they get deadnamed and misgendered on death certificate
 - And what make all this worse is what little rights TNBGD people do have, the gender-exclusionary movement/individuals are actively trying to take away basic rights, as evidenced by Cass report, changes to kids gender services, and reviews of adult gender services, changes to NHS constitution, laws regarding same-sex toilets in new buildings (can't even pee in safety).'

3.18 Testimony from Professor Michele Moore

Professor Michele Moore prepared the following speaker notes, for a talk given at the Free Speech Union (FSU) on 9 July 2024. The event was titled ‘The After the Cass Review: Free Speech Lessons from the Tavistock and Beyond’.²⁵⁰

Professor Moore addressed the following issues: ‘How has the treatment of this issue within academia deviated from good academic practice? Your experience of universities, of academic publishing, of the impact of activists? (Legal threat by the Tavistock against your second book). Personal impact on you/your role in this struggle for truth.’

“To answer that question will need to illustrate something of what has happened to me in the academy, going right back to 2014 when I first started to raise concerns about these issues.

I realised that we had reached a critical cultural moment through a combination of things that were being brought to my attention within the academy, but also within my own front room as young ones in my own life were beginning to describe ideas they were being taught in school as fact e.g., about biological sex being changeable, about trans people having always existed, telling me that children experiencing psychological discomfort with their bodies could have automatic access to medicalisation, that parents didn’t need to be told if a child wanted to present as the opposite sex in school .. and increasingly that children in their classes were transitioning, lots of them without their parents knowing.

I was working with Heather Brunskell-Evans at the time and she and I realised the need to analyse what was going on and to evaluate the evidence base which might justify such teaching in schools ... quickly found – as we had suspected – a complete lack of a credible evidence base – an absence of any high-quality research-led foundation for such teaching but very deep ideological creep in schools

We realised that a very serious conversation had to be started.

²⁵⁰ Details of the event can be accessed here:

<https://freespeechunion.org/event/after-the-cass-review-free-speech-lessons-from-the-tavistock-and-beyond/#:~:text=She%20is%20the%20co%2Deditor,library%2C%20followed%20by%20Inventing%20Transgender>

As I started it two very junior colleagues wrote to me saying they would seek to disrupt my career, particularly my Editorship of the leading journal in my field, if I did not comply with their demand for uncritical advocacy of transgender ideology. I had never encountered such threats before.

At the same time, in a different university, complaints were being made about Heather's views and we both became aware that daring to challenge any aspect of transgender ideology in the academy would result in ostracization, bullying, harassment and threats of being forced out of our jobs.

But she and I were also working at the time to support academics in peril and at risk of persecution over free speech. A central value in our work had long been to promote tolerance and dialogue between free-thinking people even in the most difficult of circumstances

And so our response was to cohere a community of people who wanted to critically discuss what was happening.

We knew that any response had to be scholarly and had to raise the full range of stakeholder voices. In 2016 we organised a secret meeting of academics, practitioners, people with experience of transitioning, parents of trans identifying children from across the UK and some from US. We decided, at this meeting that we would bring out the first book that would raise awareness of the lack of evidence for gender medicine and explore the risks that an uncritical approach to embedding gender ideology in our schools could have on the lives of children and young people. We agreed that we would bring out this book in our real names. This turned out to be a hugely significant decision / moment.

So the first book 'Transgender Children and Young People: Born in Your own Body' was published by Cambridge Scholars a small academic publisher. Though the book was calling for the protection of children and young people, there was a febrile response. There was a campaign to post vexatious reviews on Amazon, there were hostile reviews everywhere you looked, it was quickly banned from the Tavistock library. And colleagues we had thought of as critical, thinking people somehow allowed our call for an evidence base to slide out of the window, to be replaced by a rhetoric of victimhood in which anything critical said about transgender ideology was taken as an egregious affront. It was being demanded of us that transgender ideology must be uncritically accepted and reproduced as fact.

By now we had to have security guards in order to speak, we were banned from various universities and civic venues [it was reported in the Times that U of Edinburgh cancelled me saying they could not organise enough security staff if I were to go there] - routinely no-platformed, there were demonstrations and headlines wherever we went e.g., Bristol, Sheffield, Newcastle. We were frightened. We were unused to a world of protests wherever we wanted to speak, unused to masked people wielding baseball bats, blocking our entry, police vans, security details and so on.

But two things happened; 1. whistleblowers from gender clinics including the Tavistock wanted to talk to us and 2. parents, worried teachers and clinicians and most importantly detransitioners all started contacting us for help to mobilise their own resistance.

We decided the only possible response was to bring out a second book.

A very brave community of contributors, including people here, agreed to contribute to this second book. Just as it was about to come out, we received a letter from the Tavistock's solicitors who somehow had wind that the second book was coming. They employed solicitors to write to us demanding to see the manuscript and veto its content. We refused to hand the manuscript over. They wrote repeatedly, and I quote one of their letters to share with you that their exact words were chilling:

'this letter gives fair warning of the potential consequences that may follow if you continue to decline to engage with our client (i.e. The Tavistock) in a cooperative fashion'

We were very shocked. This left the publishers Cambridge Scholars in a terrible dilemma over whether to bring the book out. We were determined that the book needed to come out but had no money to access the kind of legal support we would need to go up against the Tavistock. We knew we stood to lose our homes if a legal battle ensued. The Tavistock had a sort of hubris about themselves as if they were untouchable. We were looking over the edge of the cliff if we were to bring this book out. Then somehow, we found allies, a barrister and a solicitor came forward to work for us pro bono. They restored the publisher's confidence for bringing out the book, our contributors who feared their own homes could also be on the line stood with us. It was a terrifying period of several months, the campaigns against us were at fever pitch. Right at the last minute threats from the Tavistock simply evaporated and so the book appeared.

The second book was very powerful. We had brought the voices of detransitioners now firmly into view and between the two books started to establish the first international network of detransitioners. We had mobilised gender critical parents, professionals and detransitioners across Sweden, Finland and Norway, the UK, US and by book two Australia.

We had succeeded in putting gender medicine and transgender ideology under the spotlight and crowds were building to stand with us.

But the consequences have been harrowing.

All through this within academia universities have deviated from good academic practice. They have been so afraid of transgender ideologists and activism that they have closed down academic thinking in this area and in so doing compromised the very nature of the academy itself. All the oxygen is taken up by ideologists.

I had seen and provided evidence of harm to children and young people. Ethically I could not move away from it now.

But it was I who would be sanctioned.

I have been treated appallingly by several universities, and this has had a devastating impact on my health, career and livelihood.

Early on I had a research association at the University of Oxford (Nuffield patient safety Academy) which was abruptly ended with the focus of my work said to be 'a possible distraction' (to patient safety??) despite overwhelmingly strong support from colleagues who wanted it to go ahead and to be part of it.

I was ghosted at the University of Essex where I held an Honorary Chair - during the period when Jo Phoenix and Rosa Freedman were also being harassed there

And at London Southbank University where I worked full time it has been accepted that the University failed to protect me from sustained and targeted harassment related to my protected characteristic of holding (or being perceived to hold) gender critical views.

Harassment there started from the day of my appointment, before I had even taken up post.

When I arrived, as Professor and Head of Centre for Social Justice and Global Responsibility, I was given a kitchen annexe in which to

work rather than an office or space in the open plan Deanery to which I had been appointed.

A couple of weeks into the job someone in the HR department made unfounded suggestions that there might be inconsistencies on my CV, suggesting (wrongly) that I might need to be fearful about my appointment.

I realised I was being excluded from the senior leadership team.

I discovered my new colleagues led by the UCU were openly organising a campaign of harassment against me, including petitioning for my removal, threatening those who did not sign the petition, treating me with hostility, seeking to bully and embarrass me on group email chains and in meetings.

It was upheld that the treatment I suffered from day one, at the hands of colleagues including UCU representatives was “offensive and intimidating” but the University failed to take steps to address it.

The university tried to blame me for the harassment, saying that I should have “been prepared for it”.

The harassment was extreme.

I was afraid to work in my kitchen annexe which had no lock on the door. I was afraid to walk between university buildings, I became afraid to stand on the platform when waiting for my train home.

The University, instead of supporting me and preventing the harassment to which I was being subjected, added to that harassment, sought to silence me and crush my appointment.

These practices quite obviously curtail freedom of speech and academic freedom; they prevent gender critical beliefs being expressed by academics in the course of our work. They are unlawful. They endanger the wellbeing of our children and young people.

It is clearly time for the leading universities who are serious about children’s futures to seize this moment to appoint and support brave and principled academics who are not afraid to pursue evidence over ideology and to defend academic freedom in order to protect the interests and futures of children and young people at all costs.

It is time for Vice-Chancellors to find the courage to maintain their universities as spaces which welcome diverse views and where an

expansive and pluralistic intellectual climate to serve the futures of children and young people can prevail.

It is time for University's to reestablish respectful, collegiate and systematic understandings of evidence-based theory and practice that will impact on the lives of children and young people in the full range of education, clinical and community settings.

I have said that I will not trade my silence for survival but that makes me sound braver than I am and in the academic climate of today I have been deprived of my job and livelihood in order to do this work. (That will not stop me).

As gender critical academics who care about children's lives and wellbeing, if we don't push for academic freedom now, then when?

If not you, who?

Last night an ally reminded me there is an immensely important principle here, which is 'Feel the fear and do it anyway'.

Appendix 1: Open letters, circulars and statements denouncing gender-critical individuals and views

This appendix shows over fifty examples of open letters, circulars, and statements opposing gender-critical individuals' views and materials, published between 2015 and 2024. The material is structured chronologically, with a brief overview of the background circumstances provided for each item. The appendix also references a range of open letters from academics and others in support of the free expression of gender-critical views (these are linked in the footnotes rather than reproduced in full). These differ from the main body of material shown in the appendix, insofar as they typically seek to allow dialogue and defend free speech principles, rather than to silence or denounce particular individuals or events. Examples include a 2015 letter to the Observer,²⁵¹ a 2018 letter to the Guardian,²⁵² and a 2021 letter to the Times.²⁵³ Gender-critical academics have also written open letters on substantive issues of public debate.

Taking an overview of the main body of material in the appendix, a number of observations can be made. Firstly, the chronology shows that calls for censorship and cancellation in relation to sex and gender identity date back at least a decade. A petition published in 2015, which gained nearly 3,000 signatures, urged the University of Cardiff to cancel a lecture by Professor Germaine Greer.

Second, these public calls are weighted to a particular worldview, with arguments for the relevance of sex in policy and law typically portrayed as denying the 'existence' of people with trans identities. For example:

²⁵¹ The Observer (2024), *We cannot allow censorship and silencing of individuals*, Letters, 15 February 2024.

<https://www.theguardian.com/theobserver/2015/feb/14/letters-censorship>

²⁵² The Guardian (2018), *Academics are being harassed over their research into transgender issues*, 16 October 2018.

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/oct/16/academics-are-being-harassed-over-their-research-into-transgender-issues>

²⁵³ The Times (2021), *We will not bow to trans activist bullies on campus*, Letters, 17 October 2021.

<https://www.thetimes.com/comment/article/we-will-not-bow-to-trans-activist-bullies-on-campus-5hb6sjxc6>

‘an area of which we feel should not be up for discussion or debate is the existence of Trans/nonbinary communities and identities. Being Trans/nonbinary is not a topic for debate: it is a reality...’²⁵⁴

‘Trans rights are not an issue of ideology, nor is the existence of trans people a hypothetical, philosophical debate.’²⁵⁵

‘The very title of her forthcoming publication with OUP [Gender-critical feminism] is an anti-trans dog whistle: a turn of phrase designed to sound academic that serves instead as a rallying cry for people who believe that trans people do not and should not exist.’

We are not aware of a body of equivalent public-facing material calling for individuals who disagree with gender-critical views to be no-platformed or removed from their positions, or for events to be cancelled. Some of the material reproduced in the appendix was provided by respondents to the review who agreed with gender-critical views. We did not receive any equivalent evidence from respondents who disagreed with gender-critical views.

Third, In the case of open multi-signatory letters, it is clear that many signatories have no locus in the UK higher education system. Many of the letters shown in the appendix are lengthy, and the tone is typically hyperbolic. Analysis of an open multi-signatory letter objecting to the awarding of an OBE to Kathleen Stock suggests that over half of the signatories (55%) were based in North America.

Fourth, claims that signatories represent a particular body of expertise can be difficult to verify, particularly when a letter gains hundreds or thousands of signatures. Some multi-signatory letters are signed without any details of the signatories’ institutional affiliation, academic position, or subject area. A letter organised by a philosophy PhD student based in California objecting to calls to collect data on biological data on sex in the UK censuses claimed the signatories comprised ‘an international team of scientists with extensive expertise collecting and quantitatively analyzing high quality data from human participants’. This description was not supported by analysis of the signatories. Rather, the letter can be better understood as a reaction to media coverage of the UK censuses by Californian university-based campaigners, who misunderstood the nature of the arguments being put forward. Relatedly, it can be

²⁵⁴ *Open letter to the Vice Chancellor*, 18 December 2019. Cited in The Reindorf Review, page 98. <https://www.essex.ac.uk/-/media/documents/review/events-review-report-university-of-essex-september-2021.pdf>

²⁵⁵ University of Cambridge SU LGBT+ Campaign (2022), *Statement on Upcoming Helen Joyce Event*, 13 October 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=3220269814852997&set=a.1563372067209455>

difficult or impossible to identify signatories. Signatories to a letter objecting to the appointment of Simon Fanshawe OBE as University of Edinburgh Rector include 'Annie', 'Feliz' and 'Christopher C'.²⁵⁶

It is difficult to assess the impact of the material documented here. On one level, letters that gather a large number of unidentifiable or non-expert signatories might readily be dismissed. At another level, these letters can be seen to have a cumulative impact, adding to the overall weight of material directed at a particular individual or event, branding the targets as 'controversial' figures. The personal impacts of mobbing campaigns, including the type of material shown in this appendix upon targeted individuals is well-documented. Descriptions of individuals or groups with gender-critical views as anti-trans and hateful also have a personal impact. Some institutions have taken measures to remove this type of material from institutional hosted webpages. Some campaigns calling for events or individuals to be cancelled have been successful. These include Dame Jenni Murray withdrawing from a lecture at Oxford University in 2018, the cancellation of an event with Professor Jo Phoenix in December 2019, and the twice-cancelled screening of the film *Adult Human Female* at the University of Edinburgh. Events that do go ahead often require stringent security arrangements, sometimes including police in attendance in addition to university security staff. The overall impact is to contribute to a chilling effect, creating barriers and disincentives for potential event organisers.

²⁵⁶ Multi-signatory letter on the appointment of Simon Fanshawe as Rector. *Open Letter on appointment of new Rector* (undated).

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ARVPGVu18tbrb0BQFQix-FQjFdBhnu_QFNEoyTQTli0/edit?tab=t.0

2015

2015-1 Professor Germaine Greer lecture, University of Cardiff

The following petition was organised by the Women's Officer at the University of Cardiff Students' Union and hosted on the change.org website. The petition, which gained nearly 3,000 signatures,²⁵⁷ urged the University of Cardiff to cancel a lecture by Professor Germaine Greer on 'Women and Power' in the 20th century.²⁵⁸ The lecture went ahead, with university security guards and uniformed police in attendance.²⁵⁹

Online petition, 22 October 2015

Cardiff University: Do not host Germaine Greer

On the 18th November 2015, writer and academic Germaine Greer is scheduled to deliver a lecture at Cardiff University entitled 'Women & Power: The Lessons of the 20th Century'.

Greer has demonstrated time and time again her misogynistic views towards trans women, including continually misgendering trans women and denying the existence of transphobia altogether.

Trans-exclusionary views should have no place in feminism or society. Such attitudes contribute to the high levels of stigma, hatred and violence towards trans people - particularly trans women - both in the UK and across the world.

While debate in a University should be encouraged, hosting a speaker with such problematic and hateful views towards marginalised and vulnerable groups is dangerous. Allowing Greer a platform endorses her views, and by extension, the transmisogyny which she continues to perpetuate.

Universities should prioritise the voices of the most vulnerable on their campuses, not invite speakers who seek to further marginalise them.

We urge Cardiff University to cancel this event.

²⁵⁷ Change.org (2015), *Cardiff University: Do not host Germaine Greer*, 22 October 2015.
<https://www.change.org/p/cardiff-university-do-not-host-germaine-greer>

²⁵⁸ BBC News (2015), *Calls to ban Germaine Greer lecture over trans comments*, 23 October 2015.
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-south-east-wales-34613148>

²⁵⁹ Guardian (2015), *Germaine Greer gives university lecture despite campaign to silence her*, 18 November 2015.
<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/nov/18/transgender-activists-protest-germaine-greer-lecture-cardiff-university>

This open letter, published in the Oxford Student newspaper, was signed by University of Oxford 'Liberation group' representatives.²⁶⁰ The letter condemned a previous multi-signatory letter to the Observer newspaper that stated, 'We call on universities and other organisations to stand up to attempts at intimidation and affirm their support for the basic principles of democratic political exchange'.²⁶¹ The Liberation groups letter asked 'all of the signatories who are members of Oxford University to retract their signatures and to make public apologies for adding to the discrimination against sex workers and trans people within our community'.

Open letter, 19 February 2015

An open letter from Oxford liberation groups to The Observer signatories

'On Sunday 15th of February an open letter was released in *The Observer* calling for an end to what it described as "attempts at intimidation" and "silencing" by students campaigning against trans and sex worker exclusionary activists on university campuses. We as students have a right to decide who is welcome in our homes and the presence of people that see trans and sex workers' bodies as merely academic talking points rather than as the lived realities of members of our community adds to the discrimination faced by these groups every day. We are not asking that these people be censored and, of course, we do not have the power to censor them. However, we are requesting that they do not voice these damaging views on our campuses and, consequently, in our homes.

The letter claims that the trans and sex worker exclusionary activists in question "have never advocated or engaged in violence against any group of people" and ridicules the idea that the presence of someone who holds these views is "a threat to a protected minority group's safety". In doing this, the authors have ignored repeated attempts to demean and disregard the validity of trans and sex worker lives. We believe that it *is* violence when Germaine Greer announces "I don't believe in transphobia", or when Rupert Read describes trans women as "a sort of 'opt-in' version of what it is to be a woman". These are violent acts both in themselves and in their perpetuation of a culture in which physical and sexual violence against trans people and sex workers is both extremely high – around 22% of sex workers in the UK have experienced an attempted rape (WHO) and around half of trans people have experienced sexual violence (FORGE) – and

²⁶⁰ The Oxford Student (2015), *An open letter from Oxford liberation groups to The Observer signatories*, 19 February 2015.
<https://www.oxfordstudent.com/2015/02/19/an-open-letter-from-oxford-liberation-groups-to-the-observer-signatories/>

²⁶¹ The Observer (2015), *We cannot allow censorship and silencing of individuals*, 15 February 2015.
<https://www.theguardian.com/theobserver/2015/feb/14/letters-censorship>

often ignored – only one in five LGBTQ survivors get help from service providers (NCVC/NCAVP). Julie Bindel's 'questioning' of the validity of trans healthcare is a particularly potent example of this, as it has directly impeded access to life-saving treatments such as hormone therapy which decreases suicidal ideation of trans people from 30% to 8% post-transition (Murad et al., 2010). Moreover, when Bindel characterises sex workers as living "chaotic, drug-abusing lifestyles, controlled by pimps", she adds to the stigmatisation of the one in twenty students who are sex workers (Evans, Judith 2013).

By mischaracterizing these anti-trans and anti-sex worker activists as martyrs for the feminist cause, the *Observer* letter validates a discourse that makes some peoples' lived experiences of discrimination into something that is up for debate. This is in the face of the overwhelmingly large platform often given to these minority views, with anti-trans and anti-sex worker feminists appearing in high profile publications such as the New Statesman (Glosswitch / Sarah Ditum) and The Guardian (Julie Bindel) on a regular basis.

In a world that consistently devalues the lives of sex workers and trans people it is unsurprising that this article exists, and we are no way suggesting that the authors do not have the right to believe or publish such things. However, we are particularly disappointed to note that a number of the signatories are academics here at Oxford University. When we live in a world where only 20% of trans students feel safe on UK campuses (NUS 'Beyond the Straight and Narrow') and police invite journalists along to the raids of sex workers' homes (Guardian 11/12/13), the signing of this open letter sends out a clear message to trans students and students who are in the sex industry that they are unwelcome at Oxford University. Furthermore, as these members of staff are variously involved in student welfare, this letter is particularly worrying as it suggests that student sex workers and students questioning their assigned genders may not receive the care that they deserve from their tutors.

As such, we condemn the open letter and ask all of the signatories who are members of Oxford University to retract their signatures and to make public apologies for adding to the discrimination against sex workers and trans people within our community.

[Redacted] Vice-President (Women), Oxford University Student Union (OUSU)

[Redacted] Trans Representative, OUSU Women's Campaign; Trans Representative, Oxford University LGBTQ Society

[Redacted] President, Oxford University LGBTQ Society

[Redacted] Graduate Women's Officer, OUSU

[Redacted] LGBTQ Officer; OUSU Chair of OUSU LGBTQ Campaign

[Redacted] Trans Representative, National Union of Students (NUS) LGBT Campaign Committee

[Redacted] Women's Campaign Officer, OUSU; OUSU Women's Campaign Committee; Oxford University LGBTQ Society Executive

2015-3 Julie Bindel, Cambridge Festival of Ideas

This open letter to the Cambridge Festival of Ideas was organised by the University of Cambridge Women's Campaign and LGBT+ groups.²⁶² The letter objected to the invitation of Julie Bindel to speak on the subject of censorship.²⁶³

Later in 2015, the University of Manchester Student Union prevented Bindel from speaking at a Free Speech and Secular Societies event, stating that she was 'flagged as potentially in breach of [their] safe space policy'.²⁶⁴ Writing about her own experiences and those of other women, in a Guardian article, Bindel described the no-platform campaign on university campuses as 'a gift to the misogynistic "men's rights" movement'.²⁶⁵

Multi-signatory open letter, Facebook, 29 June 2015

As members of Cambridge University and of the wider Cambridge community, we wish to express our deepest concerns about the invitation of Julie Bindel to speak at your event, "Hidden voices: censorship through omission." Especially in the context of an event intended to explore the more subtle operations of censorship of free speech, we are surprised at the choice to invite someone whose views perpetuate a culture that contributes in and of itself to the silencing of minority voices.

We are disappointed that Ms Bindel is, yet again, being given the opportunity to portray any critiques of her discriminatory attitudes towards trans women, sex workers, and other marginalised people as 'attacks on

²⁶² Make No Assumptions (2015), *An Open Letter to the Cambridge Festival of Ideas*, 29 June 2015, Facebook.

<https://www.facebook.com/makenoassumptions/posts/an-open-letter-to-the-cambridge-festival-of-ideas-as-members-of-cambridge-univers/1653116511577772/>

²⁶³ University of Cambridge (2015), *Cambridge Festival of Ideas - Hidden voices: Censorship through Omission*.

<https://www.smhr.sociology.cam.ac.uk/events/FestivalofIdeas>

²⁶⁴ The Manchester Tab (2015), *SU bans Julie Bindel from speaking at uni free speech event*, 6 October 2015.

<https://archive.thetab.com/uk/manchester/2015/10/06/su-bans-julie-bindel-from-speaking-at-uni-13938>

²⁶⁵ Bindel, J. (2015), *No platform: my exclusion proves this is an anti-feminist crusade*, 9 October 2015, The Guardian.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/oct/09/no-platform-universities-julie-bindel-exclusion-anti-feminist-crusade>

free speech', and that those critics are not being given any adequate means of reply.

There is a pervasive tendency to accuse those from marginalised groups who criticise oppressive discourse of being censorious. This tendency fails to recognise both the power dynamics that too often provide such discourse with multiple and prestigious platforms, and the ways in which it perpetuates the silencing of certain voices. The wish to keep some places free from hateful and discriminatory speech, and the right to criticise that speech, is framed as an issue of censorship and freedom of expression. Considering the many platforms of those invited to speak at these events, compared with the underrepresentation of those who are directly marginalised by their words, it is clear that this is a gross misrepresentation.

We wish to highlight our concern that groups of people who suffer discrimination and prejudice are being asked to be 'respectful' of those perpetuating that discrimination and prejudice, and only ask as meekly and politely as possible to be treated as full and equal human beings. Accordingly, we invite you to consider in more depth whose voices you are privileging, whose you are silencing, and the way in which the structure of this event plays into imbalances of power that result in the censorship of trans women and other marginalised groups.

Signed,

CUSU Women's Campaign
CUSU LGBT+
Make No Assumptions

If you would like to sign this open letter, please fill in your name here:

https://docs.google.com/.../1GvJphb_5f27ENwL0.../viewform

For more information on Julie Bindel's writing, a blog post with links under content warnings is here:

<https://makenoassumptionscambridge.wordpress.com/.../an.../>

2016

2016-1 Gay rights activist Peter Tatchell

In 2016 the National Union of Students (NUS) LGBT representative, refused to share a conference platform with LGBT activist Peter Tatchell. The NUS LGBT representative accused Tatchell of racism and transphobia,²⁶⁶ and in correspondence with the event organisers, cited Tatchell's signing of an open letter in 2015 that had defended free speech.

The following open letter was hosted on the website of an academic at the University of Western Sydney,²⁶⁷ with a linked press release that directed enquiries to a Professor at Goldsmiths, University of London.²⁶⁸ The letter gained 165 signatures and was republished in Pink News.²⁶⁹ Criticising Tatchell's response to the NUS LGBT representative, it stated "No-platforming," particularly at universities, has become the object of a moral panic in the British media.' Pink News also published a response from Tatchell in the same article.

Multi-signatory open Letter, 22 February 2016

Open Letter on Peter Tatchell, Censorship, and Criticism

I am hosting this open letter on Peter Tatchell, Censorship, and Criticism written by concerned activists, writers and scholars. The letter has been

²⁶⁶ See: The Guardian (2016), *Peter Tatchell: snubbed by students for free speech stance*, 13 February 2016.
<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/feb/13/peter-tatchell-snubbed-students-free-speech-veteran-gay-rights-activist>

The Guardian (2016), *LGBT event with Peter Tatchell to go ahead despite free speech row*, 15 February 2016.
<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2016/feb/15/lgbt-event-with-peter-tatchell-to-go-ahead-despite-freedom-of-speech-row>

²⁶⁷ Lentin, A. (2016), *Open Letter on Peter Tatchell, Censorship, and Criticism*, 22 February 2016.
<https://web.archive.org/web/20241219051616/https://www.alanalentin.net/2016/02/22/open-letter-on-peter-tatchell-censorship-and-criticism/>

²⁶⁸ Lentin, A. (2016), *Tatchell should respect critics' rights to speak International open letter condemns intolerance*.
<https://web.archive.org/web/20160408223144/http://www.alanalentin.net/wp-content/uploads/Free-speech-presser.pdf>

²⁶⁹ Pink News (2016), *Academics and activists condemn 'bully' Peter Tatchell in open letter*, 22 February 2016.
<https://www.thepinknews.com/2016/02/22/academics-and-activists-condemn-bully-peter-tatchell-in-open-letter/>

signed by over 100 people. To add your signature, please email xxxxx. Here is a [link to a press release](#) put out today, February 22 to accompany it

As human rights activists, writers, and scholars, we strongly condemn the actions of Peter Tatchell in bullying, vilifying, and inciting a media furor against a student who criticized him in a private e-mail. These attacks exemplify a pattern; Tatchell has repeatedly shown intolerance of criticism and disrespect for others' free expression. They also exemplify a broader problem. A moral panic over inflated claims of 'no-platforming' reflects a persistent, deep resistance to diversity in intellectual and public life.

UK media have attacked Fran Cowling, National Union of Students (NUS) LGBT+ Officer (Women's Place), for allegedly 'no-platforming' Tatchell from a conference on "Re-Radicalizing Queers" held at Canterbury Christchurch University. These reports are simply untrue.

The facts are these. Cowling was invited to attend the conference by the event organizer, another Canterbury Christchurch student. She declined. Her decision not to attend was informed by her belief that Peter Tatchell has engaged in problematic tactics and politics regarding Muslim, Black and trans communities, for which she provided evidence. Without permission, the other student forwarded this confidential email chain to Peter Tatchell.

In the following days, Peter emailed NUS demanding further evidence for this claim. NUS assured him he had not been 'no platformed' and that Fran's decision was not an organisational one. Tatchell persisted, however, and on the afternoon of February 11 he demanded that Fran Cowling apologise to him and to the University for her private e-mail. Less than 24 hours later, NUS received a press request from the *Observer*: Peter had forwarded them the emails. They asked why he had been 'no platformed'.

In the massive furor that followed Fran Cowling has been smeared, bullied, trolled, and harassed in the national press and on social media. Tatchell has personally vilified her and encouraged others to do so, [writing](#) in the right-wing *Telegraph* that she posed a threat to "enlightenment values." Yet *Tatchell was never censored*. He spoke at the conference; he took his case to the *Telegraph* and *Newsnight*; he has not been "silenced." The logical implication of Tatchell's position is: That no officers of the NUS be allowed to criticize him, even in private e-mails; and that all its officers be forced to share platforms with him, like it or not. "Free speech," indeed!

Peter Tatchell has little credibility as a free-speech defender.

- **Tatchell has a long record of urging that public platforms be denied members of ethnic and religious groups, especially Muslims.** He has [called for banning](#) so-called "Islamist" speakers from Universities. He has even [demanded](#) mosques apologise "for hosting homophobic hate preachers" and give "assurances that they will not host them again." Tatchell claims the right to decide who qualifies as a "homophobic hate preacher"; what counts is not inciting violence or any tangible threats to LGBT Londoners, but rather simply expressing religious opinions about

homosexual acts. The peculiar urgency with which Tatchell targets Muslims lends credibility to the charge of racial insensitivity.

- **Tatchell retaliates harshly against critics of his actions.** In 2015, he signed an open letter which appeared to be about free speech but which contained vague but pointed references to “some demands made by trans activists.” When transgender advocates objected – many taking to social media to challenge what they saw as a colleague’s betrayal – Tatchell [accused them](#), collectively and falsely, of threatening him; he called them a “Twitter mob who vowed to kill me.” (The defamatory claim smeared all transgender activists on the basis of one person’s lone Tweet.) Transgender campaigner Sarah Brown faced social-media abuse herself after Tatchell singled her out as a critic. Tatchell also turned to vicious trans-haters in the right-wing media to spread his message of victimhood, seeking support from [Milo Yiannopoulos](#) (who [says](#) “Transgenderism is a psychiatric disorder”) and [Brendan O’Neill](#) (who [dismisses](#) the right to change one’s gender markers on identity papers as “Orwellianism”). Those who use transphobes to attack trans people invite the accusation of transphobia.
- **Tatchell has also repeatedly assaulted academic freedom** – especially ironic in this situation. In 2009, Raw Nerve Press, a small feminist publisher, withdrew a book containing an article critical of his political stances after pressure exerted by Peter Tatchell and his legal team. He compelled the publisher to publish a lengthy apology praising him fulsomely. He also attacked the authors, three scholars of colour, in a broad media campaign, [calling](#) his critics “twisted academics.”
- **Tatchell used similar threats under the UK’s then draconian libel law** to force Routledge to pulp a book containing a peer-reviewed article by Scott Long of Human Rights Watch, critical of Tatchell’s factual claims and methods around Iran. Not content with suppressing the article, Tatchell also pursued Human Rights Watch with legal threats; staffers of Tatchell’s Foundation have harassed Long subsequently. The express aim of Tatchell’s tactics was to suppress public criticism of himself.

Tatchell censors others. His claims to be a victim of censorship would hardly gain traction – save that they play strategically into a furor over so-called “no-platforming.”

“No-platforming,” particularly at universities, has become the object of a moral panic in the British media. Any objection to any speaker – whether a public protest or a private e-mail — can be vilified and decried as a threat to free speech. Yet no one has an automatic right to a lecture slot. Universities can and constantly do choose who takes the podium. And when a person with a record of attacking radical queers is asked to keynote a conference on “Re-Radicalizing Queers,” it is entirely fitting to debate the propriety of the invitation.

In recent months, a series of celebrities have claimed to be victims of “no platforming” – Germaine Greer, Julie Bindel, now Tatchell. Yet *none* of these have actually had their speech restricted. Greer’s case is instructive. In no sense did anyone else “no-platform” her. She herself [theatrically](#)

[bowed out](#) of a speaking engagement, citing the possibility of peaceful, nondisruptive protests which she was unwilling to confront. The canny move of no-platforming herself helped her seize the public spotlight far better than her original lecture could. All these alleged victims have easy access to media platforms vast in their reach. Greer can go to the *Guardian*; Tatchell can take his complaints to *Newsnight*. The risk that their voices will be ignored is nonexistent.

The panic over self-proclaimed “no-platforming” has little to do with free expression, but everything to do with power. It feeds on entrenched authority’s fear of a diverse academy and a diverse public sphere. Those who claim to be silenced readily generate more and more platforms for themselves through this claim — speaking endlessly about not being allowed to speak. Meanwhile, those who have to fight hard to get their voices heard (feminists of colour, trans activists, student activists, to name just a few) are labelled agents of silencing — and defilers of the reputations of those with a public voice. When critiques of racism and transphobia are heard merely as attacks on celebrity images, then those critiques are rendered marginal, and the critics are the ones silenced. Tatchell’s assiduous efforts to expunge ‘offending’ statements and articles from official circulation exemplify this dynamic.

We call on Peter Tatchell to desist from his attacks on other activists, and from his attempts to erase legitimate critiques of his work. We have no desire to ‘censor’ or ‘silence’ him. But we also call on universities and other institutions that host him to challenge him on his record of violating academic freedom and endangering others’ rights to criticize and speak. We also urge those institutions to recognize important visions and voices alternative to Tatchell’s. They should be seen and heard. Let those who feel Tatchell is entitled to a lectern extend the same privilege, and respect, to others.’

The following multi-signatory open letter was organised in a response to an article titled 'In Defense of Transracialism' by Rebecca Tuvel in 'Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy'.²⁷⁰ The letter gained over 800 signatories, including prominent figures in gender studies such as Professor Judith Butler.²⁷¹ Tuvel's paper argued, '...considerations that support transgenderism extend to transracialism. Given this parity, since we should accept transgender individuals' decisions to change sexes, we should also accept transracial individuals' decisions to change races.'

The associate editors of Hypatia responded by apologising²⁷² in terms that have been described as 'defamation'.²⁷³ The Hypatia board later clarified that the apology was issued without consultation with the editor.²⁷⁴ Tuvel's treatment has been described as a 'modern-day witch hunt'.²⁷⁵

Multi-signatory open letter, 2 May 2017

To Hypatia Editor, Sally Scholz, and the broader Hypatia community:

As scholars who have long viewed Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy as a valuable resource for our communities, we write to request the retraction of a recent article, entitled, "In Defense of Transracialism." Its continued availability causes further harm, as does an initial post by the journal admitting only that the article "sparks dialogue." Our concerns reach beyond mere scholarly disagreement; we can only conclude that there has

²⁷⁰ Tuvel, R. (2017), *In Defense of Transracialism*, Hypatia, 32(2), pp.263-278.

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/hypa.12327>

²⁷¹ *Open letter to Hypatia*, 2 May 2017.

<https://archive.is/LQ1bj>

²⁷² The apology is reproduced in: Leiter, B. (2017), *Thought crimes watch: comparing trans-racialism to transgenderism verboten!*, Leiter Reports: A Philosophy Blog, 1 May 2017.

<https://leiterreports.typepad.com/blog/2017/05/thought-crimes-watch-comparing-trans-racialism-to-transgenderism-verboten.html>

²⁷³ Leiter, B. (2017), *The defamation of Rebecca Tuvel by the Board of Associate Editors of Hypatia and the authors of the Open Letter*, Leiter Reports: A Philosophy Blog, 1 May 2017.

<https://leiterreports.typepad.com/blog/2017/05/the-defamation-of-rebecca-tuvel-by-the-board-of-associate-editors-of-hypatia-and-the-open-letter.html>

²⁷⁴ Daily Nous (2017), *Statement From Hypatia Board Regarding Tuvel Controversy*, 18 May 2017.

<https://dailynous.com/2017/05/18/statement-hypatia-board-regarding-tuvel-controversy/>

²⁷⁵ Singal, J. (2017), 'This Is What a Modern-Day Witch Hunt Looks Like', *Intelligencer*.

<https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2017/05/transracialism-article-controversy.html>

been a failure in the review process, and one that painfully reflects a lack of engagement beyond white and cisgender privilege.

While it is not the aim of this letter to provide an exhaustive list of problems that this article exhibits or to provide a critical response, we would like to note a few points that are indicative of the larger issues. We believe that this article falls short of scholarly standards in various areas:

1. It uses vocabulary and frameworks not recognized, accepted, or adopted by the conventions of the relevant subfields; for example, the author uses the language of “transgenderism” and engages in deadnaming a trans woman;
2. It mischaracterizes various theories and practices relating to religious identity and conversion; for example, the author gives an off-hand example about conversion to Judaism;
3. It misrepresents leading accounts of belonging to a racial group; for example, the author incorrectly cites Charles Mills as a defender of voluntary racial identification;
4. It fails to seek out and sufficiently engage with scholarly work by those who are most vulnerable to the intersection of racial and gender oppressions (women of color) in its discussion of “transracialism”. We endorse Hypatia's stated commitment to "actively reflect and engage the diversity within feminism, the diverse experiences and situations of women, and the diverse forms that gender takes around the globe," and we find that this submission was published without being held to that commitment.

Many published articles include some minor defects of scholarship; however, together the problems with this article are glaring. More importantly, these failures of scholarship do harm to the communities who might expect better from Hypatia. It is difficult to imagine that this article could have been endorsed by referees working in critical race theory and trans theory, which are the two areas of specialization that should have been most relevant to the review process. A message has been sent, to authors and readers alike, that white cis scholars may engage in speculative discussion of these themes without broad and sustained engagement with those theorists whose lives are most directly affected by transphobia and racism.

We urge that Hypatia immediately acknowledge the severity of these concerns. In addition to retracting the article, we also believe it is imperative that Hypatia commit immediately to the following:

1. Issue a statement taking responsibility for the failures of judgment associated with publishing this article and apologize for the initial uncritical response posted on Hypatia's Facebook page;
2. Open its general editorial norms and procedures to scrutiny moving forward;

3. Release a statement about its review practices and a plan for improvement. This statement should identify the cause of the problem and pledge to sustain dialogue with both people targeted by transphobia and racism and scholars who specialize in the related relevant subfields of philosophy in future submissions;
4. Avoid the practice of deadnaming (that is, referring to trans people by former names) and commit to developing best practices for naming trans individuals as authors and subjects of scholarly discussions.

These steps are especially important, considering that areas such as trans and race theory have historically been underrepresented and excluded from the field of feminist philosophy. Given this history, it is especially dangerous for Hypatia to stand behind an article that exhibits poor scholarship in both fields and little concern for the voices of those most impacted by “theoretical” debates on the subject of racial and trans identity.

