

Since the LGBT+ Society's policy for LUU to do more to support trans students passed in the last round of Better Forums, we have been thinking about what the union can materially do to manifest this policy. We think the Union's approach can be condensed into three main points of action, with plans of action for each point.

LUU LGBT+ Society needs LUU to:

1. Mitigate damage done by university IT systems and hostile environment (e.g. the tolerance of transphobic harassment in lectures, accommodation, outing of trans students) via lobbying, advocacy and education, and fostering a zero tolerance environment for transphobic harassment and abuse.
2. Support the welfare of trans students.
3. Support and amplify the voices of trans students and their allies, while making sure that transphobic voices are not platformed.

Here is how LUU can achieve each goal:

1. Mitigating university damage:
 - The issue with waiting for students who have had their details leaked by IT systems to come forward is that many students do not realise that this is a problem that can be solved – when uni staff treat it nonchalantly (which is generally what happens), students think that they just have to 'grin and bear it' and are unaware that they can access support from LUU. We need to educate students on their rights under UoL and LUU policy, informed by public sector equality duty – LUU and LGBT Soc should offer resources, such as sessions and leaflets, explaining what these policies say and how you should expect to be treated as a trans person, and who to speak to if you are ever harassed or have your personal data leaked. This outreach can be managed by LGBT soc and should be especially targeted to students living in halls, where many trans students report being harassed and bullied. LUU should send information packs to school reps, so trans students are able to report harassment or unwanted behaviour safely and anonymously within academic settings.
 - Educating wider student body on transphobic harassment and abuse – many cis students, having never met a trans person, will rely on trans students to 'educate' them, which places trans students at risk of being asked inappropriate questions (which can sometimes constitute harassment). LUU should give students resources on how to treat trans students with respect, not harass them, and make sure students understand the consequences they can face if they do not follow these rules.
 - LUU should have a clear process to deal with student complaints that they have received about IT system problems, harassment and abuse – LUU should always advocate for the students in question in speaking with any relevant university staff.
 - Bringing the voices of trans students to meetings with university leadership, refusing to agree to anything from the university without explicit consent of trans students, not acting as a 'mediator' or 'neutral party' but acting as a party in the interests of trans students.
 - More physical signposting in LUU building that trans people are welcome, and able to use whatever facilities they feel most comfortable in.

- **Importance of gearing this outreach to students living in halls** – working with accommodation services and wardens to make sure these resources are adequately distributed, making sure wardens and sub-wardens are trained and know to contact LUU on behalf of a student if that is what the student needs.
- I think it would be reasonable for LUU to campaign for the university to provide dedicated accommodation to queer students, as they do to students who are vegetarian/ vegan.
- LUU should work with the relevant group of people managing identity changes and manual processes in IT to make sure this work is effective and no student is outed as trans.

2. Support welfare and physical safety of trans students:

- Offer GI counselling to any trans student that needs it – Natasha has already begun to sort this out so would be good to roll it out with LGBT soc.
- ‘buddy system’ for newer trans students and students who have recently come out as trans and students questioning their gender identity – facilitated in conjunction with LGBT soc, LUU can provide peer-led, trans pastoral support to students who might otherwise not know any other trans people on their course, and we can also work with trans charities in Leeds to create bigger support networks for these students.
- Physical spaces and sessions in LUU for trans students to decompress (as the news cycle in the UK is often exhausting and violent towards trans people) and speak privately to other trans students, without having to moderate their speech in front of cis people.
- Supporting welfare work of LGBT society, welfare sessions and outreach with regular check-ins and support for committee.
- I cannot stress enough the importance of ensuring the welfare of trans students in halls – LUU should organise specific sessions for these students to make sure they are ok and should advocate for them when they need to.

3. Amplifying the voices of trans students:

- Rather than relying on advisory boards and working groups, LUU should create a queer and trans student caucus to give power to our voices. I think a caucus would work more effectively than an advisory board or working group for the following reasons:
 - Advisory boards and working groups are often centred around labour i.e. completing a set of tasks – this labour is often unpaid or poorly compensated, and very emotional (groups often expect trans members to recount their trauma so that cis people can ‘learn’ from this in order to complete tasks). rather than being centred around resources we can extract from trans students, the aim of any organising of trans students should centre around their voices, not a set of tasks to complete. That doesn’t mean to say the caucus cannot complete or work on tasks, but they are empowered to ask about the appropriateness of the task and the context in which they do it.

- Not many students are familiar with the specific institutional language and etiquette that goes into advisory boards and working groups, and can find it quite stifling or confusing. A trans student caucus would be more accessible, and students would be freer to shape the way it works.
- Accountability: advisory boards and working groups often reproduce the hierarchy between unpaid trans labour and paid, cis members. When it comes to the feedback and voices of trans people being used by non-trans members of working groups with more seniority, feedback is often watered-down to be more palatable for other cis leaders and there is little the structure of the advisory board/ working group can do to hold these people accountable. As a caucus, it would be much easier and more effective to hold the university to account and also LUU, strengthening the working relationship between trans LUU members and LUU staff.
- Streamlines the flow of information: the usual method of getting trans student input is LUU contacts LGBT soc, soc puts out some kind of call statement, this call gets