We write with a feeling of urgency to make the Hypatia Editor, Boards, and scholarly community aware of the reception of this article and to register the dismay that we have experienced after seeing that a journal of Hypatia’s caliber--the most widely respected journal in feminist philosophy--would see this article fit to publish. As scholars who view Hypatia as an important and valued resource, we deserve and demand better.

"Note from statement writers (added 5/1): We acknowledge that this statement should have named anti-Blackness directly. The statement is not an exhaustive summary of the many harms caused by this article. We hope it will at least serve as a way to register that harm and issue a demand for a retraction. This is one step in the direction of seeking accountability for the harms committed by its publishing-- and to begin a conversation about the larger problems with our discipline it represents. And we thank Chanda Prescod-Weinstein (and others) for pointing out the dangerous erasure of anti-Blackness and the erasure of the Black labor on which the rhetoric of our own letter is built"

Signed ...

2018

2018-1 Woman's Place UK meeting, Bristol

The following open letter was organised by a PhD student at Bristol University and circulated to academics and students.²⁷⁶ The letter called for the cancellation of an event to discuss proposed changes to the Gender Recognition Act 2004, organised by the grassroots feminist group Woman's Place UK (WPUK). The event was to be chaired by Raquel Rosario Sanchez, a research student and member of the Centre for Violence Research at Bristol University. The meeting was, however, not connected with the university and held at an unconnected venue. The letter stated, 'Attaching the centre's name to this event implies that it endorses providing a platform for hate speech, and calls into question the integrity of the Centre and of the University as a whole.'

Woman's Place UK submitted an open letter to the Vice-Chancellor, rebutting the claims.^{277 278}

Multi-signatory open letter, May 2018

Cancel the "A Woman's Place" event in Bristol

We, the undersigned academics and students, call for the cancellation of the "A Woman's Place" event in Bristol, and a statement from the Centre for Gender Violence Research, one of whom plans to chair the event

We are calling for the cancellation of this event because of the impact it would have on the trans community, both in Bristol and more broadly. The conversation is cast as addressing a 'concern' about how legislation to improve the process of legal gender recognition for trans people might impact provision of safe spaces for women (where 'women' are defined as cisgender women as well as those who don't identify as women but were assigned female at birth).

The rise in trans visibility does make apparent a long-standing need to discuss and clarify our concepts and practices around safe spaces - and

²⁷⁶ Multi-signatory open letter (2018), *Cancel the "A Woman's Place" event in Bristol*, May 2018. <https://openletterbristol.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/cancel-the-a-womans-place-event-in-bristol.pdf?fbclid=IwAR22MJmrs280ybfuQCKFtgMmqjDKF0wcvabbhfDCtvt5Cis7V8qjGE85W6k>

²⁷⁷ Woman's Place UK (2018), *Woman's Place and Bristol University*, 15 June 2018. <https://womansplaceuk.org/2018/06/15/womans-place-bristol-university/>

²⁷⁸ An overview of the events in Bristol is here: Woman's Place UK (2019), *A Woman's Place is Speaking Out*, 21 August 2019. <https://womansplaceuk.org/2019/08/21/bristol-university-2/>

this necessarily involves addressing real and understandable fears of some cisgender women, navigating histories of trauma, and recognising the power of (but re-examining) deeply entrenched political strategies. There is, clearly, a need for difficult conversations to take place among feminists, and this includes expressing and processing powerful but contentious attitudes, thoughts and feelings

However, the proposed event, despite casting itself as a space for 'respectful and balanced debate', premises itself not only upon the violent denial of trans experience and identity, but on the deliberate propagation of fear- and hate-based narratives constructed specifically in order to lever public opinion against recognition of trans realities. This is not in way an attempt to create a 'safe space' for these difficult conversations

The organisers are framing the debate over trans recognition as a battle between 'feminists' on the one hand and 'trans activists' on the other, and attempt to frame trans people as 'men' threatening women's spaces - disregarding a) the existence of transmasculine and nonbinary people, b) the fact trans women are women, and c) the fact that trans people are and always have been a part of feminist struggles.

The Gender and Violence Research Centre plays a vital role in feminist thinking, working at the forefront of research tackling gender-based violence in the UK. It is therefore of particular concern that the event is to be chaired by Raquel Rosario Sanchez, a member of the Gender and Violence Research Centre at Bristol University. Attaching the centre's name to this event implies that it endorses providing a platform for hate speech, and calls into question the integrity of the Centre and of the University as a whole.

Trans people are an inextricable part of the University community. The needs of trans people, and in particular trans women and trans feminine people are integral to feminist campaigns and spaces. There is no difference between "feminists" spreading transphobic and transmisogynistic ideas or spreading racism or homophobia. We want no part in this. We ask that the University of Bristol, and all its departments, stand up and resist the perpetration of harm against trans people.

Following the call to cancel the WPUK event (see above) a group of academics wrote to the Vice-Chancellor in support of the student who raised the petition against the event, against whom the University had taken action.²⁷⁹ The multi-signatory letter gained over 340 signatures, described as ‘feminist scholars’, including individuals based in North America, Germany, Iceland, and Australia. The letter described WPUK as ‘anti-trans’ and stated that the university had violated ‘the principles of the University’s Equality and Diversity policy, as well as the Athena SWAN charter and Stonewall Diversity Champion scheme’.

Another group of academics rebutted this letter and supported the right of WPUK to hold meetings without participants being intimidated.²⁸⁰

Multi-signatory open letter, 21 May 2018

Freedom of speech at the University of Bristol

Dear Professor Brady,

As feminist scholars, we are writing to express our concern at the news that disciplinary procedures have been initiated against a PhD student who petitioned against a discriminatory event associated with the University of Bristol.

The student, Nic Shall, [wrote a petition](#) opposing an event organised by the anti-trans campaign group “A Woman’s Place”. Shall has been accused by the Vice Chancellor’s office of writing a letter containing false information, attempting to suppress the free speech of fellow students, and bringing the university into disrepute. They have been threatened with expulsion.

We believe that the disciplinary action against Shall represents an attack on the democratic right to free expression, and that it is this action that brings the University of Bristol into disrepute. The student in question is, in effect, being threatened with expulsion for writing a petition. If the University of Bristol is to uphold the principle of free speech and encourage political debate, then students and staff must be afforded the right to openly express their principled opposition to bigotry and discrimination.

We further insist that Shall’s letter did not contain false information in stating that “A Women’s Place” provide a [platform for hate speech](#). This group is committed solely to campaigning against trans rights, as enshrined in legislation such as the Gender Recognition Act 2004 and the Equality

²⁷⁹ Multi-Signatory open letter (2018), *Freedom of speech at the University of Bristol*, 21 May 2018. <https://openletterbristol.wordpress.com/2018/05/21/freespeech/>

²⁸⁰ Feminist Current (2018), *Open letter: Freedom of speech at the University of Bristol*, 7 June 2018. <https://www.feministcurrent.com/2018/06/07/open-letter-freedom-speech-university-bristol/>

Act 2010. Speakers at events hosted by “A Women’s Place” have propagated ignorant and harmful narratives through the use of offensive stereotypes, drawing a false dichotomy between trans rights and women’s rights, and misrepresenting both empirical research and current laws. The group has thereby [played a role](#) in creating [moral panic](#) about trans people’s role in public life, and contributed to [atmosphere](#) of fear and shame among trans people.

Finally, we believe that the right to free speech must be balanced with a responsibility to promote respect and justice for all. The University of Bristol Equality and Diversity Policy states that the University aims to create an inclusive environment that respects the diversity of its staff and students. It further commits to complying with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, which include a duty to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. The University of Bristol holds an Athena SWAN bronze award and is a Stonewall Diversity champion; both schemes require that the institution actively uphold the right of trans students and staff to participate in academic life on a free and equitable basis.

In threatening Shall with expulsion and [offering tacit support](#) to an openly anti-trans event, the University of Bristol has demonstrated that it does not provide an environment in which trans students and staff can reasonably participate in fair and open political debate. Both actions clearly violate the principles of the University’s Equality and Diversity policy, as well as the Athena SWAN charter and Stonewall Diversity Champion scheme.

As such, we hope that the Vice Chancellor’s office will act swiftly to dismiss the disciplinary against Nic Shall, and apologise for the hurt caused to trans students and staff by the institution’s position on the “A Woman’s Place” event.

Yours sincerely...

This open multi-signatory letter was organised by the group Pride in STEM and signed by around 300 individuals. The letter criticised the academic news analysis website 'The Conversation' for publishing an article by Kathleen Stock, former Professor of Philosophy, University of Sussex.²⁸¹ The letter expressed 'extreme disappointment' and 'anger' and stated 'many of us will no longer contribute to The Conversation until there is evidence that their editorial process has changed to live up to the ethical and scientific standards that they declare to be part of their mission'.

Multi-signatory open letter, undated

We are deeply concerned about the rise of unchallenged attacks against transgender people in the general media, but are particularly surprised and saddened to see such attacks published in The Conversation. In their own words (<https://theconversation.com/uk/who-we-are>), The Conversation is "an independent source of news and views, sourced from the academic and research community and delivered direct to the public." Some of us have written articles for them, and some of our host universities are funding them. The Conversation claim that they aim to "inform public debate with knowledge-based journalism that is responsible, ethical and supported by evidence."

This [article](#) does not respect those guidelines in terms of general content nor in terms of academic rigour. Indeed, we think that it makes a number of claims that are inherently transphobic, and that are not backed by any evidence.

For instance, the article asserts that transwomen are not women ("Transwomen are not biologically female."). Gender is actually a social construct and it is a spectrum; similarly, biological sex is also a spectrum. The author of the article ignores the non-binary reality of biological sex (see [here](#) for some supporting evidence).

The article also presents trans women as sexual predators, using this as a justification to ban them from women's changing rooms, bathrooms, and prisons ("If we think there are good reasons to retain same-sex spaces generally, in terms of protecting females from a small number of malevolent males, these reasons don't cease to operate when males self-identify as women."). Preventing trans people from using facilities matching their gender does not have any impact on the rate of sexual assault, but has dire consequences for trans people (see for instance [this study](#), showing that

²⁸¹ Pride in STEM (online), *An open letter to The Conversation* (author and date unknown). <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Uv9s8z60CfrBunAmUyOv7In3zghAvLA3TYrILYyS5M0/mobilebasic>

“the passage of such [nondiscrimination] laws is not related to the number or frequency of criminal incidents in these spaces”).

The article then argues that there is “scant data [to] reliably confirm” that “transwomen are more oppressed than females” or that “transwomen face violence in men’s changing rooms and prisons”. It goes on to affirm that “transpeople are no more at risk of homicide or violent attack than the average person, and may in fact face a lower risk.”

The source it cites for this final point compares national crime statistics to the number of times newspapers report on trans people being the victims of crime, a method that clearly underestimates the rate of violent attacks. We think that this is a false equivalence and an example of substandard scholarship.

In fact, there is abundant data showing the risks faced by trans people:

- 48% of trans people don’t feel comfortable using public toilets ([Stonewall report, 2018](#))
- 41% of trans people have experienced a hate crime or incident based on their gender identity in the last 12 months (53% of trans people aged 18 to 24 -- Stonewall report, 2018)

Even in our universities, trans people often encounter hostile environments and face many challenges, “which can include lack of health benefits, lack of access to safe bathrooms, inappropriate use of pronouns, and a profound lack of respect and awareness from others.” ([American Physical Society report, 2016](#))

36% of trans university students in the UK have experienced negative comments or behaviour from staff in the last year ([Stonewall report, 2018](#))

49% of trans people in US physics departments reported experiencing exclusionary behavior in the past year ([American Physical Society report, 2016](#))

40% of trans people in US physics departments reported that their co-workers did not use their preferred pronouns ([American Physical Society report, 2016](#))

This [report](#) shows that about 45% of trans people in the US have attempted suicide at least once in their lifetime (a rate 10 times higher than in the general population). The rate is even increased for trans people who have experienced stressors such as “rejection, discrimination, victimization, and violence”.

The article ignores all of the available evidence on the extreme challenges that trans people face, even though this information is not difficult to find. We think that publication of such poorly researched material is not only poor editorial practice, but dangerous: it compromises the safety of trans people. We do not think that the article meets what The Conversation declares to be its standards for public discourse.

Some researchers from Liverpool John Moores University contacted the editor-in-chief and the editorial board to voice their serious concerns, but the board dismissed their points. The editors argued that they had published other articles in favour of transgender rights. They said that “the article made a fair argument, and met the editorial standards we set for our journalism”.

In light of the facts we present above, we found this response to be extremely poor. Further, we feel that the editorial board has not considered the serious consequences that such a piece will have on the lives of trans people. Legitimising transphobia by publishing scientifically-flawed and misinformed articles negates the right of trans people to be treated with dignity and respect. Publishing separate articles that support transgender rights does not undo the damage caused by publishing a flawed article that actively undermines them. Trans people’s humanity is not up for debate.

We write to express our extreme disappointment and our anger. As a result, many of us will no longer contribute to The Conversation until there is evidence that their editorial process has changed to live up to the ethical and scientific standards that they declare to be part of their mission.

In the meantime, we reaffirm our support to all the trans people around us, and we commit to working towards a more inclusive environment where everyone feels safe and respected.

[[link to co-sign the letter](#)]

[List of signatories]

The following statement, calling for an event with Dame Jenni Murray to be cancelled, was made by the Oxford University LGBTQ Society, Student Union LGBTQ Campaign, and Student Union Women's Society.²⁸² Dame Jenni Murray subsequently pulled out of the talk.²⁸³

Open statement, 6 November 2018

We, the undersigned, are deeply disappointed by the Oxford University History Society's decision to interview Dame Jenni Murray on the topic of "Powerful British Women in History and Society" on Saturday 10th of November, and call for action to publicly condemn her views and, if possible, cancel the event. Oxford SU LGBTQ+ campaign believe that inviting publically transphobic speakers to the university, without challenge, further marginalises and unnecessarily compromises the welfare of trans students and staff.

Murray has made explicitly transphobic comments in an article for the Sunday Times, dated March 5th 2017. She has told trans women "don't call yourself a 'real women'", that "it takes more than a sex change and makeup", and repeatedly insinuated that transgender women and girls are not women and can only pretend to be women. Although Murray claims to believe trans people "should be treated with respect", she has silenced her critics by alleging that trans women are "misogynistic" for pointing out transphobia in feminist discourse, and uncritically encouraged her readers to question whether trans women and girls should be allowed to use single-sex spaces such as changing rooms and bathrooms, whether trans girls should be allowed to join Girlguiding, and so on. She repeatedly fails to approach trans issues with the same respect that she calls for, in fact achieving the exact opposite: admonishing trans women and questioning their womanhood - the same beliefs which motivate much of the violence against trans women - cannot be reconciled with her supposed support for those she calls "transsexuals" and "transvestites".

Her views, which clearly reflect a lack of engagement with the vast majority of actual trans people, and are in sum deeply harmful to trans women and trans feminine people, contributing to and exacerbating the harassment, marginalisation, discrimination, and violence that they already face.

²⁸² The Oxford Student (2018), *Oxford LGBTQ Campaign condemns History Society talk*, 6 November 2018.

<https://www.oxfordstudent.com/2018/11/06/oxford-lgbtq-campaign-condemns-history-society-talk/>

²⁸³ The Independent (2018), *BBC Woman's Hour host Jenni Murray pulls out of Oxford talk amid transphobia accusations*, 8 November 2018.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/bbc-womens-hour-jenni-murray-oxford-university-talk-transphobia-controversy-students-a8623411.html>

This event is not framed as an opportunity to respond to Murray's views but as an uncritical discussion led by Murray as a paragon of feminist opinion, emphasised by the title of the talk, "Powerful British Women". Inviting Murray to talk in this capacity leaves her transphobic rhetoric essentially unchallenged. While there may be "ample time for questions", the decision to offer Murray a platform is not apolitical or neutral, especially when her views cause tangible harm to vulnerable members of our society. Obsessive and sustained media focus on trans people has recently put the valuable progress made on trans rights under threat, and the consistent prioritising of voices like Murray's over those of trans people has intensified this. In this environment, the decision to invite Murray to Oxford in this capacity, to promise her a microphone and the undivided and uncritical attention of a room, is a decision to propagate, validate, and normalise institutionalised transphobia.

All of this is highly inappropriate for an event that aims to celebrate powerful women in British history and society. The event description refers to "gendered antagonisms of both British and American politics" without clarifying that it is celebrities like Jenni Murray who have largely fueled the recent transphobic discourse across the UK with high profile trans-antagonistic thinkpieces. It is deeply inappropriate to invite someone to speak on the topic of "powerful women" who has used their platform and their (cis) privilege to further oppress a marginalised group. Any talk that does not recognise the experiences of particular women cannot claim to be feminist and will certainly not be "insightful".

As Campaigns and Societies working with and for trans students at the University of Oxford, we are particularly disappointed in the Oriel College's complicity in hosting the event in their lecture theatre. Enabling such a transphobic speaker to come to Oxford and disseminate her views shows a considerable disregard for the welfare and existence of trans students. To do so not only hinders the valuable work done by the University administration (principally the Equality and Diversity Unit), but also ignores the striking evidence documented in, and the concerns raised by, the LGBTQ+ Campaign's recent Trans Report. To support transphobes, either directly or indirectly, clearly does not fall in line with the University's own Equality Policy, under which the University commits itself to "seek to embed equality in all its activities".

We therefore urge the University of Oxford to make a public statement condemning the decision to offer Murray such a prestigious platform. The university should also reaffirm -- and put into actual practice -- its commitment to transgender staff and students, who are entitled to live, work and study in an environment that does not question the validity of -- nor denigrate -- their existence.

We look forward to receiving a reply at the earliest opportunity.

Signed,

Oxford SU LGBTQ+ Campaign

Oxford University LGBTQ Society Oxford SU Women's Campaign

The following statement was organised by the University of London LGBT+ student network.²⁸⁴ The statement was made in response to a letter published in the Guardian that expressed concern about proposed reforms to the Gender Recognition Act 2004, and related concerns about the suppression of relevant research.²⁸⁵ The open statement expressed concern about the ‘precedent’ set by its publication and painted the letter as ‘a strategic attack on the rights of trans students’.

Open statement, 1 November 2018

Open statement from LGBT+ representatives within the University of London

It has come to our attention that a letter was published in The [Guardian](#) newspaper on the 16th of October notifying the public about the formation of a network of academics who claim to be “concerned about the suppression of proper academic analysis and discussion of the social phenomenon of transgenderism” and about the Gender Recognition Act reforms. We are aware that it was signed by academics from the London School of Economics, University College London, Kings College London, Birkbeck, University of East London, Royal Holloway, Goldsmiths and Roehampton. As LGBT+ representatives from these universities we felt that it was imperative we make a statement about this.

We are collectively concerned by the precedent set by the publication of the open letter aforementioned and we want to use this as an opportunity to clarify the position we hold in relation to it.

The proposed reforms to the Gender Recognition Act seek to change what is currently an invasive, expensive, dehumanising, and overly bureaucratic process for trans people in the UK.

The reforms pose no threat whatsoever to the rights of other protected characteristics and do not concern access to single sex spaces, as statements from some of the attached academics would lead you to believe. We want to emphasise that the rights of cisgender women and the rights of transgender people are not at conflict with one another. We believe that the way this has been constructed in the media is a gross

²⁸⁴ University of London LGBT+ Network (2018), *Open statement from LGBT+ representatives within the University of London*, 1 November 2018.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20210417044437/https://studentsunionucl.org/articles/open-statement-from-lgbt-representatives-within-university-of-london>

²⁸⁵ Guardian (2018), *Academics are being harassed over their research into transgender issues* (Letters), 16 October 2018.

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/oct/16/academics-are-being-harassed-over-their-research-into-transgender-issues>

misuse of the struggle of women for equality as a means by which to suppress the effort for the liberation of trans people. We recognise the tactics employed here that are seeking to pit one marginalised group against another and act to serve the liberation of neither. We also assert that trans women are women and that you cannot separate the rights of women and trans people because these categories intersect.

It is incredibly concerning that the letter attempts to define transphobia without considering the input of those who actually experience it. Its analysis of trans rights as “ideological” misses the point that the experience of transphobia is something which has far reaching consequences on the lives of trans people within our universities. To refer to “transgenderism” wrongly identifies the experiences of trans people as a kind of social or political movement. Trans people are as diverse as any other minority group, with differing backgrounds, political views and opinions. Thus, the premises on which their arguments are formed are inherently reductive and inaccurate.

As students from a range of backgrounds and disciplines, we understand the value and importance of academic debate, discussion and analysis. We also recognise, however, that debate for the sake of debate, where there are no productive outcomes and where the repercussions are markedly dangerous for marginalised people, is a profoundly unethical endeavour which makes little academic sense. We have just witnessed the ways where such discussions, which have been influenced by academics, have led to the proposition to fully remove legal protections for trans people in the United States. Our debates do not exist in a vacuum, but rather have very profound and tangible implications on people’s lives and have the capacity to do very real harm. This is why we believe that any debate questioning a trans person’s legal rights, or the validity of their identity, is fundamentally unethical. We maintain that trans students should be always treated with dignity and have their identity and lived experience respected.

The release of this letter in the final weeks of the government’s consultation on GRA reforms is not incidental.

It is a strategic attack on the rights of trans students which aims to give legitimacy to transphobic attitudes and ideas.

We have already witnessed overt transphobia on a stall outside the Student’s Union at the London School of Economics, and transphobic hate speech appearing in the women’s bathrooms both there and at Imperial College London. Trans students have faced and continue to face harassment and discrimination across London universities. Examples of these are abundant and yet most of our universities lack the infrastructure to adequately process allegations, and we see an ongoing situation whereby many trans students fear their academic careers may be jeopardised by formally complaining. A report published by Stonewall and YouGov in 2018 found that over the course of 2017 alone, 53% of trans people aged between 18 and 24 experienced hate crimes, and our university campuses are not exempt from being spaces where this takes

place. The report found that 36% of trans students had experienced transphobic harassment from staff alone, and that one in seven trans students had considered dropping out as a result of harassment and discrimination. The difference that this letter makes is that this kind of behaviour is being legitimised by academics in positions of authority and this will undoubtedly embolden those with malicious intentions.

We stand collectively in solidarity with trans students and staff in our respective institutions and urge the University of London as a whole to take transphobia on campus seriously.

Source for the statistics quoted:

<https://www.stonewall.org.uk/sites/default/files/lgbt-in-britain-trans.pdf>

Signed:

LGBT+ Students' Network

This open letter was organised by the King's College London (KCL) Intersectional Feminist Society and gained over 100 signatories. It has since been deleted.²⁸⁶ The letter was in response to an event organised by the KCL Department of War Studies with Dr Joanna Williams, which addressed freedom of expression on university campuses.²⁸⁷ The statement demanded that the event be cancelled and a public apology. Extracts from the letter were published in The Tab, which also provided a link for signatures.²⁸⁸ Signatories included the KCL Intersectional Feminist Society and the LGBT+ Society Committee. The letter has been archived online.²⁸⁹

The online political magazine Spiked, of which Williams is editor²⁹⁰ and the Telegraph²⁹¹ published articles in defence of Dr Williams and free speech. Students from the KCL Libertarian Society opposed the attempt to de-platform Dr Williams.²⁹²

Multi-signatory open letter, Facebook, 10 November 2018

Opposing Hate in King's College London - *TW - Transphobia*

PLEASE SIGN THE STATEMENT BELOW !!!!!

<https://docs.google.com/.../1G7GVZbmp1...>

We express our disappointment towards the War Studies Department for inviting Dr Joanna Williams to speak on this coming Tuesday 13th

²⁸⁶ KCL Intersectional Feminist Society (2018), *Opposing Hate in King's College London - *TW - Transphobia**, 10 November 2018, Facebook.

<https://www.facebook.com/kclintfemsoc/posts/1057399674444984>

²⁸⁷ Kings College London (2018), *Endangered Speeches launch with Dr Joanna Williams*.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20220928151017/https://www.kcl.ac.uk/events/endangered-speeches-launch-with-dr-joanna-williams>

²⁸⁸ The Kings Tab (2018), *King's students have written an open letter against 'transphobic' speaker Dr. Joanna Williams*, 12 November 2018.

<https://archive.thetab.com/uk/kings/2018/11/11/kings-students-have-written-an-open-letter-against-transphobic-speaker-dr-joanna-williams-23577>

²⁸⁹ Ketland, J. (2018), *Childish KCL Deplatforming Letter*, 12 November 2018.

<https://criticathink.wordpress.com/2018/11/12/childish-kcl-deplatforming-letter/>

²⁹⁰ Berens, T. (2018), *In defence of Joanna Williams*, 13 November 2018, Spiked.

<https://www.spiked-online.com/2018/11/13/in-defence-of-joanna-williams/>

²⁹¹ Williams, J. (2018), *'Apparently I am too dangerous to be let loose on innocent students. News to me'*, 17 November 2018, Telegraph.

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/11/17/apparently-dangerous-let-loose-innocent-students-news/>. Archived at: <https://archive.ph/ORfaB>

²⁹² Libertarian Home (2018), *KCL Libertarians' Statement on 'Endangered Speeches' Event*, 13 November 2018.

<https://libertarianhome.co.uk/2018/11/13/endangered-speeches-event-statement/>

November at an 'Endangered Speeches' event. She is someone who opposes women, trans- and non-binary people and their well-being and survival, including opposition to the [#MeToo](#) movement and feminism. We ask that the University cancel the event and the department publish a public apology.

We publicly state our support for women, trans- and non-binary people. This letter is a step in a much needed fightback against King's College London's complicity in and apathy towards transphobia and misogyny.

We the undersigned express our disappointment towards the War Studies Department for inviting Dr Joanna Williams to speak on this coming Tuesday 13th November at an 'Endangered Speeches' event. She is someone who opposes women, trans and non-binary people and their well-being and survival, including opposition to the #MeToo movement and feminism. We ask you to redact her invitation, cancel the event and publish a public apology. ui

We publicly state our support for women, trans- and non-binary people. This letter is a step in a much needed fightback against King's College London's complicity in and apathy towards free speech.

Dr Joanna Williams' positions include:

- Arguing that provisions for trans- people indoctrinates children into questioning their gender and sexuality. By stating this as being immoral, she reinforces the rigidity of gender and sexuality, which in turn upholds the violent patriarchal world we live in. Not supporting LGBT+ young people is violence; according to Stonewall, 83% of trans- young people have experienced verbal abuse, and 27% have attempted suicide. Despite this, she claims society is 'heterophobic'. Supporting LGBTQIP68475940384_+*/ young people is not, as she says, 'a waste of time and money', but a matter of basic survival.
- Opposing the #MeToo movement, which brought some level of justice and exposure to the harassment and assault that millions of women have and continue to face. Williams states that 'MeToo is an unedifying clamour to be included in celebrity suffering', demonstrating an unacceptable disregard for the horrifying and very real experiences of women around the world. It is patronising, incorrect and legitimising of the continuation of this abuse, absolving any and all of those accused of their responsibility.

Williams further questions feminism more broadly, arguing that it is a witch-hunt against men by hysterical and indoctrinated women. This interpretation is a mischaracterisation of feminism built on a misogynistic understanding of gender norms. By framing feminism this way, Williams facilitates continued oppression, especially against those most in need of feminism; working class women, women of colour, LGB+ women, trans- and non-binary people, disabled women and so on.

Not supporting women, trans- and non-binary people kills, and Williams knowingly endorses this. By giving her a platform, the War Studies

Department legitimises and spreads these viewpoints, and will directly and/or indirectly harm people, including staff and students.

King's College London has a duty of care to its students and staff, and by facilitating viewpoints that harm us, it fails in that duty. Furthermore, the University has often accepted it has an issue with not giving platforms to certain groups, including working class women, women of colour and trans- and non-binary people. A better use of platforms such as 'Endangered Speeches' would be to give the opportunity for truly marginalised groups to speak and offer new perspectives, instead of a hateful classical liberal like Williams, whose stances get more than enough airtime in society already.

We anticipate the redaction of her invitation, canceling of the event and public apology.

Signed,

The following KCL societies, staff, students and academics:

2019

2019-1 Imperial College London Vice Provost (Education), 10 May 2019

This open letter to Professor Buitendijk, Vice Provost (Education) of Imperial College London (ICL) was organised by a third year Physics student and signed by 86 students and members of staff.²⁹³ The letter admonished Professor Buitendijk for following and engaging with gender-critical social media accounts.

The ICL student newspaper reported, 'Professor Buitendijk has since apologised, deleted the offending tweets and unfollowed the accounts in question'.²⁹⁴ In a comment to the student newspaper, Professor Buitendijk said "The last thing I want is to cause anxiety or harm. That is, of course, absolutely not my intention. I've apologised about any potential or real harm and anxiety that I've caused and I really understand now, much better than before, the dangers of having these kind of very complicated exchanges of opinions of Twitter. I've totally taken a step back from all of that..."

Multi-signatory open letter, 10 May 2019

Dear Prof. Buitendijk,

We represent members of the student and staff body at Imperial and we are concerned about your engagement with transphobic material and social media accounts. Specifically, we are writing to you about your previous following of Transgender Trend (@Transgendertrd) and others on Twitter and your engagement with some tweets which claim that provision of life-saving support and healthcare for trans children and teenagers is tantamount to abuse. Over the last month we have been communicating with you about our concerns, and are reassured that you have heard them and that the College is taking them seriously.

For trans students and staff within the Imperial College community these issues are important to address with immense care, as it impacts their ability to be open at work without fear of harassment, bullying, and harm.

²⁹³ Willsher, J. (2019), 'Open letter to Dr Buitendijk, VP of Imperial college'. Reproduced in: Felix, *Imperial community pens open letter calling for confirmed support for the trans community*, 10 May 2019.

<https://felixonline.co.uk/articles/2019-05-10-imperial-community-pens-open-letter-calling-for-confirmed-support-for-the-trans-community/>

²⁹⁴ Felix (2019), *Imperial community pens open letter calling for confirmed support for the trans community*, 10 May 2019.

<https://felixonline.co.uk/articles/2019-05-10-imperial-community-pens-open-letter-calling-for-confirmed-support-for-the-trans-community/>

In recognition of these challenges, the College Policy is significantly in support of trans individuals and makes the pledge “The College believes that, as a leading institution, it will benefit from employing trans people at all levels of responsibility, thus providing role models for staff and students who identify as trans.” Furthermore, the policy continues to state that there is a “Public Sector Equality Duty” which “gives public bodies legal responsibilities to take proactive measures to address equality.” As a senior figure within the college, it is likely that members of the college will look up to you and see you as a role model, and therefore to be in line with this policy it is important that you aim to act as an ally for the trans community.

We urge you to recognise that many members of the Imperial College community have deeply personal experiences with their gender. For many students, university presents the first opportunity for them to be themselves. The 2016 APS Climate in Physics Report addressed the impact on trans researchers and found “30% of trans individuals [...] characterized the overall climate of their department or division as uncomfortable or very uncomfortable.” and for trans individuals 60% had observed and 50% had experienced exclusionary behaviour. We must work to create an inclusive community for all our members, understanding the difficulties they face.

We understand you have unfollowed these accounts and appreciate the words of support you have expressed in meetings. We urge you and the college to publicly respond to the large number of students who have expressed concern over this issue and commit to further supporting the trans community at Imperial College.

We object to groups like Transgender Trend because their conception of equality excludes the most marginalised. We hope that as a member of the College community you can continue to work with members of the LGBT+ community and their allies within college to support trans-inclusive feminism.

Yours,

Josef Willsher

The following circular email was sent from the University of Edinburgh (UoE) Staff Pride Network to its members. The email alerted members to a forthcoming event on women's rights at the University of Edinburgh, which it described as inappropriate and would be perceived as 'hateful'. The event went ahead with exceptionally tight security. When leaving the venue, one of the speakers, Julie Bindel, was lunged at by a transactivist, who was restrained by security guards.²⁹⁵ In response to the event going ahead, the UoE Staff Pride Network Committee resigned en masse, but resumed their posts thereafter. Scottish Labour MSP Jenny Marra subsequently lodged a motion in the Scottish Parliament condemning violence against women and supporting the right of universities to host 'controversial discussions' on campus.²⁹⁶

Circular email, 17 May 2019

Dear Members,

The Staff Pride Network committee have taken time to consider our response regarding an event organised by the Institute for Education, Teaching and Leadership.

We recognise that some will emphasise academic freedom and freedom of speech as the reason this event should proceed. University employees, our members, consist of PhD students, professional services staff and academics and in this Mental Health Awareness Week we are reminded we have a duty of care to the wellbeing of all our members. To allow this event is to permit words which will be perceived as hateful of our community and lead many staff and students to feel unsafe.

The event's focus implies either that not all women should enjoy the same rights, or that gender-identity-based definitions of what it is to be a woman should be rejected.

In legal documents, gender and sex are used interchangeably and, while some people wish to differentiate between them and us, legal protections for transgender people are already enshrined in UK law. Speakers at this event have called for the law to go back decades by treating trans people as different. This event seems to assume that the fight for women's rights must exclude trans women. That this kind of bias should inform an

²⁹⁵ The Telegraph (2019), *Edinburgh University's LGBT network resign en masse amid row over Julie Bindel talk*, 6 June 2019.

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2019/06/06/edinburgh-universitys-lgbt-network-resign-en-masse-amid-row/>

²⁹⁶ The Scotsman (2019), *Cross-party support among MSPs for women's right to debate safe spaces*, 11 June 2019.

<https://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/cross-party-support-among-msps-for-womens-right-to-debate-safe-spaces-1415634>

academic event hosted and promoted by the University of Edinburgh, with one-sided presentations of views which discriminate against trans people, is something we find objectionable.

There is an obvious risk that, despite the good equality, diversity and inclusion work carried out by the University, by allowing the event to proceed it may create the impression of a hostile environment towards trans and intersex members of the University.

We want therefore to draw your attention to the problematic aspects of this event.

While women continue in many ways to suffer discrimination, the exclusionary view that the fight for women's rights should by definition exclude trans women does not seem to us a suitable premise for a discussion of this sort. Given that transgender people are 0.5 – 0.8% of the population and intersex, or DSD, people are 1.2 - 1.5% of the population, for a majority to exclude 1% is unnecessary, hurtful discrimination and the oppression of one larger group over another.

Co-Chair Jonathan and Trans & Non-Binary Rep Rosie have discussed the Committee's concerns with the Principal in person, and took part in a EUSA organised meeting on Wednesday to help inform their approach.

We will do all we can to make it clear to the University that this event is inappropriate. This said, we are determined that we will be paragons of respect and, should the event go ahead, a number of us will be in attendance. If lines are crossed, we will consider an official complaint via the University's grievance procedure. There will be a peaceful, silent protest outside 50 George Square which you may wish to join. If you are a member of one of the Unions, you might also complain to them.

There are two other opportunities at present if you wish to take a proactive approach:

If you have the time, we encourage you to attend the Conference organised by our former Trans Rep REDACTED on 28 & 29 May in the Old Medical School. Transgender: Intersectional/International Conference – 28-29 May 2019, University of Edinburgh

To contribute to the Staff Pride Network, we particularly welcome enquiries from colleagues for the vacant Co-Chair position, Social & Events Officer joint position as events lead, and events volunteers to help with planning and hosting.

Our Support & Mentoring Officer REDACTED and our Trans & Non-Binary Rep REDACTED are available to offer support if this statement affects you in such a way. If you have any other questions please email the mailbox xxxxx@ed.ac.uk.

Kind regards,

Staff Pride Network Committee

This online petition, organised by a School of Social and Political Science 'Student and Staff Collective' and hosted on change.org, called for the above event on women's rights at the University of Edinburgh to be cancelled.²⁹⁷ The petition gained over 1,400 signatures.

Online petition, 28 May 2019

Edinburgh University transphobic event is unacceptable

We are members of the University of Edinburgh staff and student community concerned about the rise of transphobia on our campus. As a collective of PG students, we write this statement to unequivocally condemn transphobia.

The recent announcement of a transphobic 'Women's Sex-Based Rights' event hosted by Edinburgh University Moray House on the 5th of June is unacceptable.

We are calling for this event to be cancelled immediately on the grounds that it: (1) affords credibility in an academic context to views expressing hate and phobic sentiments towards members of the University community, (2) puts our trans and non-binary colleagues and friends at risk of physical and psychological harm, (3) provides material support to speakers with a transphobic agenda, and (4) seems to contravene the University's own policies on equality and diversity.

We disagree with the notion of transphobia as a legitimate academic debate. As feminist academics we welcome debates on the complexities of gender and sexuality but strongly believe that debates that are premised on denying the rights and legitimacy of a marginalized group in society are not fair debates. The University of Edinburgh should not be a safe-haven for hate speech. In facilitating this event, the University is allowing a situation to go ahead that will leave students and staff feeling unsafe, excluded, and unwelcome. By providing space and other material resources for this event, the University of Edinburgh is affording credibility and legitimacy to hateful rhetoric which is extremely damaging to trans and non-binary people as well as other marginalized groups in Edinburgh and the UK.

We furthermore fear that the speakers and attendees may potentially act in ways that would make the central campus area unsafe for trans and non-

²⁹⁷ SPS PG Student and Staff Collective (2019), *Edinburgh University transphobic event is unacceptable*, change.org, 28 May 2019.
<https://www.change.org/p/university-of-edinburgh-edinburgh-university-transphobic-event-is-unacceptable>

binary students and staff during and after the event. Similar events have been followed with stickering of campus and the city with hate messages.

The University should not provide space and other resources to speakers who are vehemently opposed to the dignity of marginalised members of our community. We believe this to be in contravention of the University's own policies on equality, diversity, including our policy on Trans Equality. Our view is that there is misinformation, misunderstanding, and fearmongering presenting cisgender women's rights as being opposed to trans and non-binary people's rights. We affirm that trans women's rights are women's rights and that cis and trans women should be standing together to combat gender oppression. Transgender and non-binary people have always been a part of the academic community and we honour and respect our friends and colleagues.

We ask that the University of Edinburgh reconsiders hosting an event that will be so damaging to trans and non-binary people, as well as damaging to our wider academic community. We wish to remind the University that freedom of speech is not the same as entitlement to a platform.

We respectfully request that the 'Women's Sex-Based Rights' event be cancelled.

For those wishing to support trans rights, we encourage attending the Rally for Trans Solidarity on the day of the event (5th of June; more info <https://www.facebook.com/events/423232341560610/> as well as the 'Transgender: Intersectional/International' Conference being organised by University students & staff on May 28th and 29th (<https://transgender-intersectional-international.com>

The following statement was issued by the non-profit organisation Minorities and Philosophy (MAP) UK and its umbrella organisation, Minorities and Philosophy International. MAP describes itself as ‘an international network of students that aims at addressing issues of inclusivity and minority participation in Philosophy’.²⁹⁸ The statement was issued in response to Professor Kathleen Stock giving a talk at the Aristotelian Society titled ‘What is sexual orientation’.²⁹⁹

Online statement, updated 4 June 2019

The following is a joint statement from Minorities and Philosophy UK and Minorities and Philosophy International.

In line with the missions of Minorities and Philosophy (MAP), MAP UK aims to support and celebrate the work of members of under-represented and marginalised groups in philosophy. This includes, for example, (but is not limited to) women, trans and non-binary people, people of colour, disabled people, LGBTQ+ people, working class people, immigrants, and practitioners for whom English is not a first language, among other historically underrepresented groups.

The presence of these voices in academic philosophy improves academic philosophy for everyone. Not only do members of these communities make our discipline fairer, but their contributions also make ongoing conversations richer and better.

The discipline of philosophy, as it stands, has much work to do for each of these groups. But one particular area that we must focus on is the increasing professional hostility towards trans people, with trans women and trans feminine philosophers regularly experiencing intensified and aggravated forms of hostility and abuse. In recent years and months, attacks on the trans community have been led by a number of prominent

²⁹⁸ Universities of St Andrews and Stirling (online), *Minorities and Philosophy*.
<https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/sasp/introduction/minorities-and-philosophy/>

²⁹⁹ Minorities and Philosophy UK and Minorities and Philosophy International (2019), *Joint statement in response to the Aristotelian Society talk on 3rd June 2019*, 4 June 2019.
<https://web.archive.org/web/20201201190637/https://www.mapforthe-gap.org.uk/post/statement-in-response-to-the-aristotelian-society-talk-on-3rd-june-2019> .

The title of the presentation was ‘What is Sexual Orientation?’
<https://web.archive.org/web/20190708205611/https://www.aristoteliansociety.org.uk/the-proceedings/the-2018-19-programme/kathleen-stock/>

For a published version of the paper see: Stock, K. (2019), *XIV—Sexual Orientation: What Is It?*, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* vol. 119: 3, pp. 295-319.
<https://academic.oup.com/aristotelian/article-abstract/119/3/295/5573243>

philosophers and are made to seem legitimate due to the unwillingness of the wider community to speak up and protect its most vulnerable members.

A number of trans people have spoken out about their experiences in philosophy, especially on the painful topic of how recent events in philosophy have impacted (and continue to seriously threaten) their wellbeing, their professional careers, and their personal lives. We list some of these invaluable and heartbreaking testimonies below.

In continuation of such harmful trends, today (3rd June 2019) the Aristotelian Society hosted a talk by Professor Kathleen Stock, entitled 'What is Sexual Orientation?'. We have composed this statement for two reasons: firstly, we are disappointed that a prominent philosophical organisation has hosted a talk by someone who has so aggressively and routinely spoken out against the trans community. Secondly, we are deeply concerned by the fact that the Aristotelian Society is offering its valued intellectual platform to a paper that, itself, targets the trans community. We believe this talk brings into stark relief the current situation for trans and non-binary people in philosophy.

In defence of their decision, the Aristotelian Society recently released a statement of support for Professor Stock's right to engage in philosophical debate. We believe a right to engage in legitimate philosophical debate does not absolve a person of responsibility for the harms they inflict on vulnerable persons, nor should philosophical institutions encourage such forms of moral evasion. We believe that by remaining 'neutral' and referring to 'philosophical debates' in this way, the Aristotelian Society has demonstrated its detachment from trans and non-binary people and their embodied and continually endangered lives. In effect, their statement of 'neutrality' amounts to an explicit indifference to the harassment of trans people and their allies. In this context, we have to tell it like it is and acknowledge that purported neutrality in the face of bigotry is complicity. We believe that by hosting this talk, and also by not issuing a clear and unequivocal statement of support for trans people within the profession and outside, the Aristotelian Society has contributed to the wider harms being done against trans people.

Unlike the Aristotelian Society, we want our trans colleagues to know that we are here for them, and that we stand wholeheartedly with our trans and non-binary siblings everywhere. Unlike the Aristotelian Society, we refuse to be 'neutral'. In the words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., "an injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." Unlike our colleagues at the Aristotelian Society, we refuse to remain silent in the face of injustices inside and outside the academe.

The right to promote hateful ideas is not covered under the right to free speech. Thus, we resist the charge that this is simply an attempt to silence and stifle philosophical debate. Nobody is entitled to unlimited and unopposed speech in academic philosophy - and we need to identify and call out forms of speech that target, oppress, and silence marginalised groups.

Not every item of personal and ideological obsession is worthy of philosophical debate. In particular, scepticism about the rights of marginalised groups and individuals, where issues of life and death are at stake, are not up for debate. The existence and validity of transgender and non-binary people, and the right of trans and non-binary people to identify their own genders and sexualities, fall within the range of such indisputable topics. We also condemn the questioning and policing of the sexualities of gay and lesbian people attracted to, and in relationships with, trans people. This policing and attacking of the genders and sexualities of others is just one way in which anti-trans arguments mirror other anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric.

Instead of engaging with or supporting the anti-trans work from members of the community, we encourage everyone to listen to and engage with the work of our transgender and non-binary colleagues, both through their academic publishing and their public work. We encourage everyone to listen to how trans and non-binary people are currently experiencing and faring in the discipline, and to engage seriously with this egregious state of affairs.

Specifically, we ask the Aristotelian Society to:

- Issue a statement in support of trans students and staff within philosophy, and commit to creating a more welcoming and affirming professional environment for trans people.
- Commit to a more nuanced approach to representation and diversity in their invited speakers, and to refrain in the future from inviting speakers that seek to exclude and marginalise through their speech vulnerable persons.
- Listen and engage with the work of queer, non-binary and trans philosophers, and to give appropriate uptake to the concerns that such philosophers raise about instances of anti-trans rhetoric and other expressions of bigotry in the profession.
- Materially support the work of advocacy around issues of LGBTQ+ equality, and especially the work of those groups that advocate for the rights of queer and trans persons.

More broadly, we ask that those in positions of relative professional security and power call out anti-trans rhetoric and hold their colleagues to account. We call on philosophy departments to make explicit their support of trans and non-binary students and staff, and to support the work of LGBTQ+ organisers in their departments.

On behalf of the community, we are sincerely sorry to those who are hurt and affected by this talk and the presence of anti-trans bigotry in academic philosophy. We recognise that as a discipline, we have repeatedly failed to support trans and non-binary colleagues. We commit to doing more, speaking louder, and making our discipline a better place.

Signed...

Note - at both MAP International and MAP UK we are working to do more in support of our trans colleagues. This statement is not adequate on its own. One next step we're taking is to release a more general call to action later this week, and we welcome suggestions and support...

2019-5 Professor Michele Moore and *Disability and Society* journal

This open letter/petition to the Disability and Society Editorial Board was organised by an associate professor at the University of Michigan, and gained 980 signatures via the website [ipetitions.com](https://www.ipetitions.com).³⁰⁰ The petition called for Professor Michele Moore to be removed from her post as editor and stated that unless action was taken, the signatories would no 'review for, publish with, promote, or subscribe to *Disability & Society*'. Four journal editors resigned over Professor Moore's views.³⁰¹

In June 2019, Woman's Place UK wrote to the Editorial Board in support of Professor Moore.³⁰²

Online petition/letter, June 2019

To the members of the *Disability & Society* editorial board:

We, the undersigned, write to express our profound disappointment at the public anti-transgender statements of *Disability & Society*'s editor, Michele Moore. Among other items, Moore has amplified [postings that claim trans suicide rates are a myth](#); she has made numerous posts that claim [trans narratives are a "trend"](#); she has circulated [links to her own events](#) that actively argue against transitioning, wherein she has claimed that "self-identification of gender is harmful for children and young people"; and she has on several occasions shared [a crowdfunding page](#) that purports to raise money for the fight against "[gender ideology](#)." Many of Dr. Moore's [writings](#) reproduce dangerous transphobic tropes. She states on Twitter, for example, that "transgender ideology is inherently dangerous to children and young people." Dr. Moore's Twitter statements are not the only instances of her public anti-transgender activism. Her recent scholarly work, including an [edited collection](#), promotes similar sentiments, arguing for example that "transgendering children is not liberal and progressive, but politically reactionary, physically and psychologically dangerous and abusive." As Jen Slater and Kirsty Liddiard note in [their recent *CJDS* article](#), Dr. Moore's writing "relies upon misinformed and

³⁰⁰ Yergeau, M. (online), *Letter to Disability & Society editorial board*, [ipetitions.com](https://www.ipetitions.com/petition/ds).
<https://www.ipetitions.com/petition/ds>

³⁰¹ The Times (2019), *Journal editors quit in protest over 'transphobic' academic*, 26 June 2019.
<https://www.thetimes.com/article/journal-editors-quit-in-protest-over-transphobic-academic-6tvq3cwfv>

³⁰² Woman's Place UK (2019), *In defence of Michele Moore*. 21 June 2019.
<https://womansplaceuk.org/2019/06/21/in-defence-of-michele-moore/>

outdated tropes about trans people and activism which are rarely supported through engagement with academic literature and research” (n.p.).

While we respect the right to free speech, we feel Dr. Moore is abusing the power of her professional platforms through her public trans-exclusionary activism. She has stressed the importance of “asking questions” and devoting “careful consideration” to difficult topics, but we are of the opinion that she has posed her questions in bad faith. In academia, we support conscientious, informed argumentation, but the lives and dignity of transgender people are not up for debate. Moreover, we recognize that the principles of gender liberation, far from being detrimental to young people, support the principles of dignity and self-respect for everyone.

To espouse community care and inclusion means valuing the lives, contributions, and experiences of trans and disabled scholars in our field. The overlap between disability communities and transgender communities is rich and complex. We are all vulnerable to the medical-industrial complex, institutionalization of bodily norms, and the bigotry that attends non-normativity. Dr. Moore’s public transantagonism risks making *Disability & Society* complicit in epistemic violence and active harm. In our opinion, Moore’s public declarations target those who are most precarious — living at the intersections of marginalized and targeted identities. Additionally, given Dr. Moore’s anti-transgender stances, we are deeply concerned that her editorship will hinder trans scholars from effectively reviewing for and publishing with this journal. With Dr. Moore as the editor, the lived experiences, stories, and theories of trans scholars risk being erased.

In sum, we believe that Dr. Moore’s public statements are harmful to transgender communities. As we have made clear, we feel it is particularly egregious that someone who holds such damaging positions should be granted the power to set the direction of this academic journal. Not only does her editorship inhibit trans scholars from submitting articles to *Disability & Society* in good conscience, but it also acts as a poison pill for disability studies generally—a discipline that is already struggling to be inclusive. At this moment, the members of the editorial board of *Disability & Society* have the opportunity to direct disability studies towards a positive, inclusive future—a future in which disability scholarship truly supports the communities it claims to serve. For these reasons, we the undersigned call on the *Disability & Society* editorial board to take action. We insist, in the strongest possible terms, that Dr. Moore step down from her post as editor of *Disability & Society*. We also urge the editorial board to write a public statement that condemns anti-transgender bigotry and affirms the inherent worth of the transgender and gender nonconforming members of the DS community specifically and the lives of transgender and gender nonconforming people broadly. Until such time as Dr. Moore resigns, we, the undersigned, will not review for, publish with, promote, or subscribe to *Disability & Society*...

The statement below was published by Trans Action Oxford, which describes itself as a 'group [students and staff] dedicated to fighting transphobia in all its forms, including but not limited to transmisogyny, enbyphobia and cissexism' based at the University of Oxford.³⁰³ The group condemned the university for hosting a Women's Place UK event (WPUK), which it stated was 'tacitly endors[ing] its transphobia.'³⁰⁴

The statement also condemned the support provided by the University of Oxford to Professor Selina Todd, who spoke at the event. The statement described Professor Todd as a 'person who is so openly transphobic should not be in the University's employment, let alone in a teaching position where she is directly interacting with students'. WPUK subsequently published a rebuttal to the statement.³⁰⁵

Online statement, 28 October 2019

We would like to start with the positives. We were thrilled to see hundreds of people turn out to our Trans Solidarity Demo on Friday. We were deeply moved to see the people of Oxford show that transphobia of any kind is not welcome in our city. The extraordinary turnout and enthusiasm demonstrates beyond any doubt that students and residents of Oxford stand in solidarity with the trans community. Together, we will drive transphobia out of our city.

And yet, Friday night brought great disappointment and frustration. We were appalled to see that the Women's Place UK event was hosted by the University of Oxford in its Examination Schools. We were even more shocked that they provided the group with security. While staff and students of the University stood in the rain in solidarity with trans people, the University itself endorsed and protected a group which has shown time and time again its disdain for trans identities, and its desire to erode our rights.

In short, we were all devastated by the news that, in hosting A Woman's Place UK, the University of Oxford tacitly endorsed its transphobia. Now, more than ever, the University needs to listen to the message of frustration,

³⁰³ *Trans Action Oxford*, Facebook.

<https://www.facebook.com/transactionox>

³⁰⁴ Trans Action Oxford (2019), *Trans Action Oxford's post*, 28 October 2019, Facebook.

<https://www.facebook.com/transactionox/posts/pfbid02kG1N27wETLsqEEhCLh7n3eJNw3HmPZwfD1TBCJVptJwuqr2vZNDDBYAf5y3mA2xjl>

³⁰⁵ Woman's Place UK (2019), *Misogyny in action: a rebuttal of statement by Trans Action Oxford*, 24 October 2019.

<https://womansplaceuk.org/2019/10/24/misogyny-in-action-a-rebuttal-of-statement-by-trans-action-oxford/>

empathy and defiance sent by trans students and staff, as well as those who stood alongside us, at the demo.

We know that a staggering 98% of trans students at the University of Oxford have experienced mental health issues. It is beyond outrageous that the University has spent a significant sum on protecting those who harm us, when it fails time and time again to invest sufficiently in welfare and support for trans students and staff.

The irony is particularly acute when you consider that to welcome transphobes into the University is to show trans students and staff the door. It is to make them feel alienated, disrespected and lacking in institutional support. It is simply unacceptable that the University has facilitated the spread of transphobia within its own institutions. Any policies and procedures which allowed this to happen need a swift and radical reconsideration.

This is not the first time that the University has played host to transphobes. In 2012, Exeter College hosted, and provided security for, the transphobic group Christian Concern. Neither is it the first time this week that the University has invited harmful groups to the city; on Monday, it welcome representatives of Glencore, a company heavily implicated in the climate crisis. The University of Oxford must do better to challenge regressive and hateful ideologies.

We are also deeply critical of the University's continued support of Professor Selina Todd of St Hilda's College. Todd was a speaker at Friday's event, and is a key figure in the organisation's campaign of transphobia. Todd refuses to grant trans women the same status as cisgender women. A person who is so openly transphobic should not be in the University's employment, let alone in a teaching position where she is directly interacting with students, some of them trans. Her presence in this University is directly detrimental to their well-being and safety.

Put simply, the University is not doing enough to support its trans students. Indeed, by welcoming transphobic groups and employing transphobic members of staff, it is actively and seriously harming its trans community.

We demand better.

We demand that the University review its policies, and ensure that groups like A Woman's Place are never hosted here again. We demand that it review its employment of Selina Todd. We demand, above all, that it invest properly and meaningfully in improving the well-being of its trans students and staff, because right now, it is only furthering our suffering

Signed,

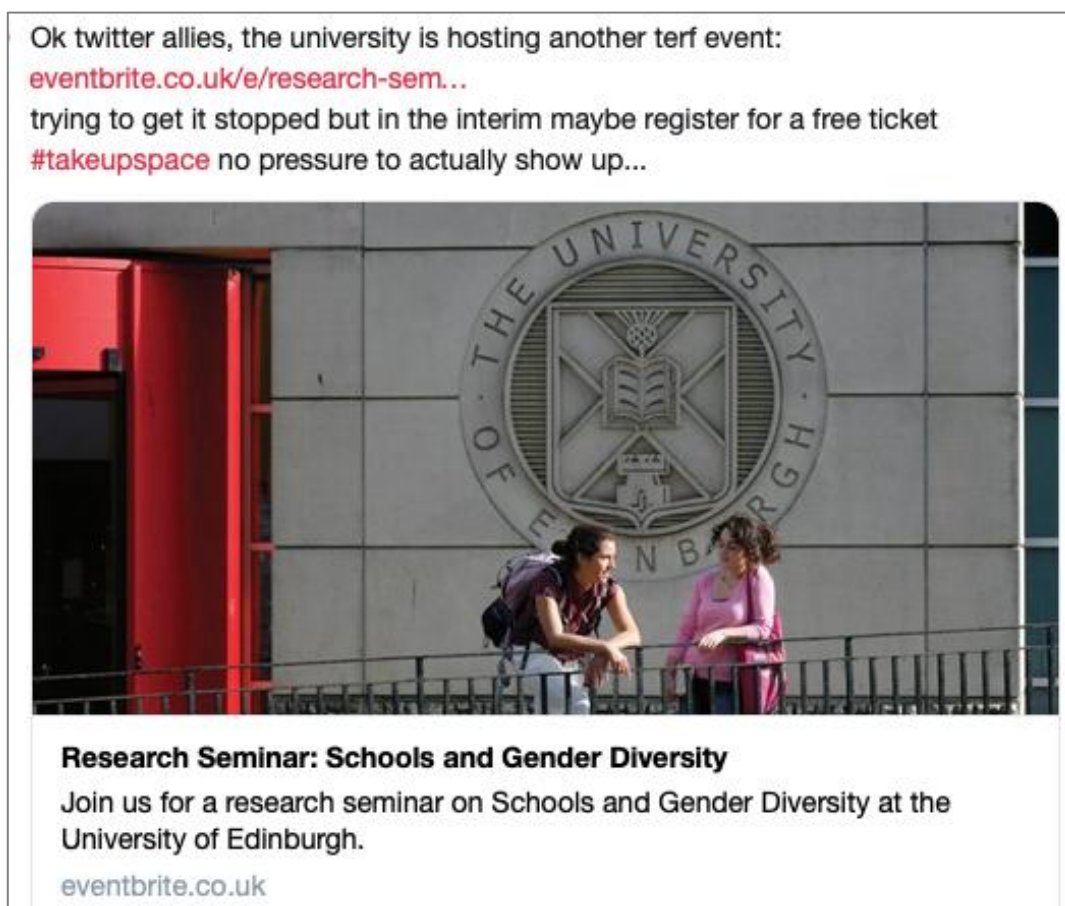
Trans Action Oxford

A collective of undergraduate and postgraduate students, and staff, of the University of Oxford

2019-7 'Schools and Gender Diversity' event, University of Edinburgh

The following statement from the University of Edinburgh Staff Pride Network (SPN) expressed 'disappointment' at a planned event on 'Schools and Gender Diversity', due to be hosted by the Moray House School of Education and Sport. A circular email with the same text was distributed to 600 network members the day before. The email and statement described the speakers as having 'a history of transphobia'.³⁰⁶

As acknowledged in the statement, the event organisers had invited the SPN and other LGBT groups to participate in the event, but all declined to take part. Once the event went live, a SPN co-convenor encouraged Twitter followers to make bogus bookings (see below, 12 November 2019).



³⁰⁶ University of Edinburgh Staff Pride Network (2019), *Committee Statement re Schools & Gender Diversity Event*, 14 November 2019.
<https://web.archive.org/web/20191114200651/https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/staffpridenetwork/2019/11/14/committee-statement-re-schools-gender-diversity-event/>

University managers subsequently postponed the event due to security concerns.³⁰⁷ At that juncture, the SPN issued an amended version of the letter (available on the UoE website at the time of writing). This stated, 'The Staff Pride Network Committee are relieved the event is not going ahead at this time and we are working with the University to provide a safe, inclusive environment for ALL staff and students to work and study'. It further stated, 'We believe it is correct to say that the activity of the proposed external guest speakers constitutes a history of transphobia because they have publicly and repeatedly misgendered and dead named trans people, and cited trans identities as equivalent to pathology'.³⁰⁸ The event went ahead on 7 June 2022, around two and half years later.³⁰⁹

Online statement/circular email

Committee Statement re Schools & Gender Diversity Event

Dear Staff Pride Network Members,

An event entitled 'Schools and Gender Diversity' has gone live. The Committee are upset and disappointed that another event featuring speakers with a history of transphobia will take place on our campus.

Despite being advertised as a research seminar it is not clear what research is being presented by Dr Benjamin or Prof Moore. We would be interested to hear objective, fact-based, pedagogic research. From what we understand of the work conducted by Ms Davies-Arai of Transgender Trend, they produced guidance for schools in England and Wales which has been resolutely denounced by Stonewall, stating, "It is a deeply damaging document, packed with factually inaccurate content"(1). We feel that the three speakers at this event will provide a biased viewpoint on supporting schoolchildren. The only challenge, if any, will have to come from the audience and will be reliant upon the chair to ensure questions to address the bias are answered.

University senior management invited us to meet with a view to establishing ways in which to reduce the harmful impact of this event on

³⁰⁷ University of Edinburgh Academics for Academic Freedom (2022), *Schools and gender: the unfinished history of an open seminar*, 11 April 2022.
<https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/edinburghafaf/2022/04/11/schools-and-gender-the-unfinished-history-of-an-open-seminar/>

³⁰⁸ See: University of Edinburgh Staff Pride Network (2019), *Committee Statement re Schools & Gender Diversity Event* (amended).
<https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/staffpridenetwork/2019/11/14/committee-statement-re-schools-gender-diversity-event/>

³⁰⁹ University of Edinburgh Academics for Academic Freedom (2022), *Sex, gender and schools: seminar open for booking*, 5 May 2022.
<https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/edinburghafaf/2022/05/05/sex-gender-and-schools-seminar-open-for-booking-tuesday-june-7th-5-30-7-30pm/>

the trans and non-binary community here at the University. They informed us that the University does not endorse this event, it is permitted under academic freedom, and have indicated that they want to work with SPN, EUSA and PrideSoc student network to support trans and non-binary staff and students at this difficult time. Nonetheless we have made it clear that, without a statement to the opposite, the University will be seen as endorsing this event simply by hosting it on University premises and that the Staff Pride Network sees no way to make the event not harmful. We will continue to support staff and students with informative, unbiased events.

The event organiser has told the media that the SPN were invited to participate in this research seminar. In fact, they invited us to participate in an 'in conversation with' event on this topic which was proposed as a balanced discussion. We understand LGBT Youth Scotland and Scottish Trans Alliance were also invited to that event and that they declined to participate over concerns for the safety of their staff and that they would not share a platform with speakers who do not accept trans identities as valid. We agree with this stance and declined to participate in any event with these speakers. We met with the chair of the University compliance committee and they advised us that without balance the 'in conversation with' event would not be approved. This research seminar approved by the compliance committee appears to be the same event, with the same speakers as the previous proposed event, but without balance. At no point were we invited to participate in the research seminar. Due to the refusal of the organiser to host a different event, we are at initial stages of planning an event to explore the imminent Scottish Government guidance, to counteract misinformation, to include speakers who affirm trans people's existence, not advocate the rolling back of hard-fought legal rights.

We believe that having these speakers with these beliefs at a University of Edinburgh sanctioned event contravenes the University's commitment to Dignity and Respect⁽²⁾ and Trans Equality⁽³⁾ and these speakers should not be allowed this space. It does not "create a positive culture for our trans and non-binary students and staff where they feel supported and respected to live as their true selves". Indeed, staff and students have told us they are considering leaving the University due to management appearing to endorse speakers such as these.

Kind regards,

Staff Pride Network Committee

1. <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/node/62946>
2. http://www.docs.csg.ed.ac.uk/HumanResources/Policies/Dignity_and_Respect-Policy.pdf
3. https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/trans_equality_policy.pdf

This open letter from the University of Essex LGBTQ Forum & Allies to the University Vice-Chancellor asked that ‘a preventative strategy can be created and put in place, to ensure that a situation such as the events of the 5th December 2019 do not occur again’. The ‘situation’ is a reference to a seminar, at which Professor Jo Phoenix was invited to speak, but was subsequently cancelled due to security concerns.

The letter is also cited in the Reindorf Review (see further part one), which notes, This document requested clarification from the University about “whether it is appropriate to discuss human rights (trans rights are human rights)” and why the University was “allowing transphobia onto campus under the guise of ‘academic freedom’”.³¹⁰

Multi-signatory open letter, December 2019

Dear Vice Chancellor,

Following recent coverage of the University of Essex’s cancellation of a seminar, which was due to be presented on Thursday 5th December 2019, by Professor Jo Phoenix (The Open University), we would like to address the issue and detail our stance on this matter.

As members of the LGBTQ community and allies at the University of Essex, we appreciate that academic freedom of speech plays a key part in the production of intelligent and useful debate, particularly in a research environment where creativity, discussion and challenging various perspectives breeds impactful output. However, an area of which we feel should not be up for discussion or debate is the existence of Trans/nonbinary communities and identities.

Being Trans/nonbinary is not a topic for debate: it is a reality.

We were disappointed to hear, on the morning of the 5th December, that Professor Jo Phoenix had been invited to present a seminar, which was going to “explore that there are some conceptual and political problems with the Trans rights perspective when applied to the administration of criminal justice in the UK”

(<https://www.essex.ac.uk/events/2019/12/05/trans-rights-and-justice>).

³¹⁰ Reindorf, A. (2020), ‘*Review of the circumstances resulting in and arising from the cancellation of the Centre for Criminology seminar on Trans Rights, Imprisonment and the Criminal Justice System, scheduled to take place on 5 December 2019, and the arrangements for speaker invitations to the Holocaust Memorial Week event on the State of Antisemitism Today, scheduled for 30 January 2020*’, 21 December 2020, University of Essex.

<https://www.essex.ac.uk/-/media/documents/review/events-review-report-university-of-essex-september-2021.pdf>

Trans/nonbinary people having equal rights is not a 'perspective': it is a human right. The right for trans people to access so-called 'single-sex spaces' (such as bathrooms, prisons, changing rooms, etc) has been sensationalised and often negatively portrays Trans people. The narrative specifically against Trans women being able to access 'women's spaces' has been largely negative: framing Trans women as posing a 'threat' to cisgender women, as being predators, attackers or criminals. The talk proposed by Professor Jo Phoenix showed evidence of a similar narrative: an 'argument' that there are 'conceptual and political problems with the trans rights perspective when applied to the administration of criminal justice in the UK'

(<https://www.essex.ac.uk/events/2019/12/05/trans-rights-and-justice>).

We emphasise, Trans/nonbinary people having equal rights is not a 'perspective': it is a human right.

What the media often fails to cover is that Trans/nonbinary people are subjected to widespread abuse, invalidation and discrimination simply for existing.

What the media fails to reinforce is that Trans women are women, Trans men are men, and all gender identities are valid. What the media fails to report is what the GRA reform means and what existing rights exist within the Equality Act 2010.

As per the LGBT in Britain: Trans Report 2018 from Stonewall, 48 percent of Trans people do not feel comfortable using public toilets. Two in five Trans people and three in ten non-binary people have experienced a hate crime or incident because of their gender identity in the last 12 months. Younger Trans adults are at greatest risk: 53 per cent of Trans people aged 18 to 24 have experienced a hate crime or incident based on their gender identity in the last 12 months. For a community who are constantly having their occupancy and existence in everyday spaces questioned to see that an academic with the profile of Professor Jo Phoenix – someone with an academic status of power and influence – has been given a platform at a University to present a seminar on the implications of allowing trans women into women's prisons is not productive or helpful. It is harmful and validates public questioning of the Trans experience.

We emphasise, being Trans/nonbinary is not a topic for debate: it is a reality.

On the news of this seminar, several members of our LGBTQ Forum & Allies individually contacted the Head of Department for Sociology and the Director for the Centre of Criminology, along with contacting the Chief of Staff, the Compliance Manager (Safeguarding) and relevant Inclusion Champions, to ask questions and express our concerns. We feared that the organisers might not be aware that Jo Phoenix is in fact a vocal member of the transphobic lobby that has emerged in academia. She was one of the signatories of a letter to the Guardian in October 2018 which expressed the concerns of a group of academic who claim to be

“concerned about the suppression of proper academic analysis and discussion of the social phenomenon of transgenderism” and about the Gender Recognition Act reforms. Jo Phoenix is also affiliated with Woman’s Place, a vocal lobby group that has publicly voiced its disagreement with the reform of the Gender Recognition Act.

Jo Phoenix was also a signatory to a letter in the Sunday Times which claimed that, in part, “As academics we are writing to register our disquiet over the inappropriately close relationship between the LGBT charity Stonewall and UK universities, via the Stonewall Diversity Champions programme. The membership requirements of this programme are in tension with academic freedom. For instance, university members must instigate specialist trans policies, in addition to general equality policies, which outlaw “transphobic” teaching and research material but offer no clear definition of what would count as such.” Jo Phoenix is thus not just tacitly but openly hostile to the proclaimed inclusivity policies of our institution which have been carefully and collectively arrived at. Huge amounts of institutional energy and collective goodwill was put towards recognition that this community supports the Diversity Champions initiative. It is therefore contradictory that someone who is openly hostile to our stated community position on this issue was invited to speak.

We appreciate that “academic staff shall have freedom within the law to question and test received wisdom, and to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions, without placing themselves in jeopardy of losing their jobs or privileges” (as outlined in the University’s Royal Charter). However, the University of Essex policy on Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech also states that the university may itself apply restrictions in circumstances where they are necessary to safeguard the safety, health and welfare of its registered students, employees and other persons lawfully upon the premises or engaged in activities associated with the University: including giving effect to the safeguards set out in the Equalities Act 2010.

Discrimination against those who fall under the protected characteristic ‘Gender Reassignment’ (which the University of Essex recognises is an outdated term) can be direct, indirect, harassment and victimisation. The debate around the ‘legitimacy’ of Trans/nonbinary people is direct discriminative speech. Hailing academic freedom of speech as a justification for introducing such a party into the University environment is directly creating an offensive and unsafe environment for those who are Trans/nonbinary.

The University states a zero-tolerance approach to hate crime: this is inclusive of hate speech. We believe that the talk, as well as the speaker presenting this seminar, was conducive to hate speech and bigotry: not academic freedom. As a zero-tolerance approach, this ‘debate’ is not welcome here at our campus. The safety and wellbeing of a marginalised community, our Trans/nonbinary community, is paramount above that of the need to express bigoted views.

We would urge those who disapprove of the cancellation of this talk to consider their own privileges and seek to position themselves as allies for the Trans community. The statistics published by Stonewall (Trans Report in Britain: 2018) recently conveyed the harrowing reality for Trans/nonbinary people seeking an education within the academic sector:

- More than a third of Trans University students (36 per cent) have experienced negative comments or conduct from staff in the last year.
- One in seven Trans university students (14 per cent) have considered dropping out or have dropped out of a higher education course because of experiencing harassment or discrimination from students and staff in the last year.
- Half of trans and non-binary people (51 per cent and 50 per cent respectively) have hidden or disguised the fact they are LGBT at work because they were afraid of discrimination.

If we were discussing academic freedom of speech, we would hope that this would extend to ensuring equality of freedom of speech: allowing Trans/nonbinary people equal opportunity and rights to education, to research, to impactful study. What they do not deserve is to have their existence questioned by those who not only are already in a place where they have gained academic accolade and privilege, but also have such people influencing and addressing the majority with their discriminatory stance and viewpoint under the guise of 'academia'.

We welcome a review of the external speaker notification form and the process in which talks are vetted at the University. We also welcome a review of how marginalised communities are discussed within academia, to ensure not only adherence to the Equality Act 2010, but also a respectful environment that allows marginalised communities to access academia freely, without fear of being used as a topic for debate and scrutiny. If the university continue to handle this incident poorly, it has the potential to further alienate the LGBTQ community at Essex, including the many students who are affected by these issues.

We have attached our comments and concerns from the Forum, collated on the 9th December 2019. We request a response from the Vice Chancellor on these matters, with the hope that in consultation with the Forum, a preventative strategy can be created and put in place, to ensure that a situation such as the events of the 5th December 2019 do not occur again.

We would like to thank all those who raised their concerns and expressed their support for our cause. We also encourage students, staff and visitors to the University to continue to utilise the Report and Support service available online, and to challenge discrimination against the LGBTQ community when safe and able to do so.

Yours Sincerely, The LGBTQ Forum & Allies

The following flyer was distributed on the University of Essex campus, in response to a forthcoming event titled 'Trans rights and justice: complicated contours in contemporary sex, gender and sexualities politics when thinking about issues of justice and punishment'. The event organisers, the Centre for Criminology, cancelled the event a few hours ahead of it taking place, citing concerns that 'open debate and discussion might be obstructed'. Professor Phoenix was initially told the event would be rescheduled, but this did not take place.

In 2021, following publication of the Reindorf report, the University Vice-Chancellor issued an open apology to Professor Phoenix.

Jo Phoenix is a transphobe who should not be invited to this university. You can't call yourself a feminist if you don't respect trans women! Delegitimising trans people is part of a misogynistic, colonialist and violent ideology. Jo Phoenix has been (wrongly) accusing "trans politics" of reinforcing gender stereotypes. In actual fact, it is her kind of trans-exclusionary feminism that reinforces rigid roles for women (they must be able to give birth, must have XX chromosomes, etc) – but women outside of these roles have existed for all of history. She is covering up her bigotry in academic jargon and claiming to just "raise questions", but this is a typical disguise for prejudice. Along with other bigoted academics, Jo Phoenix signed a letter to the Guardian claiming that "research into transgender issues" (i.e. academic transphobia) is being silenced. It isn't but it should be!	 The flyer features a cartoon character with short blue hair, a yellow shirt, and a pink skirt. The character is holding a handgun in their right hand and making a peace sign with their left hand. The text 'SHUT THE FUCK UP' is written in large, colorful, block letters at the top. The word 'TERF' is written in large, white, block letters at the bottom. The background is black with some colorful starburst effects.

2020

2020-1 Woman's Place UK and Professor Selina Todd

The following letter was organised by the Committee of Oxford College Junior Common Room Presidents,³¹¹ and garnered signatures from current and previous Junior Common Room and Middle Common room Presidents.³¹² The letter condemned funding made available by the History Faculty to Woman's Place UK, for a research project led by Professor Selina Todd on the framing of sex and gender identity in the UK censuses. The letter described Professor Todd as having 'transphobic views' and called for the History Faculty to issue an apology, review its funding process, and for 'the University to refuse to host any future events from WPUK on University property'. An article published in the online Critic magazine rebutted the letter.³¹³

Open letter, 14 December 2020

The undersigned JCR and MCR Presidents of Oxford are extremely disappointed that the University continues to fail its transgender students

CW: transphobia, suicide, self-harm

We, the Common Room Presidents of Oxford, were extremely disappointed to hear of Oxford's £20,000 payment to Woman's Place UK this year. WPUK is an organisation which seeks to deny transgender people their rights in the false name of 'feminism' and has been condemned by numerous LGBTQ+ organisations, including Stonewall and PinkNews. WPUK has campaigned for numerous projects that actively discriminate against transgender individuals, for example, they advocate for a ban on transgender individuals using the bathrooms that correctly align with their gender rather than their sex assigned at birth. WPUK conferences have historically been funded and attended by transphobic individuals and WPUK has made no attempt to condemn this faction of their support base. WPUK is a transphobic organisation, and Oxford University should be condemning them, not funding them.

The project which the History Faculty funded is led by Professor Selina Todd, an individual condemned, on numerous occasions by trans students

³¹¹ PRESCOM (online), *The Committee of Oxford College JCR Presidents*, Facebook.
<https://www.facebook.com/PresidentsCommittee>

³¹² PRESCOM (2020), *PresCom's post*, 14 December 2020, Facebook.
<https://www.facebook.com/PresidentsCommittee/posts/the-undersigned-jcr-and-mcr-presidents-of-oxford-are-extremely-disappointed-that/3508013355949655/>

³¹³ Larundson, L. (2020), *The wrong sort of women, again*, 21 December 2020, The Critic.
<https://thecritic.co.uk/the-wrong-sort-of-women-again/>

at Oxford, for her transphobic views. The project, titled 'The Political Erasure of Sex' protests the use of gender identity, rather than sexual identity, as a data variable in the national Census. Not only would mandatory questions on sexual identity force transgender and non-binary individuals to describe themselves with a label which they have disavowed and may cause them trauma, it explicitly contradicts the recommendation of the Equality and Human Rights Commission in 2011. This project threatens trans rights. Trans rights are human rights.

The University has been criticised on numerous occasions for hosting WPUK and providing a platform for the organisation to lobby their transphobic views. The University has claimed that platforming WPUK is not the same as endorsing their views. A £20,000 payment from Oxford University, the largest in their financial statements from 2018-20, is an endorsement. When combined with the transphobic aims of the project, it becomes clear the History Faculty is funding the erasure of trans rights.

Oxford University has a deep problem with transphobia. The 2018 Trans Report found that 98% of trans students had experienced mental health problems at Oxford, 65% said the University had impacted negatively upon their mental health and 45% had experienced suicidal thoughts. 63% had experienced transphobia at Oxford, and those that experienced discrimination were twice as likely to self-harm and have suicidal thoughts. There is a clear link between discrimination and mental health issues, and a very alarming crisis in mental health for trans students at Oxford. In the context of the COVID pandemic, where many trans students have been forced to remain in home environments which are toxic, abusive and harmful to their mental health, tackling this crisis should be an urgent priority for the University.

It is extremely concerning that the University is willing to fund projects that contribute towards the discrimination of transgender individuals and promote a culture which erases their identity but fails to fund resources to tackle the crisis in mental health taking place amongst the trans community of Oxford. Indeed, the University's indifference towards the suffering caused by hosting WPUK to trans students and now news of the University's financial endorsement of WPUK will damage the trust of trans students in the University and contribute further towards this crisis in mental health. Contributing to an environment which is hostile, discriminatory and humiliating for transgender students by endorsing WPUK the University is violating its own Harassment Policy.

We understand that the History Faculty has granted Professor Selina Todd funding for her project, and where she chooses to devote this funding would be at her discretion. This highlights a clear flaw in the ethical standards any project in the History Faculty is expected to meet. If a research project which threatens transgender rights can pass the Faculty's standards of ethical research, these standards are clearly out of date and insufficient.

We call for:

- A public apology from the History Faculty of Oxford for their payment to WPUK.
- An immediate review into the funding processes within the History Faculty so that projects are ethical and do not advance discrimination, especially towards transgender individuals.
- An immediate review into the welfare services provided for transgender individuals within the University and the establishment of a clear action plan for how the University plans to tackle the crisis in mental health for transgender students.
- A commitment from the University to refuse to host any future events from WPUK on University property.
- The University to investigate the possibility of donating to charities which support the transgender community and consider the establishment of specific funding opportunities for transgender academics.
- The University to enact the proposals above in consultation with transgender students, their representatives, and Prescom.

The following multi-signatory open letter,³¹⁴ signed by over 175 academics from the University of Kent at Canterbury (UKC) and other UK and US-based universities, called for the UKC Vice-Chancellor to cancel a School of English keynote lecture on 'Class', to be given by Professor Selina Todd.³¹⁵

The letter cited other cancelled events as a precedent for cancelling the event with Professor Todd: 'The decision also ignores precedents set by the University of East Anglia in January 2020, who postponed a planned seminar with gender critical feminist Kathleen Stock because of 'issues of academic freedom' in response to potential protests and University of Edinburgh, who cancelled a similar event in December due to emails from hundreds of staff'.

Multi-signatory open letter, undated

Colleagues in the school of English at University of Kent have recently been informed that the university has chosen to uphold the invitation to Selina Todd to speak as part of the keynote lecture series. As colleagues and students at the University of Kent, we would like to register our opposition to this event. Selina Todd is a self-proclaimed gender critical feminist who has been widely criticised for her arguments against trans people's - particularly trans women's - right to self-identify. We believe that the message that our hosting of Selina Todd sent to trans and nonbinary students and staff in the university, our students who are trans and nonbinary allies, and our trans and nonbinary future applicants, is that the School, and more broadly, the University, believes that trans identity is up for discussion.

The English Keynote Lecture series is designed to represent and reflect the attitude, politics and image of the School of English and, by extension, the University. Selina Todd's invitation represents a decision that has been made by the School of English without wider consultation with its staff members and students, and the university's decision to uphold the invitation has been made despite concerns raised by staff and students, and again, without wider consultation.

The power dynamics of providing a platform to Selina Todd in the name of 'academic free speech' means putting trans and nonbinary members of our community in the position of having to defend their right to exist. While the

³¹⁴ University of Kent (2020), *Professor Selina Todd lecture*, 5 March 2020.

<https://www.kent.ac.uk/news/uncategorized/24352/professor-selina-todd-lecture>

³¹⁵ Multi-signatory open letter (online), *An Open Letter to the University of Kent about the Selina Todd English Keynote Lecture*.

https://docs.google.com/document/u/1/d/15ehzvwPnOLyM_HuZRDDKB4m5VWkXT2XcVXzSphSQsSU/mobilebasic

University has invited those opposed to the event to go to the lecture and engage Selina Todd in a debate, we counter that, as Sara Ahmed argues, 'there cannot be a dialogue when some are at the table are, in effect or intent, arguing for the elimination of others at the table'.

Todd's views, which she summarises on her blog [] are not simply 'problematic' or 'unpopular'; they are harmful. The idea that trans people are a threat to women, and that others have the right to ignore, dismiss, or negate that identity based on belief is a false and harmful narrative. Her blog post argues against trans women's right to be treated as women and gives credence to the false idea that trans rights impinge upon, or take away from, women's rights. Her views refuse to acknowledge that trans women ARE women, and that trans women's rights ARE women's rights.

Todd's ideas, and ideas like these, give encouragement to those who wish to see trans people marginalised, and contribute to a wider climate of intolerance. More pressingly, 2019 saw an 81% rise in transphobic hate crimes, and it is views like Todd's that question the validity of trans and nonbinary identity, which give justification to further transphobic violence. We believe that it makes no difference that Selina Todd has not been invited to speak specifically about gender identity. Her trans exclusionary feminist stance is likely to inform her ideas on other subjects, particularly about women and labour.

The University's justification for holding the event on the grounds of free speech overlooks the fact that Selina Todd already has many platforms upon which to have her voice, and her views, heard and expressed. The Keynote Lecture Series is a space in which we provide speakers with an elevated platform in which to speak. It is not a level playing field that exists outside of structures of power and privilege, nor is it a space where all individuals have equal access to having their voices heard. The decision also ignores precedents set by the University of East Anglia in January 2020, who postponed a planned seminar with gender critical feminist Kathleen Stock because of 'issues of academic freedom' in response to potential protests and University of Edinburgh, who cancelled a similar event in December due to emails from hundreds of staff.

We urge that the University of Kent and the School of English, reconsider their decision to uphold the invitation, and ask that the University formally recognised that transphobic speech is hate speech that puts members of our trans and nonbinary community at further risk. We also encourage colleagues and fellow students who feel similarly to boycott the event. #Transrightsarehumanrights.

The following open letter to the UCL Provost was organised by six UCL Equality and Diversity Vice Deans and signed by 70 individuals, only nine of whom appeared to be UCL academic staff (including the six Vice Deans), with the remaining signatures from students.³¹⁶ The letter objected to a one-day Woman's Place UK/UCL Women's Liberation conference,³¹⁷ and asked UCL to 'withdraw their support in providing physical space for WPUK to showcase their discriminatory views'. The letter further described the views of WPUK as 'transphobic and discriminatory' and 'in direct contradiction to Stonewall's UK Workplace Equality Index'.

A separate statement published by the Student's Union UCL also 'strongly' objected to the event.³¹⁸ Shortly after the conference, several Labour MP leadership candidates signed a trans rights charter that described WPUK as a 'trans-exclusionist hate group' and called for Labour members that support WPUK to be expelled.³¹⁹ A subsequent letter from a group of UCL academics rebutted the 'libellous claim' in the charter, and highlighted links between this discourse and the bullying of women within both academia and the Labour Party.³²⁰

Multi-signatory open letter, undated

Dear Provost,

Women's Place UK (WPUK) are holding a one-day conference at UCL, invited by "UCL Women's Liberation" on Saturday 1st February 2020. Details of the announcement were made shortly before the Xmas vacation, but it has only come to our attention in the past few days. There are a number of irregularities with the advertising of the conference of the sort that have brought reputational damage to UCL in the past, including no public information about any of the invited speakers. That ID is required for

³¹⁶ Multi-signatory open letter (online), *Women's Place UK (WPUK) at UCL*. https://docs.google.com/document/d/1UAY6MhIJgJjTYCO8Z3LRjueVx0hr8N8Ei5MK7_WI2qU/edit?fbclid=IwAR2ZtwWKpzEr1kEozQsHg69pqMFm_u47mGK7Z62WcFoMeXAx7Th0ys7GnCl&tab=t.0

³¹⁷ UCL Women's Liberation (2020), *Women's Liberation 2020 Conference #WomensLib2020*, 10 January 2020. <https://blogs.ucl.ac.uk/feminism/2020/01/10/womens-liberation-2020-conference/>

³¹⁸ Students' Union UCL (online), *Our statement on the WPUK conference*. <https://studentsunionucl.org/articles/our-statement-on-wpuk-conference>

³¹⁹ The Guardian (2020), *Labour leadership: row over support for trans rights charter*, 12 February 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2020/feb/12/labour-leadership-row-over-support-for-trans-rights-charter>

³²⁰ The Guardian (2020), *Woman's Place UK is not a 'trans-exclusionist hate group'*, Letters, 20 February 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/feb/20/womans-place-uk-is-not-a-trans-exclusionist-hate-group>

each attendee, and that venue details are “confidential to ticket-holders” also sends alarm bells about the nature of the event being held, and its content.

Why might they conference have these special requirements? WPUK are well known for advocating themselves as being “gender critical”. Their manifesto, launched in 2019 includes opposition for the proposed improvements to the Gender Recognition Act, the exclusion of transgender and gender diverse people from certain spaces and an ongoing campaign against gender-neutral spaces such as restrooms.

Other organisations have taken the step to cancel WPUK conferences when they realised the content of their debates, including Leeds City Council in 2018.

WPUK’s views on gender identity are transphobic and discriminatory. They go against everything that UCL has been trying to do in promoting equality, diversity and inclusion, and are in direct contradiction to Stonewall’s UK Workplace Equality Index.

While Freedom of Expression is a fundamental right, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) recognise that no one can rely on the human right of freedom of expression to limit or undermine the human rights of others. Furthermore, Freedom of Expression does not protect statements that discriminate against or harass other persons particularly by reference to their gender or sexual orientation.

Letting this conference go ahead will result in a huge backlash from staff and students, and cause considerable reputational damage to the university. It will also cause emotional damage to trans colleagues and students. We request that UCL withdraw their support in providing physical space for WPUK to showcase their discriminatory views. From the website, considerable conference fees are being charged, and we request that UCL act to stop WPUK from profiting from discrimination on UCL estates.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted] Vice Dean EDI, Social and Historical Sciences

[redacted] Vice Dean EDI, Faculty of Engineering Sciences

[redacted] Vice Dean EDI, Bartlett Faculty of the Built Environment

[redacted] Vice Dean EDI, Arts and Humanities Faculty

[redacted] Vice Dean EDI, Faculty of Population Health Sciences

[redacted] Vice-Dean EDI, Faculty of Mathematical and Physical Sciences

[Additional signatures]’

The following letter, signed by over 560 University of Oxford students, alumni, and society and representatives, expressed distress and disappointment over the appointment of Professors Selina Todd and Senia Paseta to lead a Women's Equality and Inequality research project in the Oxford Martin School.³²¹ The letter stated, 'these two professors have negatively impacted both the lives and experiences of trans students and researchers at the University of Oxford' and asserted that their 'appointment tacitly sanctions their views and perpetuates a hostile and exclusionary environment for trans people at the Martin school'. Among its demands, the letter called for 'professors with a history of transphobic views (as defined by Trans Actual UK) not be given student-facing roles'.³²² An article by the letter's co-author, published in the University of Oxford Student newspaper, made similar allegations against Professor Todd and Paseta.³²³

Multi-signatory open Letter, 12 October 2020

Dear Pro-Vice-Chancellor of Oxford University, Pro-Vice-Chancellor of the Oxford Martin School, Professor Selina Todd, and Professor Senia Paseta,

We, the undersigned, are distressed and disappointed to see that two professors with a history of transphobia have been appointed leaders of a programme to research Women's Equality and Inequality at the Oxford Martin School. These two professors have negatively impacted both the lives and experiences of trans students and researchers at the University of Oxford, and the discourse on trans issues globally, as trans members of the University and their allies have been saying for years. Their appointment tacitly sanctions their views and perpetuates a hostile and exclusionary environment for trans people at the Martin school. Given the School's aims of finding solutions for some of the world's most significant challenges, it is not only unnecessary but harmful to the institution and its effects on international discourse for trans voices to be marginalised, put at risk, or silenced. We also fear the beliefs of these professors will negatively

³²¹ Multi-signatory open letter (2020), *Open Letter Regarding Transphobia at Oxford*, October 2020. https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSc64UIWOuJ2wWDXqwCrBXPdofyTOycRgExIz9FMzBb6bPMoww/viewform?fbclid=IwAR0_FYahb8IUOqoHlv-0fSqkdIK9am0RP3G9t-fSzqyDhmbfEiBfvSxwU3q

³²² See also: The Oxford Student (2020), *Students call for University action against 'transphobic' professors*, 9 October 2020. <https://www.oxfordstudent.com/2020/10/09/students-call-for-university-action-against-transphobic-professors/>

³²³ Keinath-Esmail, Z. (2020), *This week in transphobia: Oxford does it again*, 28 September 2020. <https://theoxfordblue.co.uk/this-week-in-transphobia-oxford-does-it-again/>

affect the scope and quality of research with which they are associated, resulting in the minimisation or neglecting of trans related issues.

In addition, we feel that the appointment of professors with transphobic views to such an important position reflects a wider apathy towards the wellbeing of trans students at Oxford. The 2018 Trans Report from the Student Union showed that 98% of trans students at Oxford report mental health issues, with a further 65% reporting that the University had had a negative impact on their mental health. In addition, 63% of trans students have experienced discrimination from the University, with 97% of this being reported as transphobic discrimination: 35% of respondents reported this transphobic discrimination as coming from staff and administrators of the University.

While much of this discrimination is reported as being due to ignorance instead of bigotry, we do not think the University has responded in a manner that is proportionate to the problem. The one positive effort we could find - the effort to educate staff about trans identities - was undercut by staff criticisms of trans awareness, as well as the continued hosting of University-authorised events platforming transphobic views such as those held by Professors Selina Todd and Senia Paseta. Meanwhile, important appointments such as the aforementioned ones at the Oxford Martin School reinforce the feeling amongst trans students that the University does not care about their wellbeing.

To begin to address these issues, we have the following demands:

1. We ask that the Oxford Martin School, and in particular Professors Todd and Paseta, publicly commit to including trans women in their research and offer an explanation as to how they will ensure adequate inclusion.
2. We ask that the University publicly adopt the Trans Actual UK definition of transphobia, to better be able to determine when something transphobic has occurred (we use this definition because it has a range of examples that relate to much of the transphobia we face at University). Adopting such a definition would also encourage and allow welfare deans and other officials to better be able to respond to transphobic incidents.
3. We ask that professors with a history of transphobic views (as defined by Trans Actual UK) not be given student-facing roles. We feel that, while such professors should be able to continue their research, their presence as deans, tutors, and lecturers negatively impacts the wellbeing of trans students: removing them from student-facing roles provides a compromise between the welfare of the students and that of the professors.

We ask the University to publicly reaffirm its commitment to support trans students (including nonbinary identities) and to present a plan to improve the welfare of such students. The plan should include a reasonable

timeframe and concrete, measurable goals; we also suggest there be a public consultation aspect (perhaps via the SU LGBTQ+ Campaign).

These demands are not a final solution, but rather the beginning of a process of dialogue to improve the welfare of trans students at Oxford. They will help establish trust and accountability between students and the University which has thus far been lacking. Only then will we be able to begin to make progress.

Kind regards,

This statement,³²⁴ issued by ‘Sociologists for Trans Justice’, expressed disappointment about the publication of an article by the lead author of this Review. In the article, Professor Alice Sullivan argued that data on sex and gender identity should be collected separately in the UK censuses.³²⁵ Strikingly, the statement does not name Professor Sullivan, nor cite the journal article objected to. This information can, however, be inferred from two academic articles cited in the statement, published in rebuttal to Professor Sullivan’s article.³²⁶

Open Statement, undated

Statement on Sex and Gender within Survey Methodology

As sociologists, we are deeply disappointed that a member of our discipline has published an article asserting that trans women should not be counted as women.ⁱ Particularly since the article does not engage the wealth of work by trans and other scholars on the topic of how best to measure sex, gender, and gender identity in surveys.ⁱⁱ Or the reams of work showing that trans people, especially young people, are profoundly harmed by the repetition of the narrative that our genders are not “real.”ⁱⁱⁱ Or all the research documenting the fact that advantage and disadvantage are largely distributed on the basis of how others perceive our gender.^{iv,v} Moreover, we are saddened, angry, frustrated, and annoyed that we yet again need to explain that trans people are people, and can be relied upon to accurately report who we are.

³²⁴ Sociologists 4 Trans Justice (online), *Sociologists for Trans Justice Statement on Sex and Gender within Survey Methodology*.

<https://s4tj.com/sociologists-for-trans-justice-statement-on-sex-and-gender-within-survey-methodology/>

³²⁵ Sullivan, A. (2020), *Sex and the Census: Why surveys should not conflate sex and gender identity*, International Journal of Social Research Methodology vol. 23: 5 pp. 517-524.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2020.1768346>

³²⁶ These are: Fugard, A. (2020), *Should trans people be postmodernist in the streets but positivist in the spreadsheets? A reply to Sullivan*, International Journal of Social Research Methodology, vol. 2: 5 pp.525-531.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2020.1768343>

and;

Hines, S. (2020), *Counting the cost of difference: a reply to Sullivan*. International Journal of Social Research Methodology vol.23: 5 pp. 533-538.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2020.1768344>

Similar to the Sociologists 4 Trans Justice statement, whilst titled ‘a reply to Sullivan’, Professor Hines’ rebuttal does not cite Professor Sullivan’s article. We understand that Professor Hines was asked by the journal to provide the reference.

2021

2021-1 Former Professor Kathleen Stock, OBE award

In the 2020/1 New Years Honours, former Professor Kathleen Stock was named as an Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) for services to higher education. The following open letter, signed by nearly 800 individuals, objected to the award.³²⁷

The letter described the signatories as ‘professional academic philosophers’ although this is impossible to verify. Of the 789 signatories, few provided details of their respective discipline. Whilst directly concerned with the UK honours system, over half the signatories (55.1%) indicated that they were based in North America. Individuals based in the UK accounted for just over a fifth of the signatures (21.5%). Other signatories were variously based in Europe, Australia and New Zealand, Asia, and South America. Around 6% provided no institutional affiliation. A full breakdown is shown in the table below.

Table 10. Location of signatories to letter objecting to awarding an OBE to Kathleen Stock

Signatory location	Number	%
North America	435	55.1%
UK	170	21.5%
Europe (exc. UK)	97	12.3%
Unknown	48	6.1%
Australia and New Zealand	15	1.9%
Asia	11	1.4%
South America	11	1.4%
Russia	1	0.1%
South Africa	1	0.1%
Total	789	99.90

The letter was later amended to acknowledge that the claim that ‘Stock opposes the UK’s Gender Recognition Act’ was false.³²⁸ A blog by American philosopher

³²⁷ Multi-signatory open letter (2021), *Open Letter Concerning Transphobia in Philosophy*, January 2021. <https://sites.google.com/view/trans-phil-letter/>
Archived copy: <https://archive.is/Wxkt3>

³²⁸ See: Weinberg, J. (2021) *Kathleen Stock Receives OBE; Philosophers Sign Letter Opposing the Honor (Updated)*, 5 January 2021, Daily Nous.
<https://dailynous.com/2021/01/05/kathleen-stock-receives-obe-philosophers-opposing-honor/>

Professor Brian Leiter described the letter as ‘full of mistakes, fact-free speculation and misleading innuendo’.³²⁹

In October 2021, against the backdrop of the ‘Stock Out’ campaign (see Appendix four) around 250 philosophers based in UK universities wrote an Open Letter in Support of Sussex in its Defence of Academic Freedom’. In marked contrast to the letter objecting to Stock’s OBE, all signatories provided details of their subject area, institution, and academic title. Most came from the highest qualified academic ranks, with academics at a professorial level accounting for 47% of signatures, and academics with doctorates accounting for a further 46%. The letter stated, ‘While not all of us agree with Professor Stock’s views, we are convinced of the importance of making space within Universities and within public life for respectful debate and discussion, particularly in relation to pressing issues of public policy’.³³⁰

Open letter, January 2021

Open Letter Concerning Transphobia in Philosophy

We are professional academic philosophers committed to the inclusion and acceptance of trans and gender non-conforming people, both in the public at large, and within philosophy in particular. We write to affirm our commitment to developing a more inclusive environment, disavowing the use of professional and cultural authority to further gendered oppression.

Last week the UK’s Conservative government designated Kathleen Stock, a Professor of Philosophy at the University of Sussex, and a prominent critic of trans-inclusive stances and policies, an Officer of the Order of the British Empire. This award was ostensibly given for services to higher education. Stock is best-known in recent years for her trans-exclusionary public and academic discourse on sex and gender, especially for opposition to [amendments to*] the UK Gender Recognition Act and the importance of self-identification to establish gender identity, and for advocating that trans women should be excluded from places like women’s locker rooms or shelters. She used the occasion of her OBE award to post on Twitter, calling for UK universities to end their association with Stonewall, the prominent LGBTQ+ rights charity, describing its trans-inclusive stance as a threat to free speech.

³²⁹ Leiter, B. (2021), *The "Anti-Kathleen Stock" open letter is full of mistakes, fact-free speculation and misleading innuendo*, Leiter Reports: A Philosophy Blog, 6 January 2021.

<https://leiterreports.typepad.com/blog/2021/01/the-anti-kathleen-stock-open-letter-is-full-of-mistakes.html>

³³⁰ Multi-signatory open letter (2021), *Open Letter of Solidarity with the University of Sussex from UK Philosophers*, 11 October 2021.

<https://openlettertosussexfromukphilosophers.wordpress.com/>

Trans people are already deeply marginalized in society, facing well-documented discrimination, ranging from government policy to physical violence. Discourse like that Stock is producing and amplifying contributes to these harms, serving to restrict trans people's access to life-saving medical treatments, encourage the harassment of gender-non-conforming people, and otherwise reinforce the patriarchal status quo. We are dismayed that the British government has chosen to honour her for this harmful rhetoric.

We do not say Stock should not be *permitted* to say the things she does. We believe in the principles of academic freedom, and note that objecting to someone being lauded or honoured for their speech simply does not conflict with those principles. Academic freedom comes with responsibility; we *should* not use that freedom to harm people, particularly the more vulnerable members of our community. Conflating concern about the harms of Stock's work with threats to academic freedom obfuscates important issues.

By no means are we suggesting that there aren't deep and important questions about sex and gender, or that philosophers should not pursue them. Indeed, an [open letter](#) from 2019, written and signed by feminist philosophers who *have* worked on these questions, has made this very point. Rather, our concern is that some — apparently including the British government — have a tendency to mistake transphobic fearmongering for valuable scholarship, and attacks on already marginalized people for courageous exercises of free speech.

We stand against prominent members of our profession using their academic status to further gender oppression. We denounce transphobia in all its forms, and hereby publicly commit to working to create a more inclusive culture, in which people of all gender presentations and identities are able to thrive and be respected for who they are.

* Erratum: the original version of this letter incorrectly stated that Stock opposes the UK's Gender Recognition Act. This was an error; it should have said that Stock is well-known for opposing *amendments* to the Gender Recognition Act that would have made it easier for people to self-identify their gender. The bracketed amendment in the text above was added subsequent to some of the signatures. We apologize for the error.

The names above are the initial signatories of the list on its publication date of 4 January, 2020. Listed below are additional people who signed between January 5–8.

This open letter, signed by more than 300 individuals, argued against the collection of data on sex in 'English and Welsh [sic] census. The letter described the signatories as 'an international team of scientists with extensive expertise collecting and quantitatively analyzing high quality data from human participants' with collectively, 'many decades of experience working with quantitative human data, survey methods, and complex datasets'.³³¹

The letter was published against the backdrop of an ongoing controversy relating to data collection in the UK censuses, and whether the sex question should collect data on biological sex or self-identified sex. The letter described the former view as an 'abominable moral position', cloaked 'in the veneer of scientific-sounding justifications' and compared it to 'slavery, eugenics, forced sterilisation, the denial of women's suffrage, and more'.

Published ahead of Scotland's 2022 census, the letter gained media coverage in the Herald newspaper, with the headline, 'Hundreds of academics back self-ID sex question in Scottish census'.³³² The list of signatories contains no details on respective academic expertise. More detailed analysis shows most signatories are based in the United States (45%), with around a fifth based in the UK (21%).³³³ Of the fourteen signatories based in Scotland, none were established quantitative social scientists. Analysis of a random selection of other signatories suggested it was unlikely that most signatories worked with large population data sets in either the social or medical sciences.

Multi-signatory open letter, April 2021

Open Letter on Collecting High Quality Census Data on Sex and Gender

We are an international team of scientists with extensive expertise collecting and quantitatively analyzing high quality data from human participants. Our group includes current and former editors of scientific journals, statisticians, and analytic instructors; collectively, we have many decades of experience working with quantitative human data, survey methods, and complex datasets. We are writing to convey our expert

³³¹ Multi-signatory open letter (2021), *Open Letter on Collecting High Quality Census Data on Sex and Gender*, April 2021.

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1yLGGAUW0mrRWWDkau041luwx-Q27rZHmQmbRZ72uH4/edit?tab=t.0>

³³² The Herald, *Hundreds of academics back self-ID sex question in Scottish census*, 4 April 2021, The Herald.

³³³ MurrayBlackburnMackenzie, *A tale of two letters revisited*, 7 April 2021.

<https://murrayblackburnmackenzie.org/2021/04/07/a-tale-of-two-letters-revisited/>

consensus that (1) asking respondents to self-report their lived sex poses absolutely no threat to collecting high quality data on sex and (2) the addition of a question about gender identity to the 2021 English and Welsh census improves its ability to accurately represent the population.

(1) The 2021 English and Welsh census will collect robust, high quality data on sex. The question on sex in the English and Welsh census asks “What is your sex?” with response options “Female” and “Male.” Historically, no guidance was provided for this question and respondents could answer in line with their self-identified or lived sex (consistent with other identity questions such as religion, ethnicity, and sexual orientation). In the 2011 census, explicit guidance was added to advise respondents to answer the question in line with their self-identified or lived sex. For the 2021 census, the Office of National Statistics revised its guidance to suggest that respondents could answer in line with their sex noted on an official document. Following a [March 2021 case](#) in the High Court, the ONS was then forced to revise the guidance once more, after census data collection had already begun, to explicitly capture data on legal sex strictly as indicated on an individual’s birth certificate or Gender Recognition Certificate.

This decision follows [widely publicized claims](#) that the guidance on this question on sex will somehow undermine the ability of the census to collect robust data on sex. We would like to note that this concern is simply unfounded. The guidance wording will not affect how either cisgender people (likely around 99% of the population) or transgender people with a Gender Recognition Certificate answer the question on sex. Moreover, [research suggests](#) (and our experience confirms) that the vast majority of survey respondents skip over instructions when it seems possible to answer a question without reading them.

For all of these reasons, the specific wording of the guidance does not threaten the ability of the English and Welsh census to collect robust data on sex. Indeed, when the highly regarded Pew Research Center conducted a [randomized experiment](#) to test the effects of various sex and gender question wordings on data quality in the US, they found that the way they asked about sex and gender had little effect on the distribution of US adults in each gender category. However, the way they asked about sex and gender did affect the ability of the survey to capture the percentage of adults identifying as transgender or non-binary. Overall, then, these kinds of survey changes are extremely unlikely to worsen data accuracy for cisgender people, but can improve it for transgender and non-binary people.

(2) The 2021 English and Welsh census can improve data quality on gender.

At its core, a census should provide accurate representation of its population of interest. Adding a gender identity question to the 2021 English and Welsh census can help achieve this goal, precisely because it will allow researchers—for the first time—to meaningfully quantify the

transgender population, consistent with the recognition of the [complex relationship between sex and gender](#).

As described above, question wording is unlikely to meaningfully alter population-level estimates of males and females overall, but question wording can matter substantially for accurately quantifying the transgender and non-binary communities. For example, non-inclusive question wording can make transgender and non-binary people [feel unwelcome](#) and [discourage them](#) from contributing their data. As a result, non-inclusive questions may result in an underestimation of the true size of the transgender community. For this reason, the addition of the gender identity question represents an improvement over census questions from previous years. Asking about legal sex (rather than lived sex) also harms the quality and interpretability of data describing the transgender and non-binary communities, because it means that transgender and non-binary peoples without a Gender Recognition Certificate may respond to the question differently depending on the extent to which they read and choose to follow the instructions.

Conclusion

In closing, we support steps to meaningfully quantify the transgender population in the English and Welsh census and we strongly oppose the misuse of scientific-sounding claims to justify the oppression of vulnerable groups. Cloaking abominable moral positions in the veneer of scientific-sounding justifications is not a new phenomenon; it has a long history including [slavery](#), [eugenics](#), [forced sterilisation](#), [the denial of women's suffrage](#), and more. Our scientific integrity precludes us from taking part in or endorsing such pseudoscientific interests while our ethical responsibility as scientists compels us to speak out against them. We therefore strongly reject any claim that measuring lived sex would prevent the 2021 English and Welsh Census from collecting robust and accurate data about sex.

The Open University Gender Critical Research Network was established in June 2021 by Professor Jo Phoenix and Dr Jon Pike. The Network was based within the OU Health and Wellbeing Strategic Research Area (HWSRA), with the aim of 'exploring how sexed bodies come to matter in [different] research fields'.³³⁴

In a blog describing the reaction to the network, Professor Phoenix states, 'Immediately after, there was a concerted and targeted campaign, launched by staff and students of the OU, to get the network shut down'.³³⁵ The blog highlights a number of open letters and statements to this aim. The following letter, signed by 358 Open University staff and postgraduate students, asked the Vice-Chancellor to withdraw university support for and affiliation with the Network.³³⁶

Multi-signatory open letter, June 2021

Open Letter from OU staff and Postgraduate Research Students -
Response to the launch of the Gender Critical Research Network

Please note: This is not a letter for undergraduate students to sign - there is a response being organised by OU Pride for students via another google form for gathering feelings/statements from students which you can contribute to and has a similar letter which you can sign...

We, the undersigned Open University faculty and staff, write to express our profound disappointment and concern at the recent launching of the Gender Critical Research Network as a special interest group within the Health & Wellbeing strategic research area, which is being hosted on official OU channels. 'Gender critical' feminism is a strand of thought and a belief that is fundamentally hostile to the rights of trans, non-binary, and genderqueer people. It is in this context that we write to express our concerns, and to reaffirm our commitment to our trans, non-binary and gender non-conforming students and colleagues. We are concerned that the OU's decision to approve and promote this network is in conflict with its obligations under the Equality Act 2010, and particularly the Public Sector Equality Duty regarding gender reassignment.

³³⁴ Open University (online), *Gender Critical Research Network*.

<https://www5.open.ac.uk/health-wellbeing/research-themes/gender-critical-research-network>

³³⁵ Phoenix, J. (2021), *On Launching the Open University Gender Critical Research Network*, 22 September 2021.

<https://jophoenix.substack.com/p/on-launching-the-open-university>

³³⁶ Multi-signatory open letter (online), *Open Letter from OU staff and Postgraduate Research Students - Response to the launch of the Gender Critical Research Network*.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1RADQtEfW6MNqSVKOAMrv7AYUsliCFj0/view>

The recent Employment Appeal Tribunal (*Maya Forstater v CGD Europe and Others*: UKEAT/0105/20/JOJ) confirmed that gender critical views are a protected belief. However, the EAT also highlighted that manifesting gender critical beliefs by misgendering or harassing trans people in a context covered by the Equality Act, such as the workplace, would likely amount to unlawful discrimination. We are concerned to see that the Gender Critical Research Network is already using OU platforms to circulate prejudicial statements. For example, the *Savage Minds* podcast episode linked to from its Open University homepage, and via the FASS academics newsletter (Issue 36: 7 June 2021), contains references to trans women as 'men in dresses' (00:58:41); explicitly argues against trans rights (00:55:22); and incorrectly claims that the LGBT rights organisation Stonewall is suggesting that lesbians should 'suck female cock' (00:57:03).

The OU's mission is to make higher education open to all, as well as promoting social justice and equality, as acknowledged in recent Pride statements which affirm the OU's support of LGBTQ+ staff and students. Furthermore, the OU's Gender Identity Policy and Guidance states that staff have a responsibility to 'respect the dignity of all students and their self-identified gender status' and that OU students should be able to study in an environment 'free from discrimination, harassment and victimisation in a place where everyone is treated with dignity and respect'. We believe that the OU has a duty of care towards its trans, non-binary and gender non-conforming students and staff, and that the Gender Critical Research Network directly impedes this duty.

We stand opposed to the backing of this network by the OU, including the use of official OU social media platforms, OU branding and the alignment of this network with the Health & Wellbeing SRA. We do not believe that freedom of speech or academic freedom should come at the expense of marginalised groups, such as those possessing protected characteristics under the law.

This includes honouring commitments made in the OU statement of principles on academic freedom to take action to avoid hostility, degradation and harm, for instance, 'in promoting our ideas we will make every reasonable effort to minimise the risks of any harm, either physical or psychological, arising for any person, institution or community'. [links are not live]

We call on the OU Vice Chancellor's Executive Team to take the following actions:

1. To withdraw its public support for and affiliation with the Gender Critical Research Network.
2. To affirm their position as a trans inclusive employer
3. To commit to developing a concrete plan of action for supporting and affirming trans students and staff in this trans-hostile external and internal environment...'

In addition to the letter shown above, the Open University Sexualities Research Group organised a separate letter, signed by thirteen members of staff.³³⁷ As well as demanding withdrawal of support for the Network, the letter called for a full enquiry into the process of approving the network. The letter stated that if support for the Network was not withdrawn, the Sexualities Reproduction Research Group would be disbanded, and its members would 'would boycott all [Health and Wellbeing Strategic Research Area] events and encourage others to do the same'.

Multi-signatory open letter, 24 June 2021

We, the undersigned, make up the overwhelming majority of the Reproduction Sexualities and Sexual Health Research Group and the Sexuality and Reproduction SIG. We are writing to express our dismay at the establishment of the gender critical research network (GCRN); to request that all university support for the network is withdrawn; and that GCRN are removed from the Health and Wellbeing Strategic Research Area (HWSRA) and all other Open University websites. If these actions are not taken, we have regretfully taken the decision that we must close our SIG, and will instruct the HWSRA to remove any reference to us or our work from their online presence and other materials from the HWSRA. We list our reasons for this request and our decision below.

Like gay men at the height of the AIDS crisis, and alongside refugees and travellers, trans people are the target of media-generated hatred in this UK. The Times has published, on average, two articles per day in the last two years on trans people, the vast majority of which actively question their right to exist. Internationally the picture is worse. States across the USA are actively rolling back trans rights while violence, including rape and murder against trans people, particularly trans women, remains endemic. Researchers at the OU recently highlighted the case of trans women fleeing violence in their home countries being burnt to death in their beds in Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya.

The current environment is compounding longstanding societal stigma to contribute towards a health crisis among trans people in the UK. Current OU research surveying more than 2,000 UK trans people found that trans people have much higher rates of disability/chronic health conditions than the general population (53%) and that a third have seen an NHS or private counsellor, psychologist, therapist or community mental health team in the last two years for reasons unrelated to their gender. This research strongly illustrates the massively detrimental health effects of the current environment.

³³⁷ Multi-signatory open letter (2021), *Open letter*, 24 June 2021.
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1HGhqIW3ldUrToAb6eBO5GGfTfQfrjC2r/view>

It is very disappointing that in the midst of this crisis, with human lives at stake, and while colleagues are working so hard to counter these trends, the OU's Health and Wellbeing SRA should choose to create and support a Gender Critical Research Network, that has already repeated trans-phobic tropes.

We question the good faith of this network's aims because:

- a) The network was launched with no prior notification to colleagues across the OU who are currently working on matters related to health, wellbeing and gender. There was no attempt by the network's founders to engage any of these colleagues in conversations about what purpose such a network would serve, nor any invitation to join it or help set it up. It has been presented as a fait accompli.
- b) Notwithstanding what the network claims to take as its focus, the term 'Gender Critical' is widely perceived as questioning trans-people's self-identity. Language and terminology matter, and we cannot but conclude that this name was chosen as a deliberate provocation to trans communities.
- c) Despite claims otherwise, the network immediately began to share materials containing transphobic comments made by its members. We ask that this network be judged on its immediate and flagrant actions and not on how it describes itself on its webpage.
- d) Neither co-convenor currently researches health and wellbeing, and only one member appears to. Only one affiliated member undertakes research on health and wellbeing topics, and not on topics related to gender. Given this, we query why it is appropriate for this group to make its home within the Health and Wellbeing SRA.

There are many reasons why our research group must actively disavow any real or perceived connection with this network and we would strongly advise the university to do the same. First, it risks fatally undermining our and the university's reputation with the communities we serve and work alongside, not only trans communities, but communities who are closely allied to them, such as LGB communities and disabled communities. Many of us have received concerned enquiries from members of these communities since the launch of the GCRN. Second, it runs directly counter to the values of our most valuable research collaborators in the areas of gender and health, who are committed to trans health and serving the needs of trans people e.g. the LGBT Foundation, Frontline Aids, the International Planned Parenthood Federation, MESMAC and The Bisexual Index. This makes our position with current and future funders extremely difficult.

We ask:

- That the HWSRA and the OU more widely withdraws endorsement of this network. We cannot accept the argument made in last Friday's statement on the intranet that OU does not resource nor endorse this network: it funds the SRA and the group's webpage represents OU's investment and endorsement.

- That a full enquiry is made into the process of approving this network for inclusion as part of the HWSRA e.g. whether an equality impact assessment and risk assessment were undertaken. Failing this, we have voted to disband the Sexuality and Reproduction SIG and will instruct the HWSRA to remove any reference to us or our work from their online presence and other materials. We would also urge other academics associated with the Health and Wellbeing SRA to do the same, and we would boycott all HWSRA events and encourage others to do the same.

The following statement was organised by the London School of Economics (LSE) Department of Gender Studies, in response to the Open University Gender Critical Research Network (see above).³³⁸ The statement was published on the Department of Gender Studies website.

The ‘Statement of Solidarity’ with OU staff argued that gender-critical perspectives ‘[relied and invested] in racist, colonial understandings of sex/gender’. The letter also reiterated the demands made in the above letter, namely that the University withdraw its support for and affiliation with the Network.

Departmental open statement, June 2021

Statement of Solidarity with Open University Staff and Postgraduate Research Students

We, the LSE Department of Gender Studies, write this letter in solidarity with the scholars, researchers, members of staff, and students at the Open University who are facing an unwelcoming and antagonistic environment because of the newly created Gender Critical Research Network. We support and wholly endorse the [Open Letter from OU Staff and Postgraduate Research Students](#), written in response to the launch of the Network. Reiterating the demands of our colleagues at the Open University, we ask that the Open University urgently rescind its support for this network, and that it actively re-commit to supporting trans rights and the field of Gender Studies.

The Gender Critical Research Network is an explicitly anti-intellectual attack on Gender Studies, trans, nonbinary, and gender-nonconforming people, and inclusive, intersectional feminist politics. Proponents of the “gender critical” perspective, including the Members and Affiliated Members of the Network, are adamantly and openly opposed to recognising trans people’s rightful and valid claims to their gender and their rights. Their efforts to undermine trans rights are particularly concerning now, at a time when trans, nonbinary and gender-nonconforming people in the UK and elsewhere are already experiencing such immense restrictions on their social, medical, interpersonal, and political livelihoods.

As numerous scholars and activists have documented, those espousing gender critical perspectives routinely make transphobic, discriminatory, inaccurate, and harmful claims about trans people specifically, and gender more broadly, that have profoundly negative effects on social and political

³³⁸ LSE Department of Gender Studies (2021), *Statement of Solidarity with Open University Staff and Postgraduate Research Students*, June 2021.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20210619190606/https://www.lse.ac.uk/gender/news/june-2021/Statement-of-Solidarity-with-Open-University-Staff-and-Postgraduate-Research-Students>

life. Their unfounded viewpoints are inimical to intersectional feminisms and scholarly debate, and they contribute to the ongoing “anti-gender” attacks on the field. In refusing the concept of gender, and in framing “sex” as immutable, binary, and essentialist, the gender critical perspective runs counter to decades of scholarship from across the social sciences, humanities, and medical fields, and it relies on and invests in racist, colonial understandings of sex/gender.

Providing an institutional platform for this network is an explicit endorsement of their derogatory positions, and it creates a learning environment that is openly hostile to the urgent projects of equity, diversity, and inclusion at the OU. The Open University’s Equality Scheme 2018-2022 states that its aim is to “eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, to promote and advance equality of opportunity and to promote and foster good relations between people.” By giving the Gender Critical Research Network institutional support, the OU is in breach of this aim.

In solidarity with colleagues at the Open University, we echo demands that the OU Vice Chancellor’s Executive Team take the following actions:

1. To withdraw its public support for and affiliation with the Gender Critical Research Network
2. To affirm their position as a trans inclusive employer and education provider
3. To commit to developing a concrete plan of action for supporting and affirming trans students and staff in this trans-hostile external and internal environment

The LSE Department of Gender Studies

This open letter,³³⁹ signed by Cardiff University students, staff and alumni, was organised in opposition to an earlier open letter from University academics, calling for a review of Cardiff University's membership of Stonewall Diversity Champions scheme.³⁴⁰

The earlier letter, organised by an academic in the Business School, was signed by current sixteen academic staff, each of whom who gave their full name, academic title and discipline. The counter letter gained nearly 1,400 signatures, with a mix of identifiable respondents and non-identifiable respondents.

Multi-signatory open letter, undated

A Response to the Vice-Chancellor regarding Cardiff University's support for trans students and staff's rights and safety

We, the undersigned Cardiff University students, staff and alumni, wish to register our opposition to the open letter published on 17 June by a number of lecturers demanding the university cut ties with Stonewall over the charity's firm support of trans rights.

At a time when trans and non-binary people are subject to near-constant inflammatory media attention, when access to life-saving health care for trans people has been continually eroded, with LGBTQ+ hate crimes on the rise, and with trans and non-binary people disproportionately likely to experience poverty, unemployment and homelessness, we believe it is more important than ever for Cardiff University to defend the rights of its queer, trans and non-binary students and staff, and to ensure trans and non-binary people feel welcome in all its spaces.

The letter asserts that Stonewall's criticism of transphobia is a matter of academic freedom, and that expressing anti-trans views, or 'disputing' trans gender identities, is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act. Among many other disputable claims in the letter, this is a gross misreading of the Equality Act: transphobic views, like homophobic views, are only protected beliefs – people have the right to hold these views, but Universities and other institutions have no duty to protect them from criticism or academic rigour in a democratic society. The right of trans and non-binary people to live their lives as themselves, in dignity, safety and

³³⁹ Multi-signatory open letter (online), *A Response to the Vice-Chancellor regarding Cardiff University's support for trans students and staff's rights and safety*.
<https://sites.google.com/view/cardiffstonewallletterreply/home>

³⁴⁰ Multi-signatory open letter (online), *Open letter to the Cardiff University Vice-Chancellor, concerning the university's relationship with Stonewall*.
<https://sites.google.com/view/cardiffopenletter/open-letter>

peace is not an academic 'debate' of any intellectual or moral merit – and this right does not inhibit the right of cisgender women to do the same.

Cardiff University has a strong and inclusive LGBTQ+ network. This letter represents an attempt to divide students and staff. It has already created an atmosphere of discomfort and fear among queer students and staff. We ask Cardiff University for a renewed statement of commitment to the rights and wellbeing of their LGBTQ+ staff and students.

We ask Cardiff University staff, students and alumni to add your name to this letter via [confidential form here](#).'

2021-7 Stonewall membership review, Cardiff University (b)

Following the call for the Cardiff University to review its membership of the Stonewall Diversity scheme (see above), flyers were circulated in the university, targeting the letter's signatories. As shown below, these included the names and images of academic staff.

Flyer titled, 'Debunking the Open Letter' featured an image of a woman with a gun.



DEBUNKING THE OPEN LETTER

SUPPORT US AT
KO-FI.COM/ACTNOW
SEND SUBMISSIONS TO
ACTNOWCARDIF-
F@ANCHE.NO

The open letter was a short piece signed by 16 professors and doctors who work at Cardiff University in an attempt to persuade the Vice Chancellor to cut all ties with Stonewall, a charity which supports LGBTQ+ rights. This was suggested in the middle of pride month, and specifically related to Stonewall's views on transgender people, under the guise of the idea of being, 'gender critical'. We're going to pick apart the open letter, and explain why most of its talking points don't stem from real concern, but rather transphobic bullshit.

The letter argues, 'being associated with Stonewall lies in tension with two of the university's core values: 1) academic freedom and 2) respect for the rights of all staff and students, including women.' This is not the case. Stonewall is not suggesting that the academic freedom of university staff and students should be removed. In October 2018 Stonewall said that they themselves will refuse to debate transphobes. Freedom of speech does not extend into forcing others to debate you.

The letter also claims that Stonewall has a, 'longstanding policy demanding, 'no debate', on transgender issues'. Stonewall have said on the matter that, 'We will always debate issues that enable us to further equality but what we will not is debate trans people's rights to exist.' - shorturl.at/vyST8

'Nancy Kelley, CEO of Stonewall, has likened 'gender critical' beliefs to anti-Semitism.' No she didn't, the linked BBC article quotes Kelley who was discussing the controversy Stonewall had faced, she says, 'with all beliefs including controversial beliefs there is a right to express those beliefs publicly... whether it's anti-Semitic beliefs, gender critical beliefs, beliefs about disability...'. This is not a comparison to anti-semitism, but rather a discussion on the limits of freedom of speech, where she actually agrees with their right to the freedom of speech they claim to be losing! - shorturl.at/mvwzW

The letter also cites, 'no-platforming' to be a cause for concern for gender critical [transphobic] academics. It is because it should be. The national union of students established it's no-platform policy in 1974 and has been used to battle facism, racism and and anti-LGBT ideas ever since, notably the BNP in 2015.

It is also stated that women are more likely to be targeted for their expression of gender critical [transphobic] beliefs. The Rein-dolf report said this, but it's odd that the majority of the signato-ries on the letter are men if that is the case.

The letter references the recent Maya Forstater court case, and says that it, '[stipulates that] gender critical views are a protected characteristic under the Equality Act'. They are not. Forstater was not fired, she simply did not have her contract renewed. The court notes, [shorturl.at/oDJ19] explicitly say that, 'This judgment does not mean that those with gender-critical beliefs can 'misgender' trans persons with impunity/ that trans persons do not have the protections against discrimination and harassment conferred by the EqA/ that employers and service providers will not be able to provide a safe environment for trans people.' Putting trans stu-dents under the authority of those who signed this letter would endanger both their health and academic succes. **The Maya Forsta-ter case does not allow you to be a transphobic prick without repercussions.**

The final point I'd like to touch on is in the penultimate paragraph, where the writer states, 'Liz Truss, the Equalities Minister, has urged all government departments to leave the [Stonewall] scheme'. Liz Truss also disbanded the LGBT+ advisory panel set up to offer insight, 'on issues and policies concerning lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people'.

This kind of rhetoric actively harms trans people every day, and it is our responsibility to call it out when we see it in order to create a kinder society for trans people to live in.



Recently, there has been a certain perception that progress made towards trans liberation has been going backwards, rather than forwards, due in most part to a wave of mainstream transphobia in the press. It is important to note that according to YouGov polls in February 2021, the general public largely support respecting an individual's gender as that which they identify as. This war being waged against trans people is a few (very loud) voices, not the majority of the UK. Humouring "debates" about trans people, often without trans people present to represent themselves, has painted real, vulnerable people as hypothetical villains by which to justify bigotry. Anyone who knows and loves a trans person can recognise these "debates" as dehumanising, offensive and mostly just infuriating - when we are reduced to sex characteristics, as feminists have always argued people shouldn't be. This peculiar focus on the bodies of others is disturbing. As newspapers use trans bodies and medical transition for shock value, it is apparent our value is decided by how attractive and capable of reproducing we are within a patriarchy, even as children. Medically transitioning is not attractive (not to mention inaccessible), but if you don't "pass" your identity will not be accepted, and if you adhere to gender norms in order to pass you're "appropriating femininity". To all intents and purposes it seems that we just can't win.

And we can't - a transphobe will continue to be a transphobe even if you follow all their rules for how to be a good trans person.

The notion that "gender critical beliefs" are essential and should be protected as an identity is laughable. The trans people in my life are gender critical. Discussion is not being stifled, we regularly criticise gender and sex and society's perception of each. But we do so without dehumanising each other, without calling for a removal of civil rights, and without demonising each other as evil perverts.

The issue is not discussion, the issue is abuse.

It is exhausting for trans people to wake up every day and have to read and listen to the next person's justification for why they are less than cis people.

Feminism is entirely necessary in the modern day, as women still face a myriad of issues - but trans liberation is not one of those issues. Gender equality for all is our mutual goal, and thus trans liberation and cis women's safety are not causes in opposition to each other.

An educational establishment categorising the demonisation and abuse of trans people as something to do with protecting women would be deliberately obtuse, evasive and disingenuous. More importantly, it would isolate trans people further and prevent them from receiving support.

Let's prioritise protecting our trans students and staff over platforming those who seek to divide our community.

2021-8 Call for the EHRC to undertake a 'Reindorf Review' for the HE sector

In October 2021 a group of 240 academics wrote to the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) asking that the EHRC undertake a 'Reindorf Review' of sex and gender policies within the HE sector.³⁴¹ The letter, organised by campaign group Sex Matters, also thanked the EHRC Chair for publicly condemning the attacks on Kathleen Stock.

The following circular email from the University of Edinburgh Staff Pride Network Committee to members objected to this, and expressed concern that the call included signatories of 28 current and former University of Edinburgh staff. It stated, 'while we recognise the freedom of those individuals to hold and express these beliefs, that freedom does not mean they are free from consequence or free to express these beliefs in ways that are abusive or discriminatory.'

Circular email, 21 October 2021

Dear Network Members,

You may have become aware of a letter by a collective of academics operating under the name 'Sex Matters' written to the Chair of the Equality and Human Rights Commission demanding a "Reindorf Review" for the higher education sector. While we are once again loath to draw attention to these beliefs, we also recognise that silence does not make our position clear to those in our community most affected by these beliefs and the ways in which these beliefs are expressed. This statement is to reinforce our solidarity to those affected and that we will continue to work in ways which support our trans and non-binary colleagues and students.

This letter paints a very biased view of the current situation regarding academic freedom in UK Higher Education institutions and depicts those academics who share 'gender critical' beliefs as victims of 'trans rights activists'. There is no reflection on why students and staff might feel motivated to protest those academics actively promoting their 'gender critical' beliefs and a failure to acknowledge the harms experienced by the trans and non-binary members of these communities as a consequence of discriminatory expressions of these beliefs. For clarity, the Staff Pride Network committee would like to make it known that we do not endorse this viewpoint of the situation. It is clear to us how harmful 'gender critical' beliefs are to the trans and non-binary members of our community, and that reductive, biologically essentialist attitudes towards sex are also damaging to everyone. No-one thrives if they are forced to adopt an identity based on

³⁴¹ Sex Matters (2021), *Letter to the EHRC Chair*, 17 October 2021.

<https://sex-matters.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/EHRC-Sex-Matters-letter.pdf>

binary sex characteristics, while trans and non-binary members of our community are especially and significantly harmed by this.

The letter claims that the Stonewall Diversity Champions Scheme promotes misleading information about the Equality Act which is simply false. It also criticises Athena SWAN for encouraging HEIs to monitor gender and not sex. We support the monitoring of gender and of gender diversity in our institutions because it is far more realistic to learn about how our staff live their lives and how they move through the world as their lived gender identities rather than forcing staff to select a binary sex characteristic that may be wholly inaccurate and may force trans and non-binary members of staff to disclose sensitive private information about their gender history.

We make no disagreement with the notion that a distinction can be made between sex and gender. Biological sex is a complex combination of anatomy, hormones and chromosomes that can result in a variety of sex characteristics in the human population. Gender is also a complex combination of the ways in which we experience and present our identities in a multi-gendered world. We reject the characterisation in the letter that there are UK Universities that impose a 'radical gender orthodoxy'. This appears to be an attempt to stigmatise those who do not conform to an antiquated belief system that promotes a binary understanding of sex. We also recognise that sex is a protected characteristic. The guidance around the Equality Act as to how sex is determined is broad, it does not provide a precise definition of sex and it does not specify that sex is rooted in 'biological sex'.

We are concerned to note the names of 28 current and former University of Edinburgh staff as signatories of this letter, many of whom have a significant platform (through lectures, publications and other opportunities) to share 'gender critical' beliefs. While we recognise the freedom of those individuals to hold and express these beliefs, that freedom does not mean they are free from consequence or free to express these beliefs in ways that are abusive or discriminatory. Members of our network have been deeply disturbed by this letter, as well as members of the student community. We extend our solidarity to those affected and will continue to work in ways which support our trans and non-binary colleagues and students.

We hope that one day all staff and students are able to go about their lives feeling safe, respected and without harassment.

The Staff Pride Network Committee'

The following press statement was published by the Gender Inclusion Network (GIN), now known as Feminist Gender Equality Network (FGEN), in response to the concurrent campaign against Professor Stock at the University of Sussex (the statement does not name Professor Stock but the inference is clear). The GIN statement expressed solidarity with students campaigning against Professor Stock. It argued that free speech defences put forward in defence of Professor Stock were and argued that defences based on free speech principles were 'oppression'.³⁴²

Open Statement, 16 October 2021

Gender Inclusion Network (GIN) stands in solidarity with trans, non-binary and queer students at the University of Sussex.

Students are protesting against a member of academic staff who is a key voice in Gender Critical Feminism and is a signatory to the 'WHRC Declaration on Women's Sex-Based Rights', which seeks to roll back the civil rights of trans people (See:<https://chican3ry.medium.com/the-whrc-declaration-explained-part-1-5ded6522aa33>), and who is a trustee of the Charity 'LGB Alliance', which also campaigns against trans rights.

The University of Sussex' students' protesters have been met with proclamations that 'academic freedom' is under attack, with social media users calling for the students to be expelled from the University. However, when the defence of a university professor, who has a national platform and name recognition, involves the silencing and denouncing of LGBTQ+ students and calls for their removal from the university space, the goal is not free speech but oppression. Academic freedom, and free speech more broadly, is not without its limits. Trans identity is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act. Academic freedom is not a licence to discriminate and create an atmosphere of intimidation and harassment.

The situation for young people in the UK is worrying. More than a quarter of trans young people have attempted to commit suicide, and 9 in 10 say they have thought about it. More than 4 in 5 trans young people have experienced verbal abuse, while almost two thirds have experienced threats and intimidation, and over a third have been physically assaulted (https://www.stonewall.org.uk/sites/default/files/trans_stats.pdf). It is vital that universities put in place appropriate support services in order to meet their duty of care to trans and non-binary students and, importantly, to

³⁴² Gender Inclusion Network (2024), *Gender Inclusion Network (GIN) stands in solidarity with trans, non-binary and queer students at the University of Sussex*, 16 October 2021. <https://archive.ph/Y8n5O>

create a culture of understanding and empathy to ensure an improved learning and teaching environment.

As academics, we have a responsibility to create a safe environment for trans students and staff alike. We need to take student concerns at Sussex and elsewhere seriously, and to address the structural transphobia and transmisogyny that are often apparent in HE. We must also work to strengthen EDI policies around gender diversity in the University to enable an equitable learning environment.

The following statement was published by UCU Sussex, whose role is to represent and protect higher education staff.³⁴³ The statement, which again did not name Stock, was issued 'in Support of Trans and Nonbinary Communities at Sussex'. It urged university managers to 'take a clear and strong stance against transphobia at Sussex', and undertake an investigation into 'institutional transphobia'. Kathleen Stock stated that the call for an investigation 'effectively ended' her career at the University.³⁴⁴

Open statement, October 2021

UCU Sussex: Statement in Support of Trans and Nonbinary Communities at Sussex

In the light of recent events on campus and ensuing public response on social media, we extend our solidarity to all trans and nonbinary members of our community who, now more than ever, should receive the unequivocal support of the University and its management. As a union, we strongly condemn all forms of transphobia, and call the University of Sussex leadership to heed its institution's values and commitments as set out in its [Trans Equality Statement](#) and its [Dignity and Respect policy](#).

We urge our management to take a clear and strong stance against transphobia at Sussex. Now is the time for our University leadership to uphold the institution's stated values by ensuring that the dignity and respect of trans and nonbinary staff and students, and their allies, are enshrined at the core of the University's culture, a commitment that was inexcusably absent from the Vice Chancellor's [statement](#) on Thursday 7 October.

Public discourses regularly devalue the lives of trans and nonbinary people, and appeals to both employment rights and academic freedom are often instrumentalised in this context. UCU will always fight for safe and secure working environments at our institution. We do not endorse the call for any worker to be summarily sacked and we oppose all forms of bullying, harassment, and intimidation of staff and students. There should be no contradiction between defending academic freedom and supporting trans rights and in this respect we emphasise UCU's national [position](#) that the

³⁴³ UCU Sussex (2021), *Statement in Support of Trans and Nonbinary Communities at Sussex*, October 2021.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20211012143753/https://ucusussex.wixsite.com/ucusussex/post/statement-in-support-of-trans-and-nonbinary-communities-at-sussex>

³⁴⁴ The Guardian (2021), *Professor says career 'effectively ended' by union's transphobia claims*, 12 October 2021.

<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2021/oct/12/professor-says-career-effectively-ended-by-unions-transphobia-claims>

enactment of academic freedom is both essential to the work of Higher Education and “comes with the responsibility to respect the democratic rights and freedoms of others”. What we do call for, then, is an urgent investigation into the ways in which institutional transphobia operates at our university and diminishes the democratic rights and freedoms of some of its most vulnerable members.

We offer this statement as a part, and not the end, of ongoing and future work to tackle systemic inequities across the University of Sussex and do so in line with UCU's [national position](#) on the essential union work of trans inclusion. We welcome the University of Sussex Students' Union (USSU)'s [statement](#) of solidarity with our trans and nonbinary community and defence of students' right to protest, and extend our strongest support to the USSU and its officers in their commitment to standing up for all students at Sussex.

In solidarity,

UCU Sussex Executive and Reps

2022

2022-1 Cathy Devine and Sports Canada

The following open letter to Sports Canada,³⁴⁵ organised by 'Athlete Ally',³⁴⁶ objected to the commissioning of Cathy Devine to undertake a survey among athletes. The letter objected to the use of terms such as 'biological male' and puberty-related male advantage' in the survey instrument, and called on Sports Canada 'to swiftly withdraw its support for this study'. The letter gained around 250 signatories.

Multi-signatory open letter, 6 May 2022

To Sport Canada:

We, the undersigned members of the academic and sport communities, write to express our deep concerns with Sport Canada's commissioning of Catherine Devine and the content of her Canadian High Performance Athletes 1 survey. This survey perpetuates discriminatory views of transgender athletes, and we call on Sport Canada to swiftly withdraw its support for this study.

The first sentence of the online survey explicitly uses the term biological males when referencing transgender women. Academics and advocates alike recognize that referring to trans women as biological males has become code for a trans-exclusionary position. Beyond deliberately demeaning and devaluing trans women's identities and humanity, the term "biological male" also ignores scientific research demonstrating that the athletic capabilities of transgender women are not comparable to those of cisgender men.

Appearing in the opening sentence of the survey, it serves as a green light for respondents to express trans-exclusionary views, thereby injecting a clear bias into the survey.

Later in the survey, other misleading terms that similarly signal a trans-exclusionary position, including puberty-related male advantage, are used to prime participants for answering questions. Priming is widely recognized amongst survey researchers as biasing the responses of survey participants and compromising the validity of the resulting findings. In this case, priming via transphobic and scientifically incorrect terminology is likely to increase the expression of negative attitudes towards transgender women in elite sport. Later in the survey, two articles are cited, which

³⁴⁵ Athlete Ally (2022), *Letter to Sports Canada*, 6 May 2022.

<https://www.athleteally.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Open-Letter-to-Sport-Canada-with-Concern-for-Catherine-Devines-Research-on-May-7-2022.pdf>

³⁴⁶ Athlete Ally (online), *About Us*.

<https://www.athleteally.org/about/>

“detail that there is no current scientific protocol which eliminates puberty-related muscular advantage in non-athletic transwomen (biological males). This means they retain most of their puberty-related male strength following hormone therapy and/or surgery even if their plasma testosterone levels drop to within the female range.” To date, several scholars, including the Canadian Centre for the Ethics of Sport, have denounced such studies, finding them inconclusive for making policy decisions about sport.

If Catherine Devine worked in a university setting, an ethical review of her proposed research would have been mandatory. Most commonly, this review would have included evidence of compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement, which mandates that researchers respect the dignity of human subjects. No evidence of such an approval is identified to participants. Given the biases identified above, it is doubtful that her study would have received approval. As it stands, the survey biases do not respect the dignity and humanity of all subjects, in this case, transgender women athletes. Catherine Devine has a clear and public track record of such bias.

We are exceptionally concerned that Sport Canada has commissioned and is currently funding an unethical study, given that study that does not adhere to the Tri-Council Policy Statement’s core principles: Respect for Persons, Concern for Welfare, or Justice. In a 2020 statement submitted to the UK Parliament, Catherine Devine expressed her views on the feedback she received from reviewers of a manuscript she had submitted to an academic journal. In this statement Devine claimed constraints on her academic freedom. The journal’s reviewers, all of whom would have expertise in the field and familiarity with the debates, made the following comments about Devine’s use of biological males and similar terms to refer to trans women: “Putting biologically male and biologically female next to transgender is transphobic”; “The use of ‘the biological differences’ and ‘the sexes’ is particularly reductionist”; and in the words of one reviewer, “Steps need to be taken to rewrite much of this article to avoid contributing to the moral panic over trans women competing in women’s sport”. These statements directly apply to Catherine Devine’s current study on the views of Canadian high-performance female athletes regarding the inclusion of transgender women in sport. The preamble to the Catherine Devine’s survey states that the results of the study will comprise “a report for Sport Canada to inform and balance policy insight in this area”. Relevant to this claim is the settlement that Canadian transgender cyclist Kristen Worley reached in 2017 with Cycling Canada (CC) and the Ontario Cycling Association (OCA). Among the terms of the settlement, CC and the OCA agreed to review their policies and establish guidelines based on objective science. If Sport Canada is to use Catherine Devine’s findings as objective science (despite its clear biases listed above) to inform policy changes for elite women athletes, we can reasonably assume those changes will be trans-exclusionary.

We find the affiliation of this survey with Sport Canada to be profoundly troubling; It suggests that Sport Canada is reversing its longstanding

leadership against gender policing and its commitment to achieving gender equality in Canadian sport at every level by 2035. The world's first ever openly transgender Olympic champion who represented Canada at the Tokyo Games has also expressed their dismay: "As a transgender athlete who has proudly represented Canada on the Olympic podium, I am dismayed to see Sport Canada funding research that perpetuates deeply harmful stereotypes about transgender athletes," said Quinn. "Especially given the onslaught of legislation and policies banning transgender youth from sports, we need research that dispels myths and misinformation and that promotes inclusivity, not discrimination."

Sport Canada's support of this survey directly marginalizes the role of the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport (CCES) on policy development regarding ethical issues. The CCES has issued the two reports – *Sport in Transition: Making Sport in Canada More Responsible for Gender Inclusivity and Creating Inclusive Environments for Trans Participants in Canadian Sport: Guidance for Sport Organizations* – providing policy guidance on transgender inclusion in sport through multi-year analysis from experts in the field. Advisory boards for those reports included both cisgender and transgender athletes, coaches, leaders of National Sports Organizations, researchers, physicians, ethicists, and government officials who consulted across the country. As people concerned for the transgender community, we endorse the CCES's research and recommendations on these complex and difficult issues. We urge Sport Canada to withdraw its support and funding for Catherine Devine's transphobic and deeply unethical survey. We value the diversity of all athletes. We learn from each other, are inspired by one another, and support one another. We will not remain silent as discriminatory practices that unfairly target elite transgender women athletes are prioritized in sport under the guise of research.'

The following letter to the Board of the higher education charity Advance HE objected to the participation of Professor Sullivan at a one-day Advance HE conference in Birmingham where she spoke on the topic ‘Why do we need data on sex?’³⁴⁷ The letter also raised concerns about the direction of Advance HE policy.³⁴⁸ Pressure was brought to bear on Advance HE prior to the conference, and there was hostile commentary on Twitter on the day of the conference directed towards both Sullivan and Advance HE including from some of those who went on to author the letter below. A statement by Advance HE was published online on the day of the conference explaining their decision to go ahead despite the fact they could not find a trans speaker with an opposing view who was willing to take part in a panel discussion³⁴⁹. A group of ten academics authored the letter, which was hosted on the TIGERS in STEMM website.³⁵⁰ The website stated, that the ‘authors would welcome signatures from those working in the UK higher education sector and other national contexts where Advance HE operates’. The letter was co-signed by a further 480 named signatories and 21 anonymous signatories.³⁵¹

Multi-signatory open letter

Dear Board Members,

As members of the higher education (HE) sector, who believe that equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) are crucial to the future of the sector, we recognise the importance of Advance HE’s work in this area. Advance HE manages the accreditation schemes Athena Swan and Race Equality Charter, delivers development programmes such as Aurora, and provides advice and guidance to the sector on matters related to equality, diversity

³⁴⁷ See conference programme: Advance HE (2022), *Gender in HE Conference 2022: Current, complex, contested: Conversations about Gender in HE*.
https://web.archive.org/web/20250129094650/https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2022-06/Gender%20in%20HE%20Conference%20programme_3.pdf

³⁴⁸ Bond, A. et al. (2022), *Open letter to Advance HE stating there is no conflict between gender equality and trans inclusion*, 24 June 2022, TIGERS in STEMM.
<https://web.archive.org/web/20240304003313/https://www.tigerinstemm.org/news/letter24062022>

³⁴⁹ Advance HE (2022), *Statement about our Gender in Higher Education Conference 2022*,
<https://web.archive.org/web/20250129095935/https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/news-and-views/statement-about-our-gender-higher-education-conference-2022>

³⁵⁰ TIGERS in STEMM describe itself as ‘the Inclusion Group for Equity in STEMM’ (Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths and Medicine).
See: TIGERSTEMM (online) *Welcome and New Blog*.
<https://www.tigerinstemm.org/blog/welcome-and-new-blog>

³⁵¹ Bond, A. et al. (2022), *Letter to the Board of Advance HE*, 6 June 2022.
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1eOHdNo5o6TUYImOOB6VLLENnnz-WybCWZ-4lp4Kc7d4/edit?tab=t.0>

and inclusion (EDI). One particular area that we, the undersigned, uphold, is the importance of including trans and non-binary people; we do not believe there is any conflict between Advance HE's efforts to improve trans inclusion, and other areas of EDI in the HE sector, such as equality for women.

The 2020 Independent Review of Athena Swan highlighted that *"the Charter must embrace the wider definition of gender"* and following this, a transformed Charter was published including a key principle of *"fostering collective understanding that individuals have the right to determine their own gender identity, and tackling the specific issues faced by trans and non-binary people because of their identity"*. Advance HE recently made a commitment on the Trans Day of Visibility that the organisation *"is committed to celebrating our people's #diversity and actively listening to their lived experience"*. These statements have been applauded by many people in the HE sector, who eagerly anticipated seeing them upheld in Advance HE's actions and policies.

However, recent events indicate a worrying watering down of this commitment to inclusion, following public criticism from a very vocal - but, we believe, dangerously transphobic - minority. In particular, the Gender in HE Conference 2022 was originally scheduled to include a panel on *"connections and tensions between sex-based and gender-inclusive rights"*. The very framing of this panel implied that the rights of cis women and trans women are separate and in tension. However, from the standpoint of inclusivity as upheld by the Athena Swan Charter principles, trans women are women and hence there is no such tension. Inclusion of trans colleagues is essential to creating an equitable HE sector.

The fact that Advance HE were unable to find a trans or non-binary speaker to participate in this panel indicates that they failed to provide an environment in which trans people felt safe and supported to speak about their views and lived experience, again contrary to Advance HE's own commitments to inclusion. Following online criticism of Advance HE's approach, the panel was eventually replaced with a session named *"A contested view, in conversation with Alice Sullivan"*. This did not solve the problem of the complete lack of representation of trans people in a conversation pertinent to their rights and safety.

The *"In conversation..."* event must be viewed alongside:

- 1) changes to the Advance HE guidance on the collection of diversity monitoring data, which represent a retrograde step that departs from inclusive best practice and risks excluding trans people and those who do not conform to a binary definition of sex or gender; and
- 2) recent press coverage that suggests Advance HE are considering amending the wording of the reformed Athena Swan Charter, reducing its commitment to trans inclusion.

Together, these actions by Advance HE constitute a backsliding away from trans inclusion which we believe is not only *wrong*, but also out of step with the considered opinions of most people in the sector.

The 2020 independent review of Athena Swan noted that “governance structure must ensure that the Charter is owned and led by the sector” and Advance HE has maintained that “the sector has been consistent that Athena Swan should be a trans inclusive gender equality charter addressing the specific challenges faced by trans and non-binary people”.

To emphasise to you that we, as members of the sector and of our academic communities, do indeed believe in the inclusion of trans and non-binary people in our workplaces and in the Athena Swan Charter, we the undersigned:

- reject the premise that trans-inclusive EDI work is a threat to freedom of speech or our academic freedom.
- further reject the suggestion that there is any tension between the rights of cis women and trans women, or *between sex-based and gender-inclusive rights*
- commit to resisting an erosion of the safety, dignity and support for transgender, non-binary and gender diverse staff and students in our institutions.
- pledge to keep embedding trans-inclusive practices in the EDI work we carry out in our institutions, including work related to Athena Swan and the Race Equality Charter.
- will not provide our labour to any EDI work which is not inclusive of our trans colleagues.

Our commitment to inclusion of all members of the academic community will not be altered or reduced by changes introduced by Advance HE that, against the views of the majority of people in the sector, promote the agenda of a minority who wish to manufacture tensions between trans rights and the broader EDI agenda.

The following statement was published by the University of Cambridge SU LGBT+ Campaign and called for Gonville and Caius College to reconsider its decision to host an event with Dr Helen Joyce.³⁵² The event, hosted by philosophy lecturer Arif Ahmed, was titled 'Criticising gender-identity ideology: what happens when speech is silenced'.

Statement, 13 October 2022

Statement on Upcoming Helen Joyce Event

CN: transphobia, antisemitism, homophobia, mentions of violence.

A version of this statement with citations can be found via the following link: linktr.ee/cambridgelgbt

'The LGBT+ campaign are shocked and highly disappointed by the decision to invite Helen Joyce, author of "Trans: When Ideology Meets Reality," to speak at the university. Joyce's book promotes harmful and outdated ideas about trans people and thus contributes to and profits from rising levels of hostility towards trans people in the UK. We strongly condemn the decision to host this event and publicise it via the mailing lists for students of the Divinity Faculty, Biological Natural Sciences and Medicine. The latter is particularly concerning as, in previous interviews, Joyce has advocated 'reducing or keeping down the number of people who transition.' To encourage student medics to attend this event is irresponsible given that they will be in future healthcare providers for trans people.

The event Joyce has been invited to speak at is titled 'Criticising gender-identity ideology: what happens when speech is silenced.' What is here referred to as 'gender-identity ideology' is in fact the belief that trans identities are valid and trans people should be supported in their transitions. Trans rights are not an issue of ideology, nor is the existence of trans people a hypothetical, philosophical debate. The reality is that trans people, especially trans youth, including students at this university, are an extremely vulnerable minority.

In addition to the ordinary challenges of university, trans students face additional difficulties due to discrimination and harassment. A 2018 Stonewall survey found that 36% of trans university students had faced 'negative comments or behaviour' from university staff in the year prior. Furthermore, the same survey found that one in seven trans university students considered dropping out or dropped out of their course due to

³⁵² University of Cambridge SU LGBT+ Campaign (2022), *Statement on Upcoming Helen Joyce Event*, 13 October 2022, Facebook.

<https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=3220269814852997&set=a.1563372067209455>

discrimination from peers and staff in the year prior. By promoting the aforementioned event to its students, the Divinity Faculty and Biology Faculty contribute to the further alienation of trans students, to whom the university has a duty of care.

This event has been announced just six days after the Home Office published the information that transphobic hate crimes have seen a huge rise in the past year, with police in England and Wales receiving 4,355 reports - an increase of 56% on the previous year. It is therefore highly irresponsible to platform Joyce, whose book seeks to propagate ideas that can drive such violence and hate-speech. For example, Joyce makes the damaging claim that the gay rights movement was 'infiltrated' by paedophiles and that the trans rights movement is likely to be exploited in the same way. Joyce also claims that people might identify as trans-women for reasons of sexual gratification, a claim which contributes to the non-consensual sexualisation the trans community already faces.

Additionally, Joyce portrays those calling for greater rights and improved support for trans people as serving the 'global agenda' of the world's wealthiest individuals. This is both extremely out of touch with the material realities of trans people, who face huge financial and institutional barriers to transition, and their activism, which is largely grass-roots and community-based. Moreover, the language used by Joyce draws on age-old antisemitic stereotypes. The implications of this are furthered by the fact that all three billionaires she highlights in an attempt to prove her claims are Jewish. Far from presenting well-researched theories, Joyce constructs an antisemitic and transphobic conspiracy theory that portrays two marginalised groups as either shadowy actors or their unthinking tools.

Joyce has made clear in her writing and other statements that she does not believe in the validity of trans identities, describing trans people as 'a huge problem to a sane world.' The LGBT+ Campaign condemns the decision of the Divinity Faculty and the Faculty of Biology to promote this event to its students. We call upon Gonville and Caius College to reconsider its decision to host this event out of respect to its student community.

The following email was sent in a personal capacity by the master and senior tutor of Gonville and Caius College to undergraduate and graduate students, and college tutors, in relation to the Dr Helen Joyce event noted above. It stated that while they believed in the principle of freedom of expression, they found Dr Joyce's views to be 'offensive, insulting, and hateful to members of our community' and would not be attending the event. Dr Joyce published a letter of rebuttal to the master and senior tutor.³⁵³ In a separate statement, the College encouraged people to 'challenge views they find reprehensible through debate and to celebrate our diversity.'³⁵⁴

Internal circular email, 19 October 2022

A message regarding Criticising gender-identity ideology: what happens when speech is silenced, 25 October

We are responding to concerns raised with us by members of Caius about the 25 October event here featuring Helen Joyce. We are writing in our personal capacities, not as Master and Senior Tutor but as Pippa and Andrew.

Freedom of expression is a fundamental principle which we wholeheartedly support. Individuals should be able to speak freely, within the law. Views should then be challenged by debate, key in academic freedom. This is the case no matter the subject or topic.

However, on some issues which affect our community we cannot stay neutral. The event featuring Helen Joyce is not a College event, although it is taking place at Caius. We do not condone or endorse views that Helen Joyce has expressed on transgender people, which we consider offensive, insulting and hateful to members of our community who live and work here.

Caius should be a place for the highest quality of research to be produced and discussed, rather than polemics.

We will not be attending the event. The College has already made a statement to the [media](#).

We have worked hard and we will continue to strive to make Caius an inclusive, diverse and welcoming home for our students, staff and Fellows. We feel events such as this do not contribute to this aim.

Best wishes,

Pippa and Andrew

³⁵³ For a copy of the original email and Dr Joyce's rebuttal, see: Joyce, H. (2022), *An open letter*, 22 October 2022. <https://www.thehelenjoyce.com/an-open-letter/>

³⁵⁴ Varsity (2024), *Students condemn decision to host gender critical feminist*, 16 December 2024. <https://www.varsity.co.uk/news/24395>

2022-5 Adult Human Female screening, University of Edinburgh (a)

The following email was issued by the University of Edinburgh (UoE) Staff Pride Network (SPN) to its members, objecting to the screening of the film 'Adult Human Female'. The screening was cancelled twice, due variously to blockades by protesters and safety concerns.³⁵⁵ The film was finally shown in November 2023 with a police and security guard presence.³⁵⁶

Circular email, June 2022

'Dear members,

We are proud to be co-hosting with EUSA a trans solidarity space on the 14th of December in the Lounge Bar in Teviot from 1800-2000. We welcome trans staff & students as well as allies to come together and show their support for the trans community at the University of Edinburgh.

Some of you may be aware that also on the evening of the 14th of December the network 'Academics for Academic Freedom' will be hosting a screening of the documentary film 'Adult Human Female'.

This film contains transphobic rhetoric designed to spread misinformation about trans people, pressing an overall narrative that affording trans people equal rights and respecting their autonomy is contributing to the [perceived] erosion of women's rights. Many of us in the SPN will be aware that this is not the first event of it's kind to take place on our campus. Those holding these outdated, harmful and hateful attitudes have been permitted to exercise their views under the guise of freedom of speech and academic freedom on a number of occasions on university premises. The

Staff Pride Network does not support the screening of this film and recognises that it creates an unsafe environment for our trans staff and students. We support UCU Edinburgh's call to cancel the film screening.

We have pledged to put our energy into supporting our EUSA colleagues in creating the trans solidarity space in Teviot and hope to see many members there on Wednesday evening.

In solidarity,

[] Co-Chair, Staff Pride Network for LGBT+ Colleagues & Allies'

³⁵⁵ University of Edinburgh Academics for Academic Freedom (2023), *Adult Human Female: June 2023 update on screening and discussion*, 5 June 2023.
<https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/edinburghafaf/2023/06/05/adult-human-female-june-2023-update-on-screening-and-discussion/>

³⁵⁶ BBC News (2023), *Free speech group hopeful for Adult Human Female film screening*, 22 November 2023.
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-edinburgh-east-fife-67476387>

The following statement was issued by the UCU Edinburgh branch, in relation to the film screening detailed above. The statement notes that UCU Edinburgh ‘had asked for permission for this to be held in a University building to be revoked’. A statement by the University of Edinburgh Pride Society ‘supported ‘the call of UCU to cancel the screening’.³⁵⁷

Open statement, 12 December 2022

Statement on Edinburgh AFAF film screening

At our AGM in June 2019, UCU Edinburgh members passed a [motion](#) on *Trans and Non-Binary Equality at the University of Edinburgh*. This formed part of our wider work to embed UCU’s multiple strands of equality work and representation ([BAME, disabled, LGBT+, migrant and women members](#)) within the branch.

In the motion, we also committed ourselves to:

Call on the University of Edinburgh (UoE) to ensure that all events held in the name of UoE and on UoE premises are in line with the Dignity and Respect Policy and that the UoE neither host nor facilitate meetings which contain content which is transphobic, biphobic, homophobic or otherwise detrimental to the safety and wellbeing of LGBT+ staff.

Having learned of Edinburgh AFAF’s planned screening of the film *Adult Human Female*, we therefore wrote to the Principal to ask UoE to withdraw support for this event. We are supported by the Staff Pride Network in making this call.

Specifically, we asked for permission for this to be held in a University building to be revoked. We pointed out that the film description (then on Eventbrite but now taken down) contained content that was, “a clear attack on trans people’s identities and not in line with Dignity and Respect policy. It is specifically not, ‘expression within a framework of mutual respect’”.

The Principal’s response, declined our request, was generalised and did not engage with the specific points raised. He also suggested we *engage* with the film by attending the screening. This demonstrates a complete lack of understanding and sends a message to staff and students of a huge gulf between the University’s Trans Equality policy, with its commitment to provide, “support and understanding to those individuals who wish to take, or have taken, steps to present themselves in a gender different to their

³⁵⁷ UCU Edinburgh branch (2022), *Statement on Edinburgh AFAF film screening*, 12 December 2022. <https://www.ucuedinburgh.org.uk/blog/7659ss58k7t283zp4dt29an8r7ssa9#:~:text=Specifically%2C%20we%20asked%20for%20permission,with%20Dignity%20and%20Respect%20policy.>

birth gender”, and what is being followed in practice. We are also aware that ours is also not the only complaint that has been dismissed in such a cavalier manner.

[UCU policy is clear](#) in that we support:

a social, rather than a medical, model of gender recognition that will help challenge repressive gender stereotypes in the workplace and in society. UCU supports trans rights and, as champions of equality, we welcome the increased visibility and empowerment of trans and non-binary people in our society.

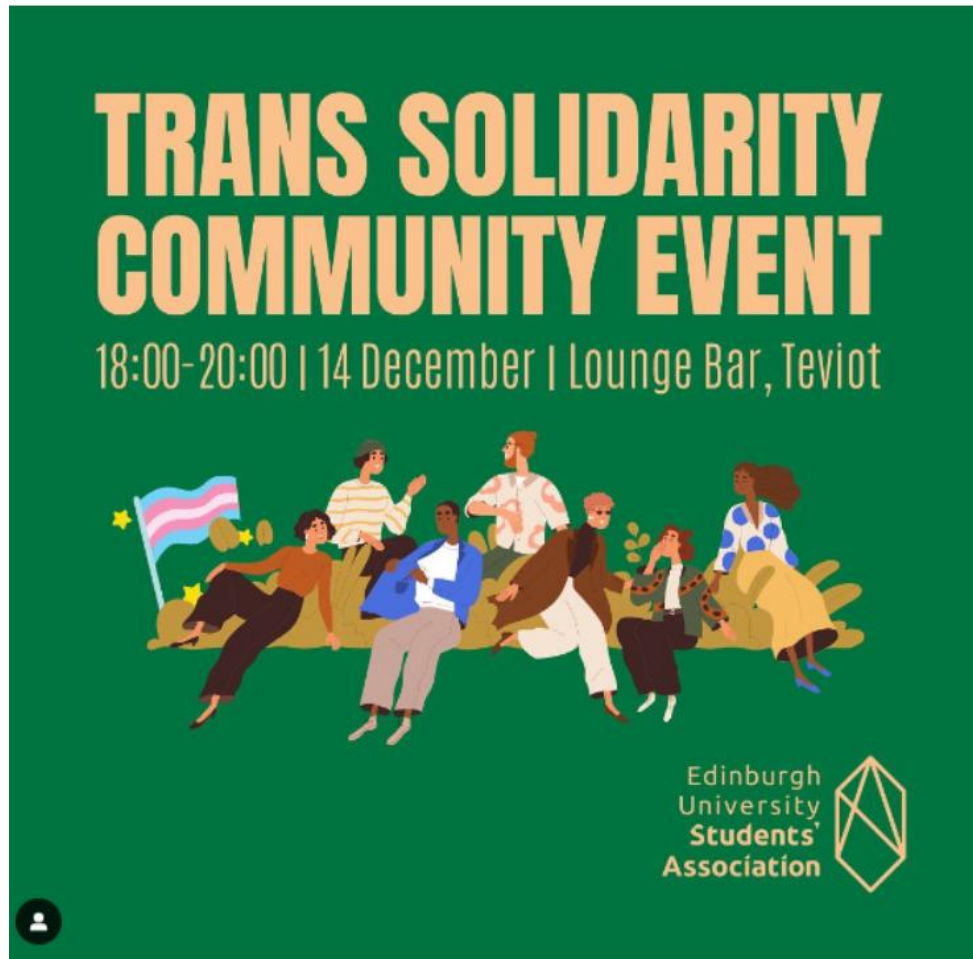
With the University not conceding to ours and others’ demands that this screening not take place on our campus, we encourage members and others to support the two alternative events below which have been organised by the Staff Pride Network, the Students’ Association and Pride Soc and which take place at the same time as the screening.

Pride Soc Stall outside 50 George Square

We have been informed that the network “Academics for Academic Freedom” will be hosting a film screening of the film “Adult Human Female” next Wednesday. We are appalled by the University of Edinburgh’s decision to allow this film screening to happen, calling this “freedom of speech”. The film contains transphobic language and spreads misinformation about trans* people, all under the narrative of protecting ‘women, children and biological reality’. The University of Edinburgh should be an environment where every individual, student or staff member can feel safe and appreciated. The allowance of this screening to happen has nothing to do with a freedom of speech, as it endangers trans* people on campus and beyond, erasing their identities and encouraging the spread of hateful portrayals. Therefore, we support the call of the UCU to cancel this film screening. Furthermore, we will collaborate with LGBTQ+ societies and feminist societies of the university to host a stall outside the film venue to show solidarity to the trans* community. We will provide non-harmful information about the lived realities of trans* people and how to support them, taking a stance against hate and misinformation, as well as the university’s neglect of their trans* student and staff population.



Trans Solidarity Community Event (hosted by EUSA and SPN)



The following open letter to Oxford University Press (OUP) editors was coordinated by academics and collected more than 800 signatures from 'members of the international scholarly community' with a relationship to OUP.³⁵⁸ The letter expressed 'profound disappointment' at the forthcoming publication of Holly Lawford-Smith's text 'Gender-critical Feminism' and referred to the book title as an 'anti-trans dog whistle'. The letter asked for details of the measures taken to ensure 'scholarly quality' and the 'further steps the Press is taking to make itself accountable for the consequences of its publication should the book go forward to print'. A report on the letter by Publisher's Weekly stated that one of the letter's collaborators was concerned that publication of the book was 'legitimising hate'.³⁵⁹

Open letter, April 2022

Letter to OUP re: "gender critical" publication

Dear Editors and Delegates of Oxford University Press,

We write to you as members of the international scholarly community with a relationship of some kind, or several kinds, to Oxford University Press: as authors of books and journal articles; as reviewers of books, series, and journal articles; as series and journal editors; as translators; as instructors who order your books for our courses; and as readers. We have always valued these relationships, and we value the immense contributions the Press has made, and has enabled us to make, to scholarly conversations worldwide.

We write to express our profound disappointment at OUP's forthcoming publication of the book *Gender-Critical Feminism* by Holly Lawford-Smith, a high-profile anti-trans-rights activist whose academic credentials have been thoroughly eclipsed by her public mobilization of transphobic rhetoric and bigotry with the explicit objective of denying trans people the right to live freely or to exist at all. We note that an earlier open letter to the University of Melbourne about Lawford-Smith's anti-trans activism rightly raised "serious questions about research integrity." In her public interviews and on her website, Lawford-Smith repeatedly describes transgender women as "men," states that only transgender people have "gender identities" and that gender identities are not real, dismisses the transgender population as "fashionable," and expresses support for conversion therapy, as well as

³⁵⁸ Multi-signatory open letter (2022), *Letter to OUP re: "gender critical" publication*, May 2022. <https://web.archive.org/web/20241229153004/https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSc342TjGvVsw80WpnZtJqJO7JUAjCY5LVxcZQzVVjFVEFbvUQ/viewform>

³⁵⁹ Publishers Weekly (2022), *Authors Condemn Forthcoming OUP Title*, 5 May 2022. <https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/industry-news/publisher-news/article/89216-authors-condemn-forthcoming-oup-title.html>

other scientifically and ethically unconscionable views. Meanwhile, Lawford-Smith, through her YouTube channel and other outlets, has publicly dismissed gender-inclusive rhetoric as “propaganda” and maintained that the defense of biological sex is, in fact, a key rallying point of “gender-critical feminism.” Just last week, her home institution announced that it had to “counsel” her in response to a transphobic post on her social media account that ran “counter to the views and values of the University of Melbourne.”

The very title of her forthcoming publication with OUP is an anti-trans dog whistle: a turn of phrase designed to sound academic that serves instead as a rallying cry for people who believe that trans people do not and should not exist. This sleight of hand has allowed the anti-trans movement to claim that any refusal of their bigotry is an attack on “freedom of speech” or the “free circulation of ideas” in public and in the academy.

Responses like ours are nothing of the kind. “Gender-critical feminism” is not a scholarly field, but a coordinated polemical intervention, unsubstantiated by peer-reviewed research in the fields of gender, sexuality, queer, and trans studies, that promotes itself by the deliberate sowing of public “controversy” without being held accountable for very real and dangerous consequences of these discourses for entire demographics of human beings. By responding to the book’s forthcoming release, we do not “censor ideas” but stand firmly in support of trans people’s right to live freely, without harassment, abuse, or terrorization.

“Gender critical” discourse attempts to deny transgender rights under the guise of scholarly inquiry. While the philosophy of gender is a rich and robust field animated by legitimate disagreement, whether or not transgender people deserve the right to exist as people at all is not a matter for philosophical debate. Transgender rights are a matter of urgent political attention internationally, as policies targeting the right of trans people to live freely or at all are being drafted and passed at alarming rates. In the United States, where many of us live and work, as well as around the world, family courts are removing transgender children from their parents, citing “child abuse” using language and arguments concocted by “gender critical” discourse. This week, as part of the largest national wave of anti-transgender legislation to date, Alabama lawmakers passed a sweeping law criminalizing lifesaving, gender-affirming healthcare for trans youth—a case that will establish a model and precedent for other nations. More than a dozen states are currently considering such proposals to ban these forms of health care described by the American Medical Association as “medically necessary” and “evidence based.” News headlines alone provide staggering evidence against the outrageous “gender-critical” claim that trans people are afforded greater social status and legal protections than cis women.

The UK, where OUP is based, is known globally as an epicenter of anti-transgender policy and rhetoric. Lawford-Smith states in public interviews that she feels Australia, where she lives and works, is several years behind

the UK in its approach to transgender rights, and hopes that the UK will be a model for her home country. The adoption of anti-transgender policies by UK media outlets with a legal requirement for unbiased reporting have shifted discourse away from an ethical discussion of transgender rights and towards a discourse where transphobic “gender critical” discourses can flourish. In 2020, the UK courts voted to remove access to lifesaving medication from transgender children—a move that has so far only been adopted by the most conservative of US states. A survey of 1000 employers in the UK found that only 8% believe transgender people have the same right to employment as a cisgender person. The UK government has also recently excluded trans people specifically from their proposed ban on conversion therapy. We bring these points forward to illustrate how from a national perspective this book may appear more normative within the current social discourse than it will present to a global audience.

In Australia, the government’s recently-withdrawn Religious Discrimination Bill was an attempt to enshrine in law the right to discriminate against trans people. Although this bill was withdrawn, conversion therapy remains legal in several Australian states. Trans Australians face discrimination in housing, employment, education, and healthcare. And Australian media is increasingly working to build opposition to trans rights in imitation of the UK situation.

We are deeply concerned, based on our familiarity with the widely debunked tropes of “gender critical” discourse, that Lawford-Smith’s book promotes such distorted and unsubstantiated claims. Our previous experience with Oxford University Press leads us to wonder by what possible processes of in-house review, peer review, Editorial Board review, and even copyediting an entire book under the title “Gender-Critical Feminism” could have made its way to print. As it is being marketed under both Social Sciences and Arts & Humanities on the OUP website, in the fields of Philosophy, Politics, and Sociology and specifically in the interdisciplinary fields of Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, we would expect a press of OUP’s reputation to incorporate the expertise of a wide range of specialists in feminist theory and gender and sexuality studies. Is this book positioned in productive conversation with, for example, OUP’s own recent *Gender: What Everyone Needs to Know*, and were its authors Laura Erickson-Schroth and Benjamin Davis, invited to participate as peer reviewers? Erickson-Schroth is also the editor of *Trans Bodies, Trans Selves: A Resource by and for Transgender Communities*, a second edition of which is scheduled for publication in April. OUP has published the work of transgender authors in the past, and has connections to academic experts in this community should they choose to reach out. Especially given the direct invocation of trans studies in the title of Chapter 5, “Trans/Gender,” we would expect the due diligence of consultation with experts in that field, as well as rigorous copyediting by someone familiar with the editorial style guides developed by trans communities to ensure that published language does not reproduce forms of rhetorical violence directly connected to forms of systemic and material harm. Barring that, we

might even simply ask, how is this text in alignment with OUP's style guidelines for acceptable language, which asks authors to ensure that: "No form of language or expression has been used that could be interpreted by a reader as racist, sexist, derogatory of a particular religion or creed, or otherwise offensive?"

We are deeply concerned that the appearance of this book in OUP's catalogue amounts to the Press lending its name, its reputation, and its long record of outstanding scholarship to a work and a movement that have no scholarly rigor, and that intentionally target vulnerable populations. The pattern of this emergent trade in "controversial ideas" is by now familiar. We anticipate that upon its publication, the book will be promoted by those already invested in its claims, be panned by those who bother to read with a critical eye, and sell well for reasons that have nothing to do with the furthering of serious scholarship. Meanwhile, no meaningful actions will have been coordinated to ensure the safety and well-being of those with the greatest stake in these exchanges, namely trans people. We hesitate to call these exchanges "a debate" given the questionable scholarly soundness of one side, the extreme power differentials in play, and the real risks posed to trans communities. Moreover, we cannot help but wonder how this book can be reconciled with OUP's commitment to equity, justice, and inclusion as a member of the Association of University Presses, of which OUP President Niko Pfund was President as recently as 2020-2021. As the largest university press in the world, and the second oldest, OUP occupies a unique leadership role.

We therefore request, as people whose names and intellectual labours are associated with Oxford University Press and its reputation, a clear and detailed account of what measures have been taken to ensure the scholarly quality of this forthcoming publication (while being mindful of the need to maintain reviewers' anonymity), and what further steps the Press is taking to make itself accountable for the consequences of its publication should the book go forward to print. Measures the press could undertake to offset the harm done by the publication of this work might include soliciting and publishing trans-affirming scholarship by transgender authors, updating the house style guidelines to include specific guidance on language around transgender rights, donating a portion of the book's profits to supporting transgender rights organizations, and/or developing editorial guidelines for the submission of works that challenge the human rights of any marginalized group. We recommend that these steps for accountability be undertaken in consultation with transgender rights activists and transgender scholars. We hope that this process can help guide OUP in editorial directions that affirm transgender peoples' humanity and rights.

2023

2023-1 Education for Women's Liberation Conference, UCL

The following statement was written by two UCL academics on behalf of qUCL,³⁶⁰ which describes itself as 'a research network hosted by the UCL Institute of Advanced Studies (IAS)'.³⁶¹ The statement was published on the UCL website on the morning of the conference 'Education for Women's Liberation',³⁶² and remains live on the UCL website at the time of writing. It draws a comparison between the conference and 'the legacy of eugenics and debates about anti-Semitism'. The conference was targeted by protestors who banged on windows, disrupting some of the sessions.³⁶³ qUCL had previously written to UCL Council seeking to overturn the decision of Academic Board regarding membership of Stonewall schemes.³⁶⁴

Open statement, February 2023

qUCL statement: on inviting anti-trans anti-queer views onto campus

As the co-directors of qUCL, a UCL research network dedicated to gender, feminism, queer studies, and LGBTQ+ studies, we are deeply concerned that inviting speakers and organizations who are well-known to promote anti-trans and anti-queer views onto our campus invalidates the hard work UCL has undertaken over the last several years to address issues of EDI, including the legacy of eugenics and debates about anti-Semitism.

Freedom of expression is a fundamental right; however, this right does not extend to limiting or undermining the human rights of others. UCL's 2021 formal public apology for its history and legacy of eugenics states: 'We operate in a climate of academic freedom, but we recognize that the right to freedom of expression is not unfettered.' The same responsible stance

³⁶⁰ QUCL (online), *qUCL statement: on inviting anti-trans anti-queer views onto campus*.
<https://web.archive.org/web/20250102135240/https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lgbtq-research/statements-and-letters>

³⁶¹ QUCL (online), *qUCL About us*.
<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lgbtq-research/why-ucl>

³⁶² UCL Women's Liberation (2022), *Education For Women's Liberation: One Day Conference*, 20 December 2022.
<https://web.archive.org/web/20250102133937/https://blogs.ucl.ac.uk/feminism/2022/12/20/education-for-womens-liberation-one-day-conference-ed4womenslib/>

³⁶³ The Telegraph (2023), *University scholars compare feminist conference to 'enabling eugenics'*, 4 February 2023.
<https://web.archive.org/web/20230204214407/https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/02/04/university-scholars-compare-feminist-conference-enabling-eugenics/>

³⁶⁴ qUCL (2022), *Letter to Chair of UCL Council*, 16 February 2022.
https://web.archive.org/web/20230606114502/http://www.ucl.ac.uk/lgbtq-research/sites/lgbtq_research/files/qucl_letter_to_ucl_council_on_stonewall_decision.pdf

on informed academic freedom applies to issues of gender and sexuality because the study and history of LGBTQ+, queer and gender studies is inextricably tied to issues of eugenics, race, anti-Semitism, and colonialism. It impacts UCL's credibility as a world-class research institution if the institution's understanding of academic freedom and freedom of expression are unfettered by considerations of rigour, evidence, method, ethics, law, and staff and student wellbeing. Debate and dissent are foundational to scholarly inquiry. However, false equivalence is damaging: To entertain uninformed positions that hurt, or worse question the validity of, marginalised peoples places UCL in the position of once again enabling the likes of the eugenics conferences that ran on campus through 2017.

2023-2 'Adult Human Female' film screening, University of Edinburgh

After two previous cancellations, the University of Edinburgh hosted a screening of the film 'Adult Human Female' in April 2023. Ahead of the screening, the university Staff Pride Network (SPN) distributed the circular email and flyers shown below, inviting its members to participate in a protest against the film, which it described as 'transphobic'.

Separately, a lengthy blog (nearly 5,000 words) authored by an anonymous staff member was posted on the University website, on the SPN webpage. This argued that the film breached the University Dignity and Respect policy and constituted harassment under the Equality Act 2010.³⁶⁵

Circular email, 24 April 2023

Dear members,

Gender Liberation have organised a banner making session today 2-3.30pm in Potterrow Dome (see flyer attached). This is in preparation for our protest on the 26th April against the screening of the transphobic documentary 'Adult Human Female' taking place outside Gordon Aikman Lecture Theatre. We will be assembling from 5pm. Full details and protest guidelines as well as our joint statement with our co-organisers Cabaret Against The Hate Speech are also attached in this email.

If you have any questions please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Best wishes,

REDACTED

Co-Chair, Staff Pride Network for LGBT+ Colleagues & Allies

³⁶⁵ Anonymous University of Edinburgh staff member (2023), *Is screening "Adult Human Female" an opportunity for respectful debate and discussion?*, 14 April 2023, Staff Pride Network. <https://web.archive.org/web/20230420035748/https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/staffpridenetwork/2023/04/14/is-screening-adult-human-female-an-opportunity-for-respectful-debate-and-discussion/>



WHAT IS ADULT HUMAN FEMALE?

This film also includes interviews by multiple TERFs and anti trans activists, is biased in all their research and is clearly set out to attack the trans community.

By organising this public screening, Edinburgh Academics for Academic Freedom are violating the dignity and respect of trans staff and students and allowing blatant transphobia onto our campus.

We do not believe trans lives and lived experiences are up for debate and this film should not be presented as academic material by anyone.



Staff Pride
Network
for LGBT+
colleagues
& allies

**OUR THREE MAIN GOALS ARE TO
SING TOGETHER, CELEBRATE OUR COMMUNITY
AND CHALLENGE HATE SPEECH WITH
MUSIC, SONG AND DANCE.**

**WE DO NOT ENGAGE DIRECTLY WITH ANYONE WE ARE
THERE TO PROTEST**

**WE DO NOT ALLOW INTIMIDATION TACTICS OR VIOLENCE
AT OUR EVENTS THIS
INCLUDES ON BANNERS AND SIGNS.**

**PLEASE ARRIVE AND LEAVE THE EVENT IN GROUPS AND
COVER OR REMOVE ANY IDENTIFIABLE
COLOURS, FLAGS OR SIGNS BEFORE & AFTER THE EVENT**

**PLEASE FEEL FREE TO BRING YOUR OWN SIGNS, FLAGS,
MEGAPHONES, INSTRUMENTS & FACE MASKS IF
CONCERNED ABOUT DOXXING.**

The following open letter was written and organized by the Oxford University LGBTQ+ Society President, and signed by staff and students, including fifteen professors.³⁶⁶ The letter objected to an invitation made to Kathleen Stock to speak at the Oxford Union.³⁶⁷ It states that students from the LGBTQ+ Society who had publicly opposed the event had faced a 'significant, targeted, online harassment campaign.'

Multi-signatory letter, May 2023

Universities must protect trans students

Universities have a duty of care to all of their students. Trans students and staff are important members of our community who should be free to be known and loved and should be protected. This is particularly true in 2023, as trans people around the world face increasing rates of discrimination and violence against them, with many losing vital legal and medical rights. More governments deny trans people the right to change their name and legal gender than allow it [1]. Over the last three years, the number of laws in the US targeting trans people has gone from 79 in 2020, to 80 in 2021, to 280 in 2022, and 549 bills have already been introduced in 2023 [2]. The most recent legislation bans the use of preferred pronouns, limits drag shows and allow trans children to be taken from affirming parents [3]. In the UK, two in five trans people have experienced at least one hate crime within the past 12 months because of their identity [4], and a third of trans students have experienced harassment from university staff because of their gender identity [5].

This is the context in which the Oxford Union invited Dr Kathleen Stock to give an address on her "gender critical" views [6]. This was an address, not an open discussion or balanced debate. Dr Stock is not an expert on gender identity and yet was invited to speak on this topic unchallenged. This prompted the Oxford University LGBTQ+ Society to issue a statement opposing Stock's views and the Oxford Union's decision to amplify them [7]. Subsequently, these students faced a significant, targeted, online harassment campaign. These students were sent abuse. They had their private and personal information leaked [8]. Amid sensationalist news

³⁶⁶ Multi-signatory open letter (online), *Universities must protect trans students*.
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1myWcqaU0E4Yokw6NavfNwgxuXwJ_Fad5zsiwZt8fl4Y/edit?tab=t.0

³⁶⁷ See; BBC (2023), *Oxford split over Kathleen Stock's invite to Union debate*, 27 May 2023.
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-65722845#:~:text=A%20group%20of%20Oxford%20University,Oxford%20Union%20event%20on%20Tuesday.>

coverage and a response from Stock, students received death threats in the mail [9]. Finally, 44 Oxford academics issued a letter arguing that the LGBTQ+ Society's advocacy endangered free speech [10]. This claim was based on erroneous media reports that falsely linked the Student Union's decision to cut ties with the Oxford Union to the LGBTQ+ Society's response to Stock's invitation. In turn, this prompted the university's senior leadership to pressure the SU to overturn its decision and then to come out against the student campaign in the national media [11].

We believe that trans students should not be made to debate their existence. We also refute that this is a free speech issue—disinviting someone is not preventing them from speaking. Trans students, too, have a right to voice their disagreement. Oxford students have always vocally expressed their opposition to views they disagree with, and will always continue to do so: protest and activism are an essential Oxford tradition. Presenting those who fight for trans liberation as a dominant majority seeking to quash dissenting views is a distortion of reality. Those who fight for trans liberation are a persecuted minority who merely seek to receive basic dignity, respect, and the freedom to live a life free from political demonisation.

What we are particularly disheartened by is the lack of care and attention to student concerns and student welfare. The press has ridiculed the need to care for the well-being of the student population, and the university leadership followed suit by not listening to, or communicating in any way with, the students who protested. We believe in attentive leadership, and as academics, we believe in the need to care for student wellbeing in order to ensure their success and combat inequalities. As those that teach Oxford students, we have seen them to be strong and more than capable to confront ideas they disagree with in the best way that can be done.

Debate is essential for a vibrant democracy, and we champion it. But what the discourse needs now is more civil conversations and less bad-faith argumentation. The theoretical debate over gender does not matter - what matters is trans people's basic living conditions, autonomy, dignity and respect. Freedom of speech matters, but we shouldn't forget the right to protest. We call on the media and university to take trans voices seriously and treat them with respect.

[1] <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/cy/lgbtq-facts-and-figures>

[2] <https://translegislation.com>

[3] <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/05/17/politics/desantis-signs-anti-trans-bill/index.html>

[4] <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/cy/lgbtq-facts-and-figures>

[5] <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/cy/lgbtq-facts-and-figures>

[6] <https://oxford-union.org/pages/term-card-calendar>

[7] <https://twitter.com/OULGBTQ/status/1650166089387474944?s=20>

[8] <https://www.oxfordstudent.com/2023/05/13/is-oxford-a-welcoming-place-for-trans-students/>

[9] <https://www.thepinknews.com/2023/05/22/oxford-university-lgbtq->

president-death-threat-kathleen-stock/

[10]<https://12ft.io/proxy?ref=&q=https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/05/16/free-speech-oxford-university-trans-row-kathleen-stock/>

[11]<https://12ft.io/proxy?q=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.telegraph.co.uk%2Fnews%2F2023%2F05%2F18%2Foxford-university-free-speech-trans-row-kathleen-stock%2F>

Written and organized:

[President, Oxford University LGBTQ+ Society]

Signed...'

The following letter from the UCU Edinburgh branch to the University of Edinburgh Principal and senior management team called the launch of an academic title published by Routledge (Sex and Gender: A contemporary reader') to be suspended. The UCU Edinburgh branch also shared the letter with its members, via the UCU mailing list.

UCU Edinburgh open letter, 5 October 2023

Transphobia has no place at our University

On 5 Oct., UCU Edinburgh branch committee sent the attached letter to VC Peter Mathieson and members of the senior leadership team. We outlined our concerns about the launch of a transphobic book on campus on 11 Oct., and asked that management adhere to the University's policy on trans inclusion, disallow this event and listen to trans staff and students. We will be holding a protest against this event. Details will be shared when we have them.

Dear Professor Mathieson and the UoE Senior Management team,

Another academic year begins at the University of Edinburgh with the organizing of an event that contests the legitimacy of trans people and their rights. It is important to highlight at the outset your responsibility to protect vulnerable minorities under university care from such campaigning that contests their legitimacy and rights, including the legitimacy and rights of the University of Edinburgh's trans community. As a reminder, you have a Trans Equality policy to adhere to that protects trans staff and students from attacks of delegitimization and which states that "Transphobic abuse, bullying or harassment will be treated very seriously and dealt with under the appropriate procedures" and that "the University is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming community where staff and students are enabled to meet their full potential and are treated as individuals." You also have policies that consolidate this obligation, as exemplified by the opening statement of the university's Dignity and Respect policy, "The University has a strong and long-standing commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion and to promoting a positive culture which celebrates difference, challenges prejudice and ensures fairness ... Promot[ing] an enabling and inclusive environment where all individuals are treated with dignity and respect."

So to the offending event on this occasion. In continuity with the anti-trans film 'Adult Human Female,' it involves the hosting of a book launch for 'Sex and Gender: a contemporary reader' (Routledge, 2024). Many of its contributing authors will already be familiar to anyone who has watched 'Adult Human Female.' This includes the contribution of Jo Phoenix, who in the film made the false and dangerous claim that over half of trans people have committed sexual offences against women or children (the total

number of trans people in prison in 2021-2022, according to government statistics, is 230, or approximately 0.08% of the U.K.'s trans population). It includes Jane Clare Jones, who similarly implies in the film that the majority of those who appear to be trans women are sexual fetishists – a sequence in the film that is accompanied by an actor portraying a sexual fetishist, to provide the supporting evidence to the claim. It also includes Shereen Benjamin, who continually uses the strategy of framing trans people and their rights as ‘gender ideology,’ with the *fait accompli* that trans people’s existence – like any ideology or theory – can be ‘debunked.’

The book being launched at the event continues with this strategy by using this false framing that trans people’s identity represents an “ideology” and/or “lobby” and that anyone supportive of trans people’s rights (i.e. typically the vast majority of trans people and any ally) is a ‘gender-identity theorist’ or part of the “gender identity lobby.” As the book’s introduction and various chapters claim time and again, “The present [trans] movement is distinguished by a belief system we will call here ‘gender identity ideology’ or ‘trans ideology ... [or] Gender-identity theory ... which overtly opposes scientific values and the notion of truth” (69, 6). This persistent attempt of the book at dehumanization and reducing trans people to an abstract anomaly or sinister cabal whose existence can be debunked or exposed not only represents a form of harassment in its implication for trans people’s legitimacy but goes against the recognition by human rights organizations such as the European Court of Human Rights (2002) as well as the U.K.’s Equality Act (2010) that trans identity constitutes a legally recognized and protected characteristic with fundamental rights. It is time that the senior management of the University of Edinburgh demonstrated its support for its trans staff and students against these campaigns and connected events, in recognition that trans people are not an ideology to be debunked, but a vulnerable minority as underlined by both the protected characteristic of the 2010 Equality Act and the very policies you have in place. It is also time that you recognized – again in alignment with human rights organizations such as the United Nations – that ‘free speech’ must be balanced with responsibilities and restrictions relating to harm caused by certain types of speech, such as those that advocate and disseminate misinformation and smears against the validity of disempowered minorities. These are not ambitious requests on our part – they are a reminder of your fundamental obligations as reflected in the very policies you already have in place.

UCU policy is clear in that we support: trans rights and, as champions of equality, we *welcome the increased visibility and empowerment of trans and non-binary people in our society*. The hosting of events that disseminate smears and false narratives of trans people causing “a chilling effect within universities” (3), “institutional capture” (69) and opposition to “scientific values and the notion of truth” (6) demonstrates that the University of Edinburgh is currently no safe or respecting place for trans staff and students. We ask that you suspend the book launch and engage and consult with trans staff and students – including the University of

Edinburgh's very own experts on trans and LGBTQ+ issues – to ensure that these kinds of events are investigated before they be allowed on campus.

Yours sincerely, UCU Edinburgh branch committee

2023-5 Book launch of 'Sex and Gender: A contemporary reader' (b)

The following email from the UCU Edinburgh Branch Co-Presidents to its members, described the authors of 'Sex and Gender: a Contemporary Reader' (see above) as 'a who's who of transphobes in academia', and provided details of an organised protest outside the event.

Circular email, 11 October 2023

Dear members,

The Staff-Student Solidarity Network is calling for people to join a peaceful protest today, please see the details below. The protest will include members of many networks, including UCUE.

Where: Lecture Hall A, 40 George Square

When: From 5pm

Why: The University of Edinburgh is hosting a launch for a book innocently entitled, "Sex and Gender: a Contemporary Reader". The reality is the authorship list of this book is a who's who of transphobes in academia. It includes academics who are known for their violently anti-trans rhetoric, and for propagating theories that have been soundly rebuffed by the wider academic community.

Apologies for the late notice.

Co-Presidents, UCU Edinburgh Branch Committee'

The following open letter³⁶⁸ was published in response to a speech given by the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology in which she announced the current Review.³⁶⁹ The letter expresses ‘anger and disappointment’ and states that ‘When it comes to sex determination it is simplistic binary arguments, such as those used by the Prime Minister himself, that deny biology’. The letter was organised and signed by six named academics,³⁷⁰ with over 2,000 co-signatories. Analysis of the signatories undertaken by the letters authors stated that around 80% were UK-based scientists. The letter was criticised by evolutionary biologist Professor Jerry Coyne.³⁷¹

Multi-signatory open letter, 5 October 2023

An Open Letter to the Government about EDI in Science

Dear Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology,

We are writing to express our anger and disappointment at the speech given by the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology at the Conservative Party Conference 2023, and accompanying posters and social media posts. These state that government policy will be ‘kicking woke ideology out of science’ and that ‘Conservatives are safeguarding scientific research from the denial of biology and the steady creep of political correctness.’ This was described as a plan “to depoliticise science”.

We are extremely concerned about both the content and possible implications of the speech, and what it says about the government’s views on both science policy and inclusion. We address these directly as follows:

- **‘Woke ideology’ / ‘Creep of political correctness’.** We assume that this refers to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) initiatives

³⁶⁸ Hubbard, K, et al. (2023), *An Open Letter to the Government about EDI in Science*, October 2023. <https://web.archive.org/web/20231029083741/https://katharinehubbard.wordpress.com/2023/10/05/an-open-letter-to-the-government-about-edi-in-science-october-2023/>

³⁶⁹ Havergal, C. (2023), *Donelan orders review of sex and gender questions in research*, 3 October 2023, Times Higher Education. <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/donelan-orders-review-sex-and-gender-questions-research>

³⁷⁰ Three of these were also authors and lead signatories of a letter (see 2022-2 in this appendix) objecting to the platforming of Professor Alice Sullivan at an Advance HE conference.

³⁷¹ Professor Coyne stated that ‘To say that the sex binary is “overly simplistic” or “scientifically illiterate” is to brand oneself an idiot’.

Coyne, J. (2023), *Why Evolution is True*, 6 October 2023. <https://whyevolutionistrue.com/2023/10/06/group-of-science-savvy-uk-liberals-urge-denial-of-the-sex-binary/>

such as AthenaSwan, the Race Equality Charter and others. Multiple sources of evidence highlight that women, some ethnic minorities, disabled people and those of lower socioeconomic status are underrepresented in science¹. This represents a loss and overall deficit of scientific talent from the UK workforce. The recent parliamentary inquiry into this issue concluded that “The Government should make improving diversity and inclusion in STEM—and indeed in all aspects of society—a central part of its day-to-day activities and future agenda.” and made 26 conclusions and recommendations to achieve a more representative UK scientific workforce². EDI initiatives are not some fringe ideology, but are key priorities for scientific institutions including UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and The Royal Society and multiple professional scientific bodies³. Research shows that diverse scientific and corporate teams are more productive and have higher impact than homogenous groups⁴⁻⁸. This is not political correctness. It is integral to ensuring UK science is inclusive of talent from a diverse range of backgrounds, and can maximise its contribution to the UK economy and global scientific standing. Inviting hostility to efforts to diversify science runs counter to the government’s own Research and Development (R&D) people and culture strategy⁹ which highlights the importance of “attracting, developing and retaining diverse people”. The Secretary of State’s position thus puts the ambition to “*cement the UK’s place as a science and technology superpower*”¹⁰ at risk.

- **‘Denial of biology’.** From the Secretary of State’s speech it is clear that this refers to the government’s increasing adoption of policies that put the lives and wellbeing of trans people at risk. When it comes to sex determination it is simplistic binary arguments, such as those used by the Prime Minister himself, that deny biology. The biology of human sex is significantly more complex than just XX chromosomes = female and XY = male. There are multiple levels of “biological sex”, including genetic, anatomical, physiological and hormonal, which may not align with each other^{11,12}. Even within genetic definitions of sex, there are multiple interacting genes involved in complex networks¹¹⁻¹³. Sex determination at birth is on the basis of external genitalia, so does not consider the multiple factors contributing to “biological sex”. Additionally, up to 1.7% of the population have Differences in Sex Development (DSD) or are intersex¹⁴. To appeal to “biological sex” as the Secretary of State has done is over-simplistic, unscientific and exclusionary rhetoric under the pretence of objectivity¹⁵.

Furthermore, as the Secretary of State acknowledges, “biological sex” and personal/social gender identity are distinct. At least 0.5% of the UK population identify as a different gender to their sex registered at birth¹⁶. Combining DSD, intersex, non-binary and trans communities, this represents up to 1.5 million people in the UK that the government implies

should be excluded from participating in biomedical, sports science and other research. Research in many contexts does not need to (nor should) restrict itself to a binary definition of sex or gender, and can be inclusive of intersex, non-binary and/or trans participants without losing scientific rigour. The Secretary of State directly criticises initiatives such as the Scottish Chief Statistician's guidance with respect to sex and gender¹⁷, but such pragmatic advice ensures accuracy in data collection and research design, and alignment with legislation including the Equality Act 2010 and the Data Protection Act 2018. We find it disturbing that over-simplistic or scientifically illiterate arguments about complex biological systems are being used to stoke so-called culture wars and make the UK increasingly hostile towards people identifying as intersex, non-binary and/or trans. Reductive and discredited biological models have been used to underpin historical and contemporary human rights abuses through scientific racism and eugenics^{18,19}, and have no place in modern scientific inquiry.

- **'Safeguarding scientific research' / 'Depoliticising science'**. Far from depoliticising science, this policy appears to be driven by ideology. The government is attempting to dictate how questions of sex and gender are addressed by academics. Such government interference in scientific research threatens academic freedom - a principle which the government claims to uphold²⁰. It also contradicts the Haldane principle, enshrined in UK law, which states that decisions about how to spend research funds should be made by researchers rather than politicians²¹. The rhetoric displayed at the party conference is not safeguarding science, but instead putting key policy underpinnings of the UK's academic science ecosystem at risk.

Science does not happen in a vacuum. Science is designed, funded, and conducted by people, and has real impacts on individuals and society. To meet the significant global challenges we face from healthcare to environmental sustainability to realising the potential of AI, we need diverse teams of scientists and other experts who can develop evidence-based, ethical and socially responsible solutions that positively benefit everyone. This culture needs to be embedded in all stages of scientific education and training, and in the scientific infrastructure of journals, funders and professional bodies. Disability, sexuality, gender identity, ethnicity, nationality, socioeconomic status and cultural background should not be a barrier to participation in science. Everyone should be included in science, protected from abuse in the name of science, and benefit from the products of science.

Finally, we strongly challenge the claim that the government is responding to 'the legitimate concerns of the scientific community'. The views expressed in the Secretary of State's speech do not reflect the view of UK scientists. On the contrary, many are appalled, saddened and angry that the government claims to be speaking for science in this way. Multiple professional societies have already reaffirmed their commitment to inclusivity after the Secretary of State's speech³. We add our signatures

below to signal our opposition of the government's position on these issues.

A serious government would be driving forwards a bold and ambitious plan to enable UK scientists to make maximum impact, not using science as a vehicle to drive partisan arguments and dog-whistle politics. We strongly condemn both the messaging and the underlying narrative as one that does not represent the interests or needs of science, scientists or perhaps most critically, society. We also ask that the Secretary of State provides reassurance that the government is still committed to developing a diverse scientific workforce, and to safeguarding academic freedom and the Haldane principle.

Yours faithfully,

[REDACTED six authors and lead signatories]

The names of signatories to the open letter are below.

- 2054 people signed the letter and gave consent for their signature to be counted.
- 1825 people gave consent for their name and details to be displayed. 229 signatories wished to remain anonymous.
- 1851 signatories are scientists or are working in a science related area.
- Of those, 1638 were UK based scientists, representing 80% of the signatures.
- A wide range of scientific fields was represented. The most common were chemistry, psychology, neuroscience, ecology, physics and microbiology.

A change.org petition was launched³⁷² opposing an event on 'Silencing Women: Academic Freedom and Unthinkable Thoughts', featuring a panel discussion with Professors Jo Phoenix, Judith Suissa and Alice Sullivan chaired by the journalist Joan Smith. The petition and a protest outside the venue were noted in the Welsh media³⁷³. The event took place without disruption, and a recording of the event³⁷⁴ has been viewed over 15,000 times at the time of writing.

Change.org petition

Stop transphobic hate in Swansea

FAO Rhian Jones, Operations Manager, Taliesin

We, the signatories to this letter, have been made aware of and are concerned about the event planned for 08/03/2023 at Taliesin entitled "Silencing Women: Academic Freedom and Unthinkable Thoughts" featuring Professor Jo Phoenix, Professor Alice Sullivan and Judith Suissa.

The panel is comprised of known 'gender-critical' academics who have built their reputations on the exploitation of various moral panics relating to trans people. The recent work of Professor Phoenix relating to the safety of cis female prisoners in the presence of trans prisoners is an example of such a tactic, deploying the spectre of the 'dangerous trans prisoner' as the foundation for her argument against gender self-identification, stoking the flames of hatred against trans people in wider society.

It appears that no effort has been made to balance this panel by incorporating the views of trans people or their supporters. We feel that should this event be allowed to go ahead it will encourage transphobia in Swansea and this will be to the detriment of the safety of trans people in Swansea.

A recent email circulated from Judith Lamie, Pro-Vice-Chancellor of Swansea University outlines the university's commitment to the rights of LGBTQ+ people:

"As an Institution, we continue to challenge homophobia, biphobia and transphobia, and seek to provide a positive and inclusive working and

³⁷² Archived: <https://web.archive.org/web/20230216163717/https://www.change.org/p/stop-transphobic-hate-in-swansea>

³⁷³ Dowrick, M. (2003) *More than 100 people protest at International Women's Day event at Swansea University*. Wales Online. <https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/hundreds-protest-alleged-transphobic-event-26420324>

³⁷⁴ Available on Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o54yeaLCX08>

learning environment that allows our LGBT+ colleagues and students respect. We support and stand with all LGBT+ people within our community and are proud of the work we do as we continue to platform diversity, inclusivity and equality".

Rather than challenging discriminatory attitudes, we think this event will reinforce and support transphobia on campus and more widely in Swansea. It is difficult to see how this event aligns with the intentions of the university as an institution outlined above.

It is within the context of an increase in transphobic hate crimes of 56% last year (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-63157965> and the devastating murder of 16-year-old Brianna Ghey on the 11/02/2023 following years of transphobic bullying that we bring this to your attention.

We believe this event should not go ahead.

Trans women are women.

Trans men are men.

Trans rights are human rights.

2024

2024-1 Simon Fanshawe, University of Edinburgh Rector (a)

In February 2024, Simon Fanshawe OBE was elected as the Rector of the University of Edinburgh.³⁷⁵ The appointment prompted statements, open letters, and circulars of objection, some of which gained media coverage.³⁷⁶ The following multi-signatory open letter to the University of Edinburgh Principal was organised by a group called 'Edinburgh University Alumni Against Transphobia'. The letter gained around 330 signatures and called for the appointment to be withdrawn.³⁷⁷

Open letter, February 2024

To Professor Sir Peter Mathieson

The University of Edinburgh has announced the appointment of Simon Fanshawe as Rector. He is a supporter of anti-Trans advocacy group LGB Alliance. As a proud queer person and formerly proud alumni of Edinburgh University I firmly believe that transphobia has no place in a modern society and appointing someone with these views creates a hostile environment for the many trans, non-binary and gender non-conforming students studying at the university.

We expect this appointment to be withdrawn and a true advocate of equality, accessibility, diversity and inclusion appointed.

³⁷⁵ BBC News (2024), Activist Simon Fanshawe named as University of Edinburgh rector, 12 February 2024.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-edinburgh-east-fife-68272222>

³⁷⁶ For example: Daily Mail (2024), *Trans campaigners slam announcement of Stonewall founder-turned-critic Simon Fanshawe as Edinburgh University Rector*, 14 February 2024.

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-13082651/edinburgh-university-transgender-simon-fanshawe-stonewall.html>

The Times (2024), *Edinburgh students angry over trans critic's appointment as rector*, 23 February 2024.

<https://www.thetimes.com/uk/scotland/article/edinburgh-students-angry-over-trans-critics-appointment-as-rector-xk2g6qjfv>

³⁷⁷ Edinburgh University Alumni Against Transphobia (online), *Open letter to Professor Sir Peter Mathieson*.

<https://the.organise.network/campaigns/network-edinburgh-university-alumni-against-transphobia-1b749e27bab77971>

In response to Simon Fanshawe's appointment, the Edinburgh University Student's Association (EUSA) Sabbatical Team published the following open statement expressing frustration and disappointment, and calling for a change to University regulations, to provide for a 're-open nominations' option.³⁷⁸

Open statement, 14 February 2024

Sabbatical Statement on the University of Edinburgh's New Rector

A response to the announcement of the University of Edinburgh's new rector.

On 12 February, following an uncontested election, Simon Fanshawe OBE was announced as the next Rector of the University of Edinburgh.

Fanshawe was one of the founding members of the LGB Alliance, a group which has [opposed a ban on conversion therapy for trans people](#), and also [opposed the Gender Recognition Reform Bill](#), which passed in Holyrood in December 2022 with a two-thirds majority before being blocked by the UK government. In 2021, [the organisation's official X, formerly Twitter, account posted comparing extending LGBTQ+ inclusion to bestiality](#).

We are frustrated and disappointed to see someone whose views are so diametrically opposed to those of our community taking on a role which is responsible for representing all students and staff, particularly when many of our students have expressed distress at the already hostile environment for trans people at the University of Edinburgh.

We have supported, and will continue to support, students campaigning on this issue. We know that this will come as devastating news to the members of our community who are already disproportionately impacted by rhetoric – on and off campus - which questions and demeans their identities.

Our LGBTQ+ Campaign have released an [open letter](#) in response to Simon Fanshawe's appointment which we encourage all students to read and sign. We echo their calls for the University to show proactive support for trans students and staff on campus, and to amend [the Regulations governing the election of the role of Rector](#) to include a "re-open nominations" option in the election, increasing representation of the views of students and staff.

Signed by: Sabbatical Officer Team 2023/24

³⁷⁸ Edinburgh University Student's Association Sabbatical Officer Team (2024), *Sabbatical Statement on the University of Edinburgh's New Rector*, 14 February 2024.
<https://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/newsandblogs/article/sabbatical-statement-new-rector>

As noted in the above EUSA Sabbatical Team statement, the EUSA LGBTQ+ Campaign also organised a multi-signatory open letter to the Vice-Principal.³⁷⁹ This expressed shock at the appointment and made a number of demands, including that Fanshawe either rescind his appointment, or have the appointment rescinded by the university. The letter also demanded that the university ‘change its approach to academic freedom and freedom of speech, no longer allowing individuals and groups whose views are seen as harmful by our community to host events on campus.’ The letter was signed by university societies, staff, students, graduates, and some individuals who only gave their name or forename.

Open letter, February 2024

Open Letter on appointment of new Rector

Content note: this letter contains descriptions of transphobia, and links to webpages which some readers may find distressing.

Dear Leigh Chalmers,

We are writing to you today, in your role as Vice-Principal and University Secretary, having learned with shock that Simon Fanshawe OBE has been confirmed as Rector at the University, following an uncontested election.

As a world-leading university, most students would assume that their welfare would be the University’s top priority, particularly when many of them have spent several years of their lives and thousands of pounds here.

However, this appointment – to a role intended to “ensure all voices are heard in making important decisions that affect students and staff” – demonstrates an extreme lack of respect and care for their trans+ students, and unfortunately aligns with their decision to not just allow but actively facilitate transphobic events to happen on our campuses, infringing on the rights and safety of our community.

The news article announcing Simon's appointment highlights that he was a co-founder of the UK’s largest LGBTQ+ charity, Stonewall. It neglects to mention that he has recently labelled the organisation a “propaganda machine”, claiming that their support for trans rights constitutes them preaching “divisive gender ideology”. It also fails to address the fact that, in 2019, Simon co-founded [LGB Alliance](#) in direct opposition to Stonewall’s position on trans rights.

³⁷⁹ LGBTQ+ Liberation Officer, Staff Pride Network Committee, Trans and Non-Binary Liberation Officer (online), *Open letter on appointment of new Rector*.
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ARVPGVu18tbrb0BQFQix-FOjFdBhnu_QFNEoyTQTli0/edit?tab=t.0

Since its inception, LGB Alliance have [opposed a ban on conversion therapy for trans people](#), and also [opposed the Gender Recognition Reform Bill](#), which passed in Holyrood in December 2022 with a two-thirds majority before being blocked by the UK government. In 2021, [the organisation's official X, formerly Twitter, account posted comparing extending LGBTQ+ inclusion to bestiality](#). A quick Google search brings up countless more examples of hateful and harmful speech from LGB Alliance and its members.

It is therefore unsurprising that Simon's appointment was celebrated by Academics for Academic Freedom, and For Women Scot, both of whom share his "gender critical" ideology.

We, the signatories of this letter, recognise and respect academic freedom and freedom of speech. However, when an individual represents us and our institution, it is reasonable to expect them not to hold and promote extreme, minority views, which the vast majority of our students and staff consider distressing, disgusting, and dangerous.

Time and time again, the University has platformed individuals like Simon, prioritising their voices over its own students, who have consistently told them how harmful this is to their mental health and sense of belonging. In fact, when students and staff came together to protest attempts to screen the film *Adult Human Female* on campus, they called in the police to enable the event to go ahead. This is not a question of the University supporting 'diversity of opinion'; it is a question of them failing in their responsibility to care for their students, and choosing complicity over solidarity.

The existence of trans students and staff should not simply be tolerated, treated as an inconvenience to be overcome. We should – at the bare minimum – feel safe, protected, and respected, by our peers and staff. We should be able to exist without being subjected to abuse being shared on our campuses, and by individuals with a relationship to the University.

We are sick of watching trans students and staff leave this University to escape the unprecedented levels of transphobia, and those of us who remain are increasingly embarrassed to be associated with an institution whose main claim to fame is a commitment to amplifying these views. This cannot continue.

We demand that the University finally stand up for its students, the students it brought here with promises of equality, diversity, and inclusion. We demand that trans students and staff be seen, heard, and protected at and by our University. We demand an end to their apathy in the face of discrimination on our campuses. And we will continue to make these demands until they listen.

Specifically, with regards to the position of Rector, we are calling for:

1. Simon Fanshawe OBE to immediately rescind his acceptance of the role of Rector, and if he has not done this by the end of the month, for the University to rescind his appointment, re-opening nominations for the role.

2. The University to amend [the Regulations governing the election of the role of Rector](#), ensuring that uncontested candidates must still face an election and be voted into post, not just appointed, increasing transparency and accountability to students and staff.
3. The University to release a public statement, before the end of LGBTQ+ History Month, pledging to protect and support trans+ students and staff.
4. The University to change its approach to academic freedom and freedom of speech, no longer allowing individuals and groups whose views are seen as harmful by our community to host events on campus.

Signed,

[redacted] LGBTQ+ Liberation Officer

Staff Pride Network Committee

[redacted] Trans and Non-Binary Liberation Officer

The Feminist Society

The University of Edinburgh Rail Society

Amnesty UK Student Action Network Committee

Girl* Up Edinburgh

Hearty Squirrel Food Cooperative

Ukrainian Society

Edinburgh University Sign Language Society

Sex? On Campus Edinburgh

UK Deaf Students Union

Women in Politics and IR

Freshair Radio

Retrospect Journal...

A statement by the University of Edinburgh (UoE) Staff Pride Network (SPN) also called for the Fanshawe's removal. The statement shown below was originally posted on the UoE SPN webpage and circulated via email to SPN members.³⁸⁰ It was subsequently withdrawn following an intervention by the University. An updated SPN post stated: 'The University has required us to remove the blog due to their perception that drawing attention to Simon Fanshawe's publicly available views on trans people (and our opinions on their potential effects) may run counter to the university's Dignity and Respect policy'.³⁸¹

Open statement/circular email, 14 February 2024

We are disturbed to learn of the uncontested election of Simon Fanshawe to the position of Rector at the University of Edinburgh. His close ties to the LGB Alliance ([an organisation founded to spread anti-trans propaganda](#), categorized by the [Global Project Against Hate and Extremism](#) as an "anti-transgender" hate group) and his [public statements](#) ridiculing trans identity send a dangerous signal to staff, students, and the wider community that Edinburgh University is not safe for trans people and people of minoritised identities.

That Simon Fanshawe's candidacy was not ruled out of order is yet another reminder of how University of Edinburgh senior management repeatedly fails to uphold the University's own policies on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and its legal obligations under the Equality Act (2010).

The Staff Pride Network therefore calls on the University of Edinburgh to do the following:

- Remove Simon Fanshawe as rector and implement a renewed election period
- Greater transparency in the rector election process with the inclusion of a Reopen Nominations option for uncontested elections

³⁸⁰ University of Edinburgh Staff Pride Network (2024a), *SPN Committee statement regarding the appointment of Simon Fanshawe to Rector of the University of Edinburgh*, 14 February 2024. <https://web.archive.org/web/20240215095652/https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/staffpridenetwork/2024/02/14/spn-committee-statement-regarding-the-appointment-of-simon-fanshawe-to-rector-of-the-university-of-edinburgh/>

³⁸¹ University of Edinburgh Staff Pride Network (2024b), *SPN Committee statement regarding the appointment of Simon Fanshawe to Rector of the University of Edinburgh*, 14 February 2024. <https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/staffpridenetwork/2024/02/14/spn-committee-statement-regarding-the-appointment-of-simon-fanshawe-to-rector-of-the-university-of-edinburgh/>

A pledge to protect and support trans staff and students and cease funding and platforming hate groups on campus...

2024-5 Cass Review (a)

In April 2024 the UK Government published the Cass Review, an independent review of gender identity services for children and young people, commissioned by NHS England in 2020.³⁸² As documented by Pearce,³⁸³ the report prompted a large body of critical material objecting to its findings and recommendations. This included open letters, statements, academic articles and commentary in activist media outlets. Indicative of the significance of the review, many responses came from jurisdictions beyond the locus of the review, including North America, Japan and Australia.

The following open letter was organised by the Feminist Gender Equality Network and invited signatories from academics. The letter described the report as 'shoddy' and 'biased', and called for it to be 'scrapped'.³⁸⁴ Other letters objecting to the review include a letter to the Secretary for Health from over 100 'LGBTQ+ community organisations and experts'.³⁸⁵

³⁸² Cass, H. (2024), *Independent review of gender identity services for children and young people*. <https://cass.independent-review.uk/>

³⁸³ Links to critical statements, letters, and articles can be accessed here: Pearce, R. (2024), *What's wrong with the Cass Review? A round-up of commentary and evidence*, updated 18 November 2024. <https://web.archive.org/web/20250102225845/https://ruthpearce.net/2024/04/16/whats-wrong-with-the-cass-review-a-round-up-of-commentary-and-evidence/>

³⁸⁴ The original letter is here:

Feminist Gender Equality Network (2024), *Letter from academics concerned about The Cass Review*, 13 April 2024.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20240413202655/https://feministgenderequality.network/letter-from-academics-concerned-about-the-cass-review/>

And a revised version is available here:

Feminist Gender Equality Network (2024), *Letter from academics concerned about The Cass Review* (revised).

<https://web.archive.org/web/20240620233927/https://uncommon-scents.blogspot.com/2024/04/letter-from-academics-concerned-about.html#!https://web.archive.org/web/20240515100334/https://uncommon-scents.blogspot.com/2024/04/letter-from-academics-concerned-about.html>

³⁸⁵ TransActual (2024), *Letter to Wes Streeting MP, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care*, 5 October 2024.

<https://transactual.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Letter-to-Wes-Streeting-from-TransActual-and-others-re-the-Cass-Review-Oct-2024.pdf>

Unsound methodology, unacceptable bias, problematic and unsupported conclusions. As academics we regard The Cass Review as dangerous and potentially harmful to trans children.

As academics with decades of research experience between us we can confidently say that The Cass Review would fail if it were submitted as an undergraduate dissertation. Its methodology is shoddy in the extreme and it is clearly biased throughout.

It does not include a proper systematic literature review or material published in any language other than English as well as excluding most research evidence because it fails to reach the impossibly high bar of a double-blind trial. In fact trans healthcare is inappropriate for a double-blind trial; if you give hormones to one group of people and not to another, they will very quickly notice. It would also be completely unethical and in fact most medicine is not based on this kind of evidence anyway.

In contrast The Cass Review provides very little evidence for the proposals it comes up with, and much of that 'evidence' is anecdotal. In effect the Cass proposals are largely un-evidenced and seem to be based on anti-trans rhetoric rather than science.

The failure to systematically include trans peoples' voices while liberally presenting anti-trans campaigners' rhetoric – including those accused of supporting 'conversion therapy' – reveals a level of bias that is unacceptable in something as important as this.

We regard The Cass Review as methodologically unsound, biased in the extreme (despite its reasonable-sounding language), dangerous, and rights-stripping in its proposals. If implemented it will cause great harm to trans and non-binary young people. This report should be scrapped, trans children deserve so much better than this.'

The following open letter to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care was published on the Transactual website and signed by academics and others. The letter expressed a lack of confidence in the appointment of Hilary Cass and the Review itself, and called for its recommendations to be suspended immediately. The signatories are described as a ‘wide-ranging alliance of trans organisations, academic experts and individuals involved in trans healthcare’ although many of the signatories provide no identifiable information. Organisational signatories include TransActual UK, GIRES, and the Feminist Gender Equality Network (FGEN).³⁸⁶

Open letter, October 2024

Dear Wes Streeting MP, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care

We, the undersigned organisations and individuals with an interest in trans healthcare, are writing to you today to express our deep lack of confidence in the Cass Review, and our concerns over the Department of Health and Social Care’s continued insistence on further degrading the healthcare offer for trans people by implementing and extending its recommendations.

Trustworthy government reviews of the evidence base for a particularly controversial policy, especially in the medical field, do not look like the Cass Review. They have a clear mandate and problem to solve which are raised by those directly affected, not by newspaper columnists or ideologues. They do not exclude members of the patient cohort and those with long-term experience in the field from being part of their team or consider professional or lived experience “bias”. They ensure there is transparency and meritocracy in the appointment of key personnel. They consult openly and in an ongoing fashion with patients and organisations representing them. They do not assume that the treatments in question and anyone involved with them are part of an ideological conspiracy. They are clear and consistent about the evidentiary standards being used to judge any given concerns. They are careful not to give credence to unevidenced theories. They accurately represent the views of those they have engaged with. When problems arise or mistakes are made, they engage with the impacted communities. When strong critiques are made by other experts internationally, these are discussed and engaged with rather than ducked and declared unacceptable to mention. None of these can be said of the Cass Review.

Instead, we have suffered the absurd spectacle of a review which despite finding crushingly long waiting times, drawn out assessment procedures,

³⁸⁶ See: TransActual (2024), ‘*Trans Community letter to Secretary of State for Health, Wes Streeting*’, 18 October 2024.

<https://transactual.org.uk/blog/2024/10/18/trans-community-letter-to-secretary-of-state-for-health-wes-streeting/>

and strong indicators of long-term accuracy in the targeting of treatment, its recommendations seek to undermine trans people's care by fearmongering about the number of young people who seek it and using unreliable methodologies and evidence thresholds to misrepresent the efficacy of puberty blockers and hormone treatments. The research evidence, which is effectively hidden from the general reader in appendices, does not support the conclusions extrapolated from it by the Review and is so methodologically problematic as to be inadequate for policymaking. The technical failings of the Cass Review [1] have been extensively documented. There is real concern, therefore, that the Review promotes an inherently flawed approach to determining the efficacy and safety of clinical support for trans healthcare'.

In this context, it is worrying that Baroness Cass has found it necessary to deny her colleagues' accusations of bias against trans lives and trans culture [2] , especially since other concerns about her leadership of the Review have been expressed, including:

- The selection of Baroness Cass without consideration of any other candidates;
- The secrecy surrounding the commissioning of the Cass Review by the Conservative Secretary of State for Health, and refusal to answer Freedom of Information Act Requests regarding this;
- Lack of transparency in the commissioning of qualitative and quantitative research for the Cass Review, with a trans-led, multi-university research team receiving no response to their bid, and NHS England subsequently refusing to answer Freedom of Information Act Requests regarding this;
- The explicit exclusion of any trans people from involvement in the Governance Assurance Group, on the basis of potential bias, in clear contravention of the NHS principle of 'nothing about us without us';
- The inclusion of spurious and misleading theories with no supporting evidence [3];
- Ignoring trans people when seeking to access private medical records of adults protected by the Gender Recognition Act 2004, leading to widespread fear for citizen's rights to privacy; Intimations by then Minister for Women and Equalities Minister Kemi Badenoch that biased individuals were selected and appointed specifically to enable the Cass Review to occur [4] ;
- Dismissal of and refusal to answer to criticisms from experts domestically and internationally [5][6] , or explain why other government evidence reviews of the same treatments have reached opposite conclusions [7] .

You did not commission the Cass Review, and need not have been held responsible for all of these mistakes. However, you have repeatedly committed, in public and private, to the implementation of the Cass

Review's recommendations. This is incompatible with your stated goal, communicated to LGBTQ+ organisations in a meeting with yourself and DHSC officials on 30th July, of rebuilding trust between the government and the LGBTQ+ community. This trust has been shattered in the past decade in no small part by the way in which the Cass Review was conducted. While you and the government are committed to defending and implementing the recommendations arising from the Cass Review, it is very difficult to see how trust can be rebuilt, enabling positive, collaborative engagement with your department to improve the situation for trans people in the UK.

This does not need to be the case. In accordance with your stated goal of rebuilding trust with the LGBTQ+ community, we call upon you to:

1. Establish transparency for the Cass Review by publishing details of the process by which it was commissioned, its governance structure was 2. decided, and Hilary Cass was selected as Chair.
2. Suspend the implementation of the Cass Review's recommendations immediately, including removing the current prohibitions on prescription of GnRH analogues ('puberty blockers') for trans children until the accuracy of the Review's findings can be established, whilst ensuring that trans children and young people have access to support.
3. Support the British Medical Association's ongoing review of the Review's methodology and conclusions by publicly rebuking actors who insinuate that criticism of the Cass Review is sinister and worthy of censorship, or that support for gender-affirming care for young people is suspect.

We look forward to receiving your assurances on these matters.

[List of signatories]

Following publication of the Cass Review, Ireland's Health Service Executive (HSE) stated that it would consider the review as part of a health care update.³⁸⁷ The letter below, was signed by over 200 Irish academics, staff, and postgraduate students from a range of disciplines. The letter critiqued the Review's methodology and cautioned the HSE against considering the findings.³⁸⁸ The letter warned the Review was being 'seized upon and used to justify the position of those who wish to roll back rights for trans people and restrict our access to basic care'. Here, the letter cited a statement by Amnesty International UK which asserted that 'anti-trans' groups had weaponised the report.³⁸⁹

Multi-signatory open letter, April 2024

Irish academics say young trans people in Ireland deserve better than the recommendations of the Cass Review

The proclamation of the Irish Republic famously includes a commitment to "cherishing all the children of the nation equally, and oblivious of the differences carefully fostered by an alien Government, which have divided a minority from the majority in the past". This commitment is central to how we, as a multi-disciplinary group of academics based in universities across Ireland, view the Cass Review, an "Independent Review of Gender Identity Services for Children and Young People" which was commissioned by NHS England to make recommendations on the questions relating to the provision of these services.

This report, which was published this week, has been much discussed in relation to the provision of Gender Identity Services for young people in Ireland. Despite the spirit of the quotation above, we believe Irish trans young people are not receiving the quality of care they deserve. We wish to highlight the risk of this situation being worsened should Irish authorities uncritically rely on the Cass Review to inform their model of care for trans young people in Ireland.

³⁸⁷ The Irish Times (2024), *HSE to consider UK's Cass Review on gender as part of healthcare update 'informed by best evidence'*, 10 April 2024.

<https://www.irishtimes.com/health/2024/04/10/hse-to-consider-uks-cass-review-on-gender-as-part-of-healthcare-update-informed-by-best-evidence/>

³⁸⁸ Multi-signatory open letter (online), *Irish academics say young trans people in Ireland deserve better than the recommendations of the Cass Review*.

<https://sway.cloud.microsoft/pFNJFRo9BM6LChR0?ref=Link&loc=play>

³⁸⁹ Amnesty International UK (2024), *UK: Cass review on gender identity is being 'weaponised' by anti-trans groups*, 10 April 2024.

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/uk-cass-review-gender-identity-being-weaponised-anti-trans-groups?ref=wearequeer.af.com>

We call for the vision of [Trans Healthcare Action](#) who seek “an Ireland where trans and gender diverse people can access gender-affirming healthcare within our local communities through an informed consent model” and “an end to the current outdated gatekeeping model practiced in Ireland” to be implemented across services for young people and adults.

There is **no dedicated gender identity service for young people in Ireland** – making our state [an outlier within the EU](#). Within Children’s Health Ireland, young people cannot access gender identity services because the paediatric endocrinologist there requires a referral from a psychiatrist at the HSE Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service with gender expertise – a role that remains unfilled. This situation leaves **young people in Ireland who require gender identity services having to seek treatment privately and abroad**. Many end up delaying care until they can access the adult National Gender Service, which itself [can take up to a decade](#). We know that such [delays may cause harm](#). Voices from the Trans community and beyond are clear in calling for the urgent improvement of gender identity services in Ireland.

The HSE is currently developing a model of care for young people and [considering how the Cass Review should inform it](#). Next, we outline serious concerns with how the Cass review was conducted that should raise doubts about the wisdom of implementing its recommendations.

Six Flaws in the Conduct of the Cass Review

The Cass Review relies on six systematic reviews of different aspects of healthcare for young people accessing gender identity services. [Systematic reviews](#) are a way of compiling information from multiple studies that have looked at the same topic and come to an overall understanding of the results. There are [very specific guidelines](#) for how systematic reviews should be done but the Cass Review’s systematic reviews deviated from best practice in systematic review methodology in several ways:

1. None of the authors of the systematic reviews had previous experience of researching or providing medical healthcare in gender identity services.
2. While a systematic review is supposed to present an unbiased analysis of the evidence, the one author with experience of working in gender identity services, is a clinical psychologist and known proponent of methods that are considered [unethical](#) and inconsistent with gender affirmative approaches. The involvement of this author should have been balanced by the involvement of researchers and healthcare practitioners who consider the evidence for gender affirmative care to be positive. This [adversarial approach to collaboration](#) is the fairest approach when researchers disagree.
3. This team also failed to involve other key stakeholders. The best approach would have been to have a diverse team of healthcare practitioners with diverse views and expertise in gender medicine, health and social care for young people in primary and secondary

settings, and ideally input from young people and parents directly affected by the issue being reviewed.

4. A crucial aspect of considering evidence from systematic reviews is looking at the quality of the multiple studies that they find. However, the Cass team only assessed study quality in four out of the six reviews and used a highly criticised tool for doing so.
5. In those four reviews, they calculated a score to represent the quality of each study, but this is another deviation from best practice as it reduces something very complex to just a number.
6. It's considered worse again to exclude studies from analysis based on these scores, but the Cass team did this in two of their reviews. Why they only did this in two of their reviews, and why they did this in the reviews about the two most controversial interventions – puberty blockers and hormone therapy – is not disclosed by the team. They excluded 48% & 36% of studies for puberty blockers and hormone therapy respectively using this flawed approach, which completely undermines the comprehensive nature of systematic reviews.

Several reviews (see [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)), that include more evidence than the Cass Review, provide a much more positive view of gender affirmative health care for young people. Of note is the large number of professional healthcare provider organisations internationally that support gender affirming healthcare for young people, which includes **the American Academy of Paediatrics**, [the American Medical Association](#), and the [American Psychological Association](#) the [Canadian Paediatric Society](#), the [Royal Australian College of GPs](#), and [many others](#), and the criticism of the Cass Review by professional organisations for those who provide gender identity services (e.g., in [Canada](#), [Australia](#)).

The Political Context of the Cass Review

The HSE would also do well to understand the political context that shaped the Cass Review. [It has been stated that the National Gender Service “tries not to get too involved in ideological” discussions of gender identity](#), but uncritically accepting [the Cass Review implicitly endorses a socially conservative and demonstrably harmful ideology in relation to gender](#).

Globally, we are in the midst of an unprecedented moral panic concerning trans people, trans healthcare and gender identity services for young people in particular. This is clearly linked to the deeply concerning rise of far right political forces in the US, Europe and elsewhere who are seeking to manufacture a controversy regarding trans people that can then be used to reverse progress in women's and LGBTQ+ rights. The discourse regarding trans lives is particularly toxic in the UK – to the point that [“the UK is considered a hostile country for trans people especially for trans children”](#). Likewise, Ireland is witnessing the rise of far right movements that prey on people's anger around housing and economic inequality. Vulnerable people are strategically manipulated by online misinformation

and radicalisation, resulting in their anger subsequently directed at minorities including trans people and migrants.

The enthusiasm for the Cass Report in Ireland must be seen in this context. Despite, or in fact due to, its many flaws, it is being seized upon and used to justify the position of those who wish to roll back rights for trans people and restrict our access to basic care. This is clearly reflected in Amnesty International's statement that the Cass Review is "being weaponised by people who revel in spreading disinformation and myths about healthcare for trans young people".

Trans Healthcare in Ireland

All this rhetoric and manufactured debate serves to detract from the basic facts about trans healthcare in our country:

- there is no service whatsoever providing care for trans young people in Ireland
- the adult service is rated as the worst in Europe
- wait times for the National Gender Service are estimated at over a decade
- Fine Gael, Fianna Fáil and the Green Party promised to "create and implement a general health policy for Trans people, based on a best-practice model for care, in line with the World Professional Association of Transgender Healthcare (WPATH) and deliver a framework for the development of National Gender Clinics and Multidisciplinary Teams for children and adults" and have utterly failed in this.

To return to our opening quote from the proclamation of the Irish Republic, if we are to decide what the care of our children looks like on our own terms, that means critiquing, deconstructing and rejecting the colonial nature of the transphobic rhetoric that has shaped the responses of those who have championed the Cass Review. Instead, we should embracing and supporting trans, non-binary and gender diverse people in our communities by establishing access to gender identity services within primary care that are based on the principles of bodily autonomy, self-determination, and informed consent and these services, as with any health service, should be continually researched and improved according to the latest evidence.

2024-8 'Sex, Discrimination and the Equality Act' event, Swansea University (a)

The following statement was issued in relation to a forthcoming event titled 'Sex, Discrimination and the Equality Act 2010' due to be chaired by Professor Jo Phoenix, with Akua Reindorf KC, Maya Forstater and Helen Joyce as panellists.³⁹⁰ The statement was signed by senior university managers and distributed internally to Swansea University staff. The statement said that previous similar events had had a negative impact and caused distress, but the University had a legal obligation to uphold the booking.

Professor Jo Phoenix wrote an open letter of complaint to the University Vice-Chancellor, describing the statement as harassment and asking for an apology.³⁹¹ In a response to Professor Phoenix, the Vice-Chancellor emphasised that the statement was internal and 'not intended as a full and comprehensive public statement on the University's own position' but a response to distressed staff and students.³⁹² In further correspondence with the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Phoenix noted the communication also failed to address the substance of her complaint, and invited the Vice-Chancellor to attend the event.

Staff circular, 21 May 2024

Statement regarding upcoming event at the Taliesin Arts Centre, 21 May 2024

Women Zone Cymru/Outspoken women, an external community group, has made a private hire booking of Swansea University's Taliesin Arts Centre on 1st July 2024. This event was not proposed by the university, the students union or the Taliesin Arts Centre.

We understand that the subject matter causes concern for a number of members of our staff, student body and the wider community. Some from these groups have provided us with information regarding the negative impact of similar events held previously and we understand the distress that has been caused. As a University, we are strongly committed to developing an inclusive culture and creating an environment in which all individuals feel they belong. We do not want our colleagues, students, or the wider community to experience distress or upset. However, the

³⁹⁰ Womensgrid (2024), *Sex, Discrimination & the Equality Act – An Outspoken Women Event – Swansea*, 26 April 2024.

<https://www.womensgrid.org.uk/?p=24550>

³⁹¹ Phoenix, J. (2024), *Open Letter to Professor Paul Boyle, VC, Swansea University*, 6 June 2024.

<https://jophoenix.substack.com/p/open-letter-to-professor-paul-boyle>

³⁹² Phoenix, J. (2024), *Continuing Correspondence with Prof Paul Boyle, VC, Swansea University*, 24 June 2024.

<https://jophoenix.substack.com/p/continuing-correspondence-with-prof>

university confirms it has accepted this hire in adherence with its legal duty of ensuring freedom of expression and freedom of speech.

During the event, the security and safety of our students, staff, and visitors will be of utmost important. As with all other events, we are working closely with University security colleagues, external agencies, and the event organisers to ensure the event is well planned and organised.

We understand, however, that the potential impact of this event is not restricted only to the day that it occurs. We are therefore working with LGBT+ Cymru to ensure we can provide appropriate support to our LGBT+ community. If you have been affected by this event (or similar events held previously) and would like to access support through LGBT+ Cymru please contact before 31st July 2024, who will confidentially help arrange this access. Further information regarding LGBT+ Cymru, including their helpline number is available [here](#).

We would also like to take this opportunity to share other steps that we are taking across the university to extend our commitment to LGBT plus colleagues. Specifically, we are currently working with the LGBT+ staff network on: '*Promoting good relations - a transgender strategy*'. This strategy comprises a range of short, medium, and long term actions, including celebration and remembrance events, the creation of transgender training for staff, and reviewing trans guidance for students and staff. Through this strategy, we hope to create an environment in which trans and non-binary colleagues and students feel recognised and supported, alongside all members of our staff and student community.

Niamh Lamond (Registrar) and Prof. Camilla Knight (DVPC, EDIB)

2024-9 'Sex, Discrimination and the Equality Act' event, Swansea University (b)

In relation to the same event (see above), the University of Swansea LGBTQ Network Chair sent the following emails to network members. The final email describes how the Chair unsuccessfully sought to persuade the University to use legal remedies to cancel the event. The email also refers to 'abuse and harassment experienced by staff and students at the hands of organisers and attendees of [previous] events' but it is not clear what this claim is based on.

Circular emails, May 2024

I would be really grateful if as many in the network as possible to send me their comments and concerns about hosting this event. I will then collate the comments and pass them anonymously to SMT.

Our LGBTQ+ students and staff especially those who identify as strands need our support. Let's make sure we are visible and provided

Dave Chair LGBTQ Allies Network

Dear all,

Please see below e-mail from Daf, Em and Freya from the Staff LGBTQ+ network. I have offered our full support as an Allies network and will be attending various meetings with SLT in order to ensure that the wider voice of all stakeholders is heard.

If anyone has any supportive comments to make, please let me know and I will make sure that collectively our voices are heard.

Thanks

Dave

Chair LGBTQ Allies Network

Dear all,

It is with a heavy heart that we e-mail you with news that once again an event by an anti-trans organisation has been booked at the Taliesin. The event, on the 1st July, has been organised by 'Outspoken Women'. This is the same organisation that ran the 'Silencing Women' event on International Women's Day last year. We're told that the event in July is entitled sex discrimination and the Equality Act.

We appreciate that this will be a difficult and distressing news and we firstly want to reassure you that we are doing everything we can to challenge the

University's decision to accept this booking. Off the back of previous events, we collated feedback and evidence of the impact of these events and presented to senior leadership with our concerns. This included evidence of the abuse and harassment experienced by staff and students at the hands of organisers and attendees of these events and where we feel University policy and Government legislation allows for the university to decline such booking requests on the grounds of safeguarding staff and students.

In questioning what this booking has been allowed to go ahead, we have drawn attention to SLT the University's duty to balance its competing obligations to protect expression and to safeguard its staff and students. We shared a very useful document with SLT that explores how legislation can be applied to these types of scenarios – 'Universities Legal Obligations in the Context of Trans Inclusion, Trans Equality and 'Gender Critical' Activities on campus'. Currently, the response we have received is that: *"The University has taken extensive legal advice around its obligations in relation to freedom of speech, particularly in the context of the Education Act. This advised concluded that the obligations under the app take priority over any internal policy or guidance, and that the university has no legal basis to reject the booking. This legal guidance has been refreshed in the context of this new event and takes into consideration other legislation such as ECHR. The conclusions remain unchanged."*

We are very concerned about this response and we'll be seeking further advice on the implications of this, including liaising with the campus Unions and with Stonewall. We are going to liaise with the other staff EDI networks as statements such as this raised bigger concerns about the university's commitment to EDI.

We want staff within the network to feel able to be involved in challenging this but also appreciate this is a very difficult and upsetting situation. If there are any further steps you feel we should be taking at this time, please do let us know, we're more than happy to speak to people individual or to arrange a meeting for anyone to attend to talk through things.

We're sorry to have to share this, in what we know is a difficult time in general for many teams and departments. We know the generic go to in terms of staff well-being at the moment is the 'Staff Wellbeing Services' but as we all know, these services are not LGBTQ+ specific. We've included below just a short list of LGBTQ+ specific services should anyone need to access support at the moment....

2024-10. Royal College of Psychiatrists International Congress, Edinburgh

The following 'Call to Action' was issued by the Trans Safety Network ahead of a panel event to be held at the 2024 Royal College of Psychiatrists conference in Edinburgh.³⁹³ The statement identified and named four 'anti-trans' speakers on the panel, encouraged the event organisers to 'to reconsider the promotion of conversion practices and absence of trans expertise at their World Congress', and encouraged readers to lobby the conference organisers.

Trans Safety Network Call to Action, 8 May 2024

Call to Action: Anti-trans lobbyists Speaking at the RCPsych international congress

On 17-20 June the Royal College of Psychiatrists (RCPsych) will host their 2024 International Congress at the Edinburgh International Conference Centre. The conference programme lists several speakers associated with anti-trans lobbying and the promotion of conversion therapy.

An anti-trans panel

On Thursday 20 June, a session will take place titled 'Treatment of gender dysphoria in children and adolescents: a review of the evidence base'. Most of the speakers have worked with SEGM, an anti-trans [pseudoscience](#) thinktank [associated with the promotion of conversion therapy](#).

- Dr Lenny Cornwall (chair), of Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Trust. Dr Cornwall lost a closely fought election to the RCPsych Board in 2023, after promising to "[end RCPsych's partnership with Stonewall](#)". Cornwall is a [member of CAN-SG](#), an anti-trans pseudoscientific group who promoted [conversion therapy in their launch webinar in October 2023](#). He has actively opposed measures to support men and non-binary people in perinatal care, for example through supporting a campaign to [cancel trans equality training for midwives](#).
- Prof Riittakertu Kaltiala, of Tampere University, Finland and chief psychiatrist in the Adolescent Forensic unit at Tampere University Hospital. Prof Kaltiala spoke at SEGM's 2023 conference and [introduced Dr Hilary Cass to SEGM member Patrick Hunter](#). The psychiatric unit at Tampere University Hospital has been [accused of abusive practices by young trans people](#) and their

³⁹³ Trans Safety Network (2024), *Call to Action: Anti-trans lobbyists Speaking at the RCPsych international congress*, 8 May 2024.
<https://transsafety.network/posts/rcpsych-congress-anti-trans-lobbyists/>

families, including [unnecessary gynecological tests, subjecting young people to inappropriate questions and recommendations regarding their sexual practices, and refusing to use young people's names.](#)

- Dr Michael Biggs, of the University of Oxford. Dr Biggs has no specific expertise in trans healthcare, but has extensively engaged in anti-trans disinformation campaigns. He is an [advisor to SEGM](#), a [member of the Board of Directors for the anti-trans group Sex Matters](#), and has [appeared in anti-trans film for Ickonic](#), the streaming platform operated by [notorious antisemite David Icke](#). In 2018 Biggs was outed as the owner of a [prolific transphobic troll account on Twitter](#).
- Prof Sallie Baxendale, of University College London. Prof Baxendale has [written for the anti-trans campaign group Transgender Trend](#), and [spoken at a conference organised by SEGM](#).

Keynotes from Dr Hilary Cass

The RCPsych Congress will also feature a keynote address from Dr Hilary Cass, chair of the Cass Review on Tuesday 19 June. Dr Cass will also speak at a later event titled “Everything you wanted to know about transgender health but were too afraid to ask”.

While the final report of the Cass Review has been warmly received by NHS bodies and UK politicians, it has been extensively critiqued by trans healthcare experts and researchers from a range of disciplines. Critics have highlighted [methodological and ethical issues including inconsistent use of evidence](#), the [exclusion of research expertise or oversight from people with lived experience of gender services](#), and [collaboration with proponents of conversion therapy](#).

Despite this preponderance of controversial figures on the speaking programme, we are not aware that any proponents of affirmative trans healthcare, let alone actual trans people, have been invited to speak to our own experiences at the RCPsych conference.

Speak out against transphobia in psychiatry

Contemporary anti-trans campaigns within medical science thrive on partial evidence, disinformation, and misleading expertise. In this context, it is easy for certain voices to be lost: specifically, people with actual lived experience of transition and gender services, and trans healthcare experts who have actually worked with and listened to trans people.

Echoing the rallying cry of the disability liberation movement, “nothing about us without us”, we encourage RCPsych conference organisers to reconsider the promotion of conversion practices and absence of trans expertise at their World Congress. We further encourage keynote speakers at the RCPsych Congress – including Dr Hilary Cass – to consider whether

they wish to be associated with the dangerous ideologies and practices of groups such as SEGM and CAN-SG.

Readers wishing to lobby conference organisers and speakers may find the information in this post useful as a starting point.

Official contact details for the RCPsych International Congress 2024 are available [here](#).

Keynote speakers include... :

If you choose to contact any of these individuals, please be courteous and provide relevant evidence: they may not be aware that various event attendees are associated with anti-trans groups, or may not initially understand how or why these groups pose a real risk of harm to trans people.

Appendix 2: Feminist Gender Equality Network call for submissions and template

The Feminist Gender Equality Network (FGEN) encouraged its members to respond to the Sullivan Review and provided a 'short guide to completing the surveys'.³⁹⁴ The FGEN guidance covered both strands of the Sullivan Review; Data Collection on Sex and Gender (Strand 1) and Barriers to Research on sex and gender (Strand 2).

FGEN correspondence and social media communication is shown below, including a copy of the guidance on responding to the Barriers to research survey.

From: Feminist Gender Equality Network XXXX

Sent: Friday, May 31, 2024 8:56 PM

To:

Subject: URGENT: Response to "Data Collection on Sex and Gender" at UCL

URGENT: Response to "Data Collection on Sex and Gender" at UCL

Thanks to everyone's overwhelming support for our last call for input to discussions, we could form a group to discuss and plan a response to it. We came up with a 3 point plan which is now in action;

Thanks to everyone's overwhelming support for our last call for input to discussions, we could form a group to discuss and plan a response to it. We came up with a 3 point plan which is now in action;

Academics within UCL are taking up the issue internally with the ethics boards.

We have raised several FOI requests with the government to discover the motivations and process behind the award of the research

This is where we need you again. We have prepared a short guide to completing the surveys. It's important that we do this because the call for evidence has only been shared with a select mostly gender critical crowd

[Call for evidence strand 1: Data collection on sex and gender](#)

[Call for evidence Strand 2: Barriers to research on sex and gender](#)

[Guide to completing the survey](#)

³⁹⁴ Feminist Gender Equality Network (2024), *Guide to completing the survey*.
<https://web.archive.org/web/20240603154359/https://feministgenderequality.network/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Guide-to-Completing-the-Survey.pdf>

The deadline for the survey is June 3rd, so please respond as soon as you can, and share this with people who you know and who may be able to contribute.'

On 1 June 2024 the survey was promoted to FGEN members on Twitter/X by an FGEN co-chair, in a post that described taking part as 'action to defend our academic freedoms'.



The FGEN guide to completing the survey for the Barriers to Research strand is shown below.

Guide to completing the survey

Background

A project is being conducted by academics at UCL about research on sex and gender. It is being carried out for the government and is intended to feed into a government report for research and data collection in Higher Education.

The project includes a “call for evidence” and involves two surveys or strands:

- Strand 1 is about “Data Collection on Sex and Gender”
- Strand 2 is about “Barriers to research into Sex and Gender”

We are quite concerned about this project because of its discriminatory and biased nature. The surveys do not meet basic standards for research.

We are particularly concerned given its potential to enable the government to introduce measures which restrict research in UK Higher Education Institutions. Given the issues we’ve outlined, we have compiled a short guide to help people complete it. In summary:

- For Strand 1, we invite people to respond to the survey about problematic surveys by citing this very survey. Of course, feel free to cite other examples of poor quality surveys you have come across.
- For Strand 2, we have provided some general examples and suggest people complete with it their own personal examples of how good research has been, and is being, silenced.

Strand 2 Questions “Barriers to research into Sex and Gender

“What barriers to research have you faced?”

2. Research ethics processes

- Ethics committees have people with discriminatory views (gender-exclusionary) who try to steer the research in a damaging and dangerous direction for participants, or who try to exclude TNBGD people from the research by ensuring questions asked do not include them.
- Makes it harder to get research approved, especially when the people approving the research hold negative biased discriminatory views towards population of interest, and in some cases don't believe in the existence of the population
 - If someone has a view which denies the existence and realities of an entire population, they have no place sitting on an ethics committee
- Some ethics committees consider “how would this play out in the Daily Mail” when assessing applications thus inhibiting TNBGD inclusive research
- Unhelpful suggestions from reviewers who are gender-exclusionary
 - For example, it has been suggested to include details of anti-trans organisations (including those who support conversion therapy - an illegal and banned practice) in a list of supportive organisations for research where the participants were TNBGD people.

3. Barriers to research funding.

- Funders say they are interested in funding equity, inequality, inclusion and diversity research but when it comes down to it, they often won't (lip service, tokenistic). They are either too afraid of anti-trans/gender-exclusionary people or hold anti-trans views themselves.
- Some funders will not fund work that is too specific to one population, so you really have to spell out how research that is inclusive of the needs of TNBGD people, benefits the entire population. But even when you do spell it out, they often choose not to listen.
 - For example, to get funding for TNBGD research, it is often necessary to expand the research other inclusion health groups who have different needs

4. Barriers to data collection.

- Personal safety and well-being, e.g., when start collecting data, researchers name goes out there and they can be put in a vulnerable position where they are subjected to harassment, bullying, utter torment online from gender-exclusionary people/trolls
- Additional resources are needed to build trust with participants because of all the hurt and damage caused pathologisation, medicalisation, gender-exclusionary people.
- The validity and reliability of data can be compromised if participants/researchers feel pressured to conform to gender-exclusionary norms - as could be the case with this survey; questions worded in a biased way - leads to biased findings. The survey itself only being distributed through channels with other gender-exclusionary people, again leads to biased findings.

5. Barriers to publication.

- Certain journals and organisations hold negative biases against TNBGD people and/or research, which leads to discrimination and rejection in the selection process.
- Gatekeepers (e.g., editors, reviewers) serve as a barrier to publishing as they may hold gender-exclusionary views or are concerned about potential backlash from those with gender-exclusionary views.
- TNBGD authors are rejected based on their identity rather than the quality or relevance of their work.

6. Self-censorship and chilling effects (for example, feeling unable to express certain views).

- According to Stonewall's "LGBT in Britain Trans Report", half of trans and non-binary people (51% and 50% respectively) have had to hide or disguise the fact that they are LGBT at work because they were afraid of discrimination
- Chilling is the way people with gender-exclusionary views are attacking TNBGD folk, people's basic human rights are under attack and being taken away.
- TNBGD people and allies have to be careful with the language they use and what they say in case gender-exclusionary people come after them or try to sue for "defamation".
- Participation in academic activities: TNBGD students and academics may be forced to refrain from participating in discussions, conferences, or networking opportunities due to bias, discrimination or hostility.

- To mitigate this: we need better legal protection for TNBGD people, inclusive policies, training programmes, advocacy

7. No-platforming and discrimination against you as a speaker.

- Gender “critical” beliefs are discriminatory, not “critical” in any capacity, and are gender-exclusionary beliefs
- Lots of TNBGD speakers and allies (at UCL) come under attack by people with gender-exclusionary views, e.g., under the guise of asking questions, they call the speakers' very existence into question. No one should have to explain or justify their existence, it's horrific.

8. Barriers to holding events, including any unusual demands on organisers or failure to support the organisers in the usual way.

- Focus is on protecting TNBGD speakers/attendees from others who deny their existence (and some who attend with the intention of disruption)
- Have to organise security/extra steps for in person events
- Have to be careful how and where events are advertised
- Spaces not being suitable for (e.g., toilets, access for those with disability)

9. Disinvitations from projects or collaborations.

- Disinvitations have limited people's opportunities for career advancement, as collaborations and project involvement are often critical for gaining experience, building a professional reputation, and advancing in academia or other research fields.
- Coordinated campaigns and smears against, for example, trans inclusive Relationships and Sex Education providers have had chilling effects as schools and other organisations become anxious about being associated with them and education campaigns
- Disinvitations have isolated TNBGD researchers from networks, reduced their visibility and influence in their field.
- For those who work/are hired on short term research contracts, disinvitations lead to immediate financial instability and job insecurity.
- Rejection and exclusion have caused significant stress and anxiety, particularly because it is discriminatory and/or unjust.
- Persistent exclusion from collaborative opportunities leads to decreased motivation, lower job satisfaction, and a sense of futility about your career prospects.

- Disinvitations prevent TNBGD researchers from contributing their expertise to important projects, which then limits the validity of the work and its impact.
- Collaborations fosters innovation and creativity - excluding TNBGD researchers:
 - diminishes the diversity of perspectives and ideas
 - potentially limits the scope and impact of the research.
 - leads to a lack of representation and inclusivity, which are crucial for addressing a wide range of issues comprehensively and equitably.
 - Perpetuates biases and gaps in knowledge, reducing the overall quality and relevance of the research outcome, deprives projects of diverse insights, and hinders the development of new ideas and approaches.

10. Discrimination by university administration or services (such as, IT, communications, HR, etc.).

- TNBGD individuals face discrimination in shortlisting, hiring, promotion and retention.
- TNBGD individuals have significantly lower incomes and are more likely to be in poverty, unemployed or working part-time, when compared with cis individuals
- According to McKinsey and co, 2020:
 - Trans adults are twice as likely as cis adults to be unemployed.
 - Cis employees make 32% more money a year than trans employees, even when the latter have similar or higher education levels.
 - Trans staff feel far less supported in the workplace than their cis colleagues do. They report that it's more difficult to understand workplace culture and benefits, and harder to get promoted. They also feel less supported by their managers.
- Often trans individuals who successfully secure employment after transitioning often face challenges in finding positions that match their pre-transition work history and are in the same field they previously worked in.
- Inadequate support for TNBGD staff, students, and visitors (e.g., toilets and changing rooms)
- IT systems with restrictive gender categorisations, and do not accommodate an individuals' names and pronouns (or changes to), which leads to misgendering and discrimination.

- University communications can use language or imagery that excludes or erases TNBGD people and is cisnormative in nature.
- Researchers face challenges in having their research findings accurately represented and promoted by university communications channels due to bias or ignorance.

11. Bullying, harassment and ostracism (such as colleagues or students cutting ties).

- Overt discrimination, erasure, questioning existence, microaggressions, harassment, misgendering, exclusionary practices, abuse are common experiences fueled by those with gender-exclusionary views (or so called gender-critical views)
- UK has become an extremely hostile and unsafe place for TNBGD people, impacted by relentless violent attacks from those with gender-exclusionary views
- According to Stonewall's "LGBT in Britain Trans Report":
 - Half of trans and non-binary people (51% and 50% respectively) have had to hide or disguise the fact that they are LGBT at work because they were afraid of discrimination.
 - One in eight trans employees (12%) have been physically attacked in the workplace (by colleagues or customers) in the last year.

12. Complaints, including coordinated complaints against you.

- Many TNBGD researchers/academics have had targeted personal attacks from academics and others who disagree with their very existence, this takes its toll on a person and we/the field has lost a lot of talented researchers/academics as a direct result of this.
- When people have raised reasoned objections to gender "critical" (exclusionary) events on campus, they are subject to bullying and harassment by receiving grievances against them from colleagues, and Freedom of Information inquiries coordinated from outside the institutions in an effort to silence them.
- Students have had complaints launched against them by senior members of staff (including Professors) claiming they had breached a staff social media policy to which they are not subject.

13. Management behaviour.

- TNBGD individuals and allies get no support from management when being attacked by anti-trans and gender-exclusionary people

- Lack of support from management in handling anti-trans attacks, has led to projects being shut down, funding being lost, direct and huge impact on people's mental health leading to long periods of sick leave, and in some cases, the loss of talented individuals from academia and research.

14. Compelled speech (being forced to assent to certain views, statements or signals).

- Being repeatedly forced to explain/justify your existence/ the existence of an entire group of people

15. Barriers to career progression.

- TNBGD individuals face several barriers to career progressions stemming from societal attitudes, institutional practices, and interpersonal interactions.
- Overt and covert discrimination, erasure, questioning existence, microaggressions, harassment, misgendering, exclusionary practices all serve as barriers to career progression for TNBGD.

16. Institutional policies and training.

- Institutions might have policies and training in place, but when institutions feed into the hands of gender-exclusionary people, these policies become meaningless.
- If policies are actively enforced and supported by senior management, then there is no point - lip service.
- Policies that protect/reinforce gender-exclusionary beliefs, are policies that enforces discrimination.

17. Barriers affecting students.

- Experiences of discrimination, harassment, bullying, rejection, lack support, name and pronoun recognition, lack training for staff, unsupportive/denying staff, lack safe(r) spaces, lack of trans-inclusive content in curriculum - fueled by the gender-exclusionary agenda
- Gender-exclusionary views have a knock on effect – it's not just an attack on TNBGD folk, it echoes facism and is an attack on rights of LGBTQIA+ people, migrants, reproductive rights - and ultimately freedom and rights for all.
- Physical dangers - e.g., razor blades hidden behind anti-trans posters on campus.

18. Other

- Call self gender “critical” when there is no critical part thinking whatsoever, complete exclusion and discrimination
- Relentless attacks include: Cass Report, changes to kids gender services, and reviews of adult gender services, changes to NHS constitution, laws regarding same-sex toilets in new buildings
- British media and politicians using TNBGD people as scapegoats to distract from
 - Brexit, handling of the COVID pandemic, cost of living crisis, failings in our police system etc.
- Legal issues:
 - The laws in this country go against International Human Rights Standards, the UN recommends that legal gender recognition procedures should be based on self-determination by the individual, a simple administrative process and should not require individuals to fulfil abusive requirements, such as medical certification - which is a requirement in the UK (gender recognition certificate).
 - The UN also states that minors should also have access to recognition of their gender identity - again, this is not the case in the UK where you have to be 18 or over to get a gender recognition certificate.
 - There are no laws protecting non-binary people.
 - People have no dignity in death - if a person doesn't have a gender recognition certificate, they get deadnamed and misgendered on death certificate
 - And what make all this worse is what little rights TNBGD people do have, the gender-exclusionary movement/individuals are actively trying to take away basic rights, as evidenced by Cass report, changes to kids gender services, and reviews of adult gender services, changes to NHS constitution, laws regarding same-sex toilets in new buildings (can't even pee in safety).'

Appendix 3. 'Stock Out' campaign materials

This appendix shows materials produced as part of the 'Stock Out' campaign by 'Anti Terf Sussex', directed against Kathleen Stock, former Professor of Philosophy at the University of Sussex. On 16 October 2021 the Times reported, 'The current campaign to oust Stock was started two months ago by another unnamed student who began "dropping into Whatsapp groups" and inviting others to get involved. Anti Terf Sussex was then formed with the aim of demanding Stock's resignation. The group is made up of around 15 students, both postgraduate and undergraduate, the majority of whom are transgender.'³⁹⁵

At the time of writing, the material below is still available via the 'antiterfsussex' Instagram account. The group describes itself as 'an unaffiliated network of queer and trans students, committed to showing unity + resistance in the face of sussex uni's employment of kathleen stock'.³⁹⁶ Material is also published on the campaign linktree account, including a 'Being Trans and Protesting' guide,³⁹⁷ and a lengthy article³⁹⁸ article containing highly damaging allegations by a US postgraduate student.³⁹⁹ The appendix, which is structured chronologically, shows the escalation of action against Kathleen Stock throughout October 2021. Professor Stock announced that she had resigned from her post on 28 October 2021.⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁵ The Times (2021), *Inside the 'cloak and dagger' campaign against Kathleen Stock*, 16 October 2021.

<https://www.thetimes.com/article/inside-the-cloak-and-dagger-campaign-against-kathleen-stock-6rcdpm855>

³⁹⁶ Antiterfsussex (online), *kathleen stock is a transphobe*, Instagram.

<https://www.instagram.com/antiterfsussex/?hl=en>

³⁹⁷ Antiterfsussex (online), @antiterfsussex, Linktree.

https://linktr.ee/antiterfsussex?utm_source=linktree_profile_share&itsid=1ea4d5bb-a7c6-425b-ada9-20906958dd97

³⁹⁸ See: Leiter, B. (2021), *Christa Peterson's "hit piece" on Kathleen Stock*, Leiter Reports: A Philosophy Blog.

<https://leiterreports.typepad.com/blog/2021/01/christa-peterson-hit-piece-stock.html>

³⁹⁹ Peterson. C. (2021), *'Kathleen Stock, OBE'*, 11 January 2021.

<https://www.praile.com/post/kathleen-stock-obe>

⁴⁰⁰ The Guardian (2021), *Sussex professor resigns after transgender rights row*, 28 October 2021.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/oct/28/sussex-professor-kathleen-stock-resigns-after-transgender-rights-row>

A3-1 antiterfsussex manifesto

A 'manifesto' published by the antiterfsussex campaign, demanding that Kathleen Stock be fired.^{401, 402} The manifesto, reproduced in full below, described Stock as 'one of this wretched island's most prominent transphobes' (publication date not known).

'ANTI-STOCK ACTION 2021'

For the blissfully unaware, **Kathleen Stock** is a professor of philosophy at University of Sussex, and we are shedding some light on the damage that she is causing.

Stock is one of this wretched island's most prominent transphobes, espousing a bastardized variation of "radical feminism" that excludes and endangers trans people. She has spent years campaigning for the exclusion of trans people from "women's only spaces", and against trans and non-binary people's right to self-identify as any gender.

How feminist do you think it is to define a person's social role and access to public spaces by their sexual organs?

Stock is a bigot, who uses her academic reputation to further wider transphobic movements. She is a trustee of the trans-exclusionary hate group LGB Alliance, who insist that NHS gender clinic services are "transing out the gay" and "harming children" by prescribing HRT, ignoring the medical consensus around its safety and necessity. The group also oppose ending abusive conversion therapy practices, instead claiming that affirming-based practices towards trans people are a method of conversion therapy.

Transphobes like Stock are anti-feminist, anti-queer and anti-intellectual, they are **harmful and dangerous to trans people**. They're spiteful bootlickers, with Stock alone spitting out years worth of tweets, articles and organizing that make her distaste for our existence abundantly clear. But guess what? **We are not up for debate. We cannot be** reasoned out of existence. And we will not let people try to.

They camouflage their transphobia in academic language, in fake feminism, in "reasonable concerns", and then we suffer the real material consequences of it.

⁴⁰¹ Antiterfsussex (online), *Manifesto*, Linktree.

<https://cryptpad.fr/file/#/2/file/phQycfsrtEtNCrHhnoOOKvKM/>

⁴⁰² See: The Argus (2021), *#ShameOnSussexUni - why transphobia row is trending on Twitter*, 7 October 2021.

<https://www.theargus.co.uk/news/19632149.shameonsussexuni---transphobia-row-trending-twitter/>

University of Sussex have continued to employ Stock whilst her rhetoric has contributed to the dire state of unsafety for trans people in this colonial shit-hole, whilst she profits from transphobia, and whilst **students here have been resigned to stomach the influence and impact of her transphobia**. This university is actively enabling and encouraging her transphobia by not firing her, which whilst not surprising, has continued for far too long.

We've fucking had enough.

We are an anonymous, unaffiliated group of queer, trans and non-binary students who will not allow our community to be slandered and harmed by someone who's salary comes from our pockets. If you care for our community like we do, spread the word, get people angry, angry enough to do something about it.

Our demand is simple: fire Kathleen Stock. Until then, you'll see us around.'

A3-2. 'Anti-Stock' poster designs, 6 October 2021

A series of five poster designs made available online for downloading and distribution on the Cryptpad website.⁴⁰³ Images of the posters near the university campus are shown in A3-3.



**WE'RE NOT PAYING
£9250 A YEAR
FOR TRANSPHOBIA**

**FIRE
KATHLEEN
STOCK**

⁴⁰³ *Poster Designs* Cryptpad shared Folder, 6 October 2021.
<https://cryptpad.fr/drive/#/2/drive/view/Km1Ulk4zWZXu3leER0gNm1KrJpZuqXNqezJ7cv2bgEU/>

**IT'S NOT A DEBATE
IT'S NOT FEMINISM
IT'S NOT PHILOSOPHY**

**IT'S JUST
TRANSPHOBIA
AND IT'S NOT ON**

**FIRE KATHLEEN
STOCK**

**KATHLEEN STOCK
MAKES TRANS
STUDENTS
UNSAFE**

**SUSSEX STILL
PAYS HER**



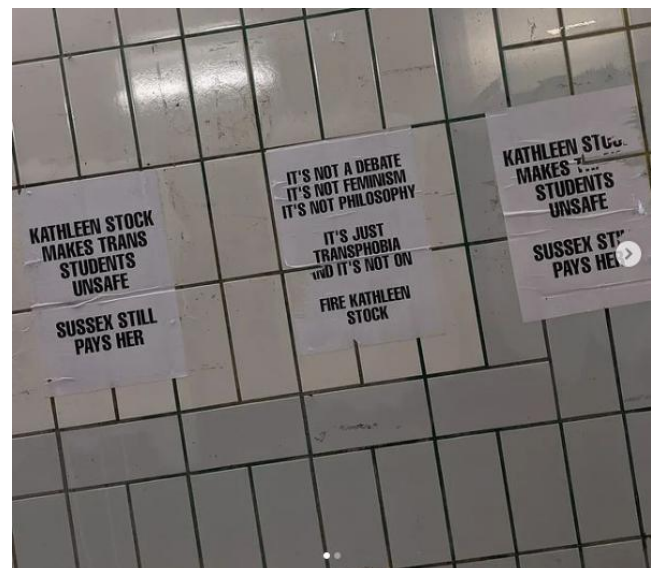
**TERFS FUCK OFF
ANTI KATHLEEN
STOCK ACTION**

**SUSSEX
ENABLES
TRANSPHOBES**

**KATHLEEN STOCK
MUST GO**

A3-3. 'Fire Kathleen Stock' posters at Falmer rail station, Instagram campaign image and text, October 7 2021

The above posters appeared in a tunnel linking Falmer railway station to the university campus.⁴⁰⁴ The image was also posted on Instagram.⁴⁰⁵



'The tunnel from Falmer station into campus, yesterday and today.

Alt Text: Slide One - A tiled wall with a series of black and white posters on. Two read 'Kathleen Stock makes trans students unsafe. Sussex still pays her', and the other reads 'It's Not A Debate. It's Not Feminism. It's Not Philosophy. It's just transphobia and it's not on. Fire Kathleen Stock.'

Slide Two - The same tiled wall with a black and white poster that reads 'We're not paying £9250 a year for transphobia. Fire Kathleen Stock.'

⁴⁰⁴ Mailonline (2021), *Woke students try to CANCEL feminist lecturer: Anonymous trans rights mob launch 'bullying' campaign to demand Sussex University sacks professor who said 'many trans women are still males with male genitalia'*, 7 October 2021.
<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10068673/Woke-students-try-cancel-feminist-lecturer-Kathleen-Stock.html>

⁴⁰⁵ Antiterfsussex (2021), *Fire Kathleen Stock posters*, Instagram.
<https://www.instagram.com/antiterfsussex/p/CUuNEp2MJFA/?hl=en>

A3-4. 'Stock Out' protesters, Instagram campaign image and text, 8 October 2021

Images of a road blockade with a 'Stock Out' banner, and a 'No Terfs' banner, hung from a railing.⁴⁰⁶



'The university insists on protecting transphobes and endangering trans students! We resist! Stock out!

Alt text - Slide one: a line of people blocking a road, with a security van behind them. Two trans flags either side of a banner that reads 'Stock Out' in pink and blue. Slide two: a banner hung up on a railing that reads 'No Terfs' in white, pink and blue with a trans symbol inside the O.'

⁴⁰⁶ Antiterfsussex (2021), *Stock Out and Terfs Out banners*, Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/antiterfsussex/p/CUw98XyMiEM/?hl=en>

A3-5. Campaign email template 'Stock and Discrimination', 9 October 2021

The following text was made available on CryptPad, as a template for protesters.⁴⁰⁷

'Email Template: Stock & Discrimination

'Hello,

I have recently heard of the transphobia that Kathleen Stock has been spreading, and wanted to know why this does not go against the university's zero tolerance policy, shown below. I am not sure why Stock is exempt from this policy, especially as she has been endangering transgender students and making them feel unsafe on campus. I would like clarification if possible please.'

⁴⁰⁷ Antiterfsussex (2021), *Email Template: Stock & Discrimination*, 9 October 2021, Instagram. <https://cryptpad.fr/pad/#/2/pad/view/igMYcV85JoxkYRIk3vLSgafi12KQr6erD+d3dnGi370/>

A3-6. 'Fire Kathleen Stock' poster, Instagram campaign image and text, 12 October 2021

Image of two additional posters, one calling for Kathleen Stock to be fired, and one criticising the Vice-Chancellor for defending her freedom of speech. Both images posted on Instagram.⁴⁰⁸



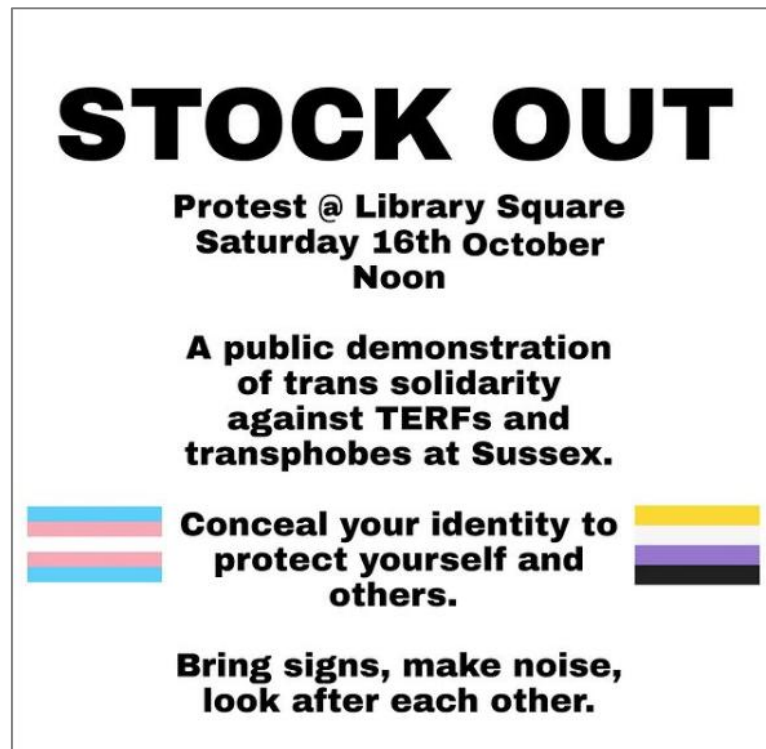
'Not going anywhere. Fire Stock.'

Alt Text: Slide One - A poster on a brick wall with black text that reads "Academic freedom doesn't include transphobia. Trans students have the right to protest Stock. It's our safety on the line. Fire Kathleen Stock." Slide Two - A poster on a brick wall with black text that reads "'Everyone at the university has the right to be free from harassment and discrimination". Yet Adam Tickell enables and encourages Stock's transphobia. We've fucking had enough".

⁴⁰⁸ Antiterfsussex (2021), *Fire Kathleen Stock and We've Fucking had Enough posters*, Instagram. https://www.instagram.com/antiterfsussex/p/CU65yFpgsIY/?hl=en&img_index=1

A3-7. 'Stock out' protest details, Instagram campaign image and text, 13 October 2021

The following Instagram post advertised details of a protest against Kathleen Stock, to be held on the University of Sussex campus.⁴⁰⁹



'word is there's a protest on campus this saturday against stock and the uni's support of her. this has our complete and full support. spread the word. love and solidarity 🏳️💜🏳️

alt text: white background with black text, a trans flag and non-binary flag on each side. The text reads: "Stock Out. Protest at Library Sqaure. Saturday 16th October. Noon. A public demonstration of trans soldiarity against TERFs and transphobes at Sussex. Conceal your identity to protest yourself and others. Bring signs, make noise, look after each other.'

⁴⁰⁹ Antiterfsussex (2021), *Stock Out protest*, 13 October 2021, Instagram. See: <https://www.instagram.com/antiterfsussex/p/CU-rLILgR4t/?hl=en>

A3-8. 'Tips on staying safe at a protest', Instagram image and text, 15 October 2021

An Instagram post with details on 'staying safe' at the protest noted above.⁴¹⁰



'Tips for tomorrow! Stay safe, look after each other. We'll show we are united against TERFs at Sussex!!

Alt Text: Preparation. You may wish to create signs or banners for this protest, this would be a great way to engage, and spread our message. We recommend travelling to and from the protest in groups, this makes sure that police and security are less likely to harass you, or that if they do you will not be alone, and also ensures that you will have people to emotionally support you if at any point you become stressed or overwhelmed. Bringing a backpack with water, snacks and an extra layer is a staple of any protest, this is a way to ensure that you remain healthy for the duration of the protest, especially as protest durations can be unpredictable in the event of a police kettle (surrounding protesters and not letting them move). General Rights. You have no obligation to talk to cops (we recommend you don't), and you don't have to give personal details either. Unless there is a specific order in place (Section 60AA), you don't have to show your face to police, we recommend wearing a mask, and potentially a hat or hood. If police try to perform any action against you, you have the right to ask them under what power they are acting, this way we will be able to maintain awareness of any potential police overreach. The less information police have about us, the safer we all are, especially as Sussex Police are investigating the Anti- TERF-Sussex campaign, Sussex University is hostile towards our movement, and because police are known to be institutionally hateful, towards ethnic minorities, LGBTQ+ people and any other marginalised groups they may encounter.'

⁴¹⁰ Antiterfsussex (2021), *Tips on staying safe at a protest*, 15 October 2021, Instagram. <https://www.instagram.com/p/CVDyrRRgN1v/?hl=en>

A3-9. Masked protesters with flares, Instagram campaign image and text, 16 October 2021

An image from the 'Stock Out' demonstration, which was attended by masked protesters.⁴¹¹ One protester told the Daily Mail that the masks were not intended to be threatening: "We try to keep as much anonymity as possible. It's plausible deniability as well. It's cloak and dagger, but that's not the way we want it. The masks, it's not meant to be threatening. It's just for the protection of people that want to be vocal. No one wants to lose their place at university, but we don't want to sacrifice our right to defend ourselves with our words."⁴¹²



'Thank you for everyone who showed up today! We will not be deterred! Will be not be silenced! Prospective students deserve to know the damage this university does to its trans community, and everyone deserves to know how powerful our solidarity is. The queers united, will never be defeated! Alt Text: Slide One - Two people in black standing on a parapet with chalk on it that reads 'Stock Out'. They're holding a banner that reads 'Stock Out' in pink and blue, and are holding pink and blue smoke flares. Slide Two - A long line of people holding signs, flags and banners. Behind them is Sussex Uni library. In front of them is a path covered in chalked trans flags and 'Stock Out' written on the floor in chalk.'

⁴¹¹ Antiterfsussex (2021), *Stock Out masked protestors*, 16 October 2021, Instagram https://www.instagram.com/antiterfsussex/p/CVGN7rygwwb/?hl=en&img_index=1

⁴¹² Mailonline (2021), *Masked mob demand trans row professor is sacked in campus protest after defending anonymous crusade because 'they don't want to be abused online'*, 16 October 2021. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10098351/Anonymous-trans-mob-defend-cloak-dagger-crusade-against-feminist-professor.html>

A3-10. 'Stock out' graffiti, Instagram campaign image and text, 25 October 2021

Image of graffiti in the Falmer railway station tunnel, posted on Instagram.⁴¹³



From the tunnel up to falmer station, last week. This was the action that prompted Tickell's statement in support of Stock's right to be transphobic. We will not be fooled, nobody has a legal right to lead a hate campaign against trans people. We will not be deterred. We stand united.
Alt Text: A tile wall with pink spray paint that reads 'Stock Out'.'

⁴¹³ Antiterfsussex (2021), *Stock Out graffiti*, 25 October 2021, Instagram.
<https://www.instagram.com/antiterfsussex/p/CVc4kdnAz5g/?hl=en>

A3-11. 'Stock out' underpass graffiti, Instagram campaign image and text, 20 October 2021

Images of 'Stock Out' graffiti on an underpass.⁴¹⁴ The Instagram descriptive text suggests that the graffiti appeared put up on during up the week commencing 11 October 2021.



'This got sent in last week, looked pretty cool on the underpass that the buses passed through. Gone but not forgotten.'

⁴¹⁴ Antiterfsussex (2021), *Stock Out graffiti*, 20 October 2021, Instagram.
<https://www.instagram.com/antiterfsussex/p/CVPvVJggaYF/?hl=en>

A3-12. Instagram post, 28 October 2021

The following statement was published by the antiterfsussex campaign following the announcement of Kathleen Stock's resignation on 28 October 2021.⁴¹⁵

'Sussex is TERF free!

Kathleen Stock is not going to be coming back to University of Sussex as a professor. **Good fucking riddance.** This is a monumental victory for trans and non-binary students, who have protested the ways that this university has enabled transphobia, abuse and discrimination. The full weight of a colonial institution, the national media circuit and government ministers, were **no match for the unity and solidarity of the queer and trans communities** at Sussex University.

As part of a statement today from the renowned cisgender man and transphobe-supporter Adam Tickell, he again expressed his commitment to people's rights to be transphobic and to Stock's precious career. This is no surprise, **birds of the same oppressive hierarchical institutions that depend on creating an underclass flock together.** Tickell will leave a legacy of abuse and discrimination following his time at Sussex, bringing his utter shitshow to University of Birmingham next term, where we sincerely hope that students there will refuse to be governed by Tickell's insincerity and authoritarian strategies.

We have organized as a network of autonomous actors - and it is due to our anonymity, plurality of tactics and decentralized structure that we have succeeded. Fuck the national press media who happily collaborated with the university and Stock to turn this into a debate about 'free speech' and 'academic freedoms'. I hope some bastard at some tory rag has to sift through this for quotes and correct our spelling mistakes. For those reaching out to this account, we will not speak to the press because we will never debate, discuss or organize on the terms of the people who have enabled discrimination and transphobia. This has been a campaign to get Stock out of Sussex, for the sake of the safety and protection of trans and non-binary students. And it fucking worked. **Direct action gets the goods, and trans and non-binary students are safer and happier for it.**

But the struggle isn't over. Institutional transphobia lives on, it runs deeper than Stock or Tickell or Sussex or any university. **Trans liberation is possible in our lifetimes but we must stand strong together in the face of structures that support eliminationists and bigots.**

⁴¹⁵ Antiterfsussex (2021), *Sussex is TERF free!*, 28 October 2021, Instagram. <https://www.instagram.com/p/CVIRyn3gcrs/?hl=en>

We can only extend **a massive thank you to everyone involved** in the petitions, open letters, university complaints, protests, stickers, posters and more. This has been an occasion of coming together when we needed to, and looking out for each other's safety and autonomy in ways that nobody else has. **We acted as a community built on solidarity and love. And that's fucking powerful.**

You can do it too. You don't need permission or authority granted upon you from any group or individual to be able to resist, to claim your autonomy, to look after each other, to build a better world for the people you care about.

Trans resistance will always overcome. United, never to be defeated.'

Appendix 4: Barriers to research on sex and gender survey instrument

The survey instrument used to collect data for the review is shown below.

‘What barriers to research have you faced? Select all that apply.

We will invite you to tell us what happened for each of the options you have selected. You may report on multiple experiences or issues. If a particular experience that you wish to report fits more than one category, you can select all the categories that apply, but just report the experience under what you consider the most relevant category.

There is no word limit. You can either write in your responses or paste from a document.

1. Research ethics processes
2. Barriers to research funding
3. Barriers to data collection
4. Barriers to publication
5. Self-censorship and chilling effects (for example feeling unable to express certain views)
6. No-platforming and discrimination against you as a speaker
7. Barriers to holding events, including any unusual demands on organisers or failure to support the organisers in the usual way
8. Disinvitations from projects or collaborations
9. Discrimination by university administration or services (such as IT, communications, HR, etc)
10. Bullying, harassment and ostracism (such as colleagues or students cutting ties)
11. Complaints, including coordinated complaints against you
12. Management behaviour
13. Compelled speech (being forced to assent to certain views, statements or signals)
14. Barriers to career progression
15. Institutional policies and training
16. Barriers affecting students
17. Other

About you

Providing this information about yourself is optional.

Occupation:

- Academic
- Researcher outside academia
- Student
- Non-academic role in Higher Education
- Other

If you are based in a higher education institution, which one? [WRITE IN]

If applicable, what is your academic discipline?

- Arts and humanities
- Science, technology, engineering, mathematics and medicine
- Social sciences
- Law
- Management
- Other

Would you describe yourself as 'early career' and/or precariously employed? Y/N

What is your sex?

- Female
- Male

What is your age group?

- 18-25
- 26-35
- 36-45
- 46-55
- 56-65
- 66 and over

Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?

- Straight/heterosexual
- Lesbian
- Gay
- Bisexual

- Other

Do you consider yourself to be trans, or have a trans history?

- No
- Yes

What is your ethnic group?

- White
- Black
- Asian
- Mixed
- Other

What is your religion?

- No religion
- Christian
- Buddhist
- Hindu
- Jewish
- Muslim
- Sikh
- Other

Gender-critical beliefs are defined in law as the belief that biological sex is real, important, immutable, and not to be conflated with gender identity.

Do you agree or disagree with the gender-critical perspective?

- Agree strongly
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree strongly
- Don't know or prefer not to say

Would you say that you are a feminist or ally of feminism?

- Yes, I am a feminist/ally
- No, I am not a feminist/ally
- Don't know or prefer not to say

How would you describe your political views?

- Very left-wing
- Fairly left-wing
- Centrist
- Fairly right-wing
- Very right-wing
- Don't know or prefer not to say

Do you have a disability?

- No
- Yes

Contact details

It is optional to provide contact details, but these will help the review team to be confident that your response is genuine, and will allow us to contact you if you consent.

Name

Orcid Id

Contact email address

Would you be willing to be contacted by the research team? Y/N'

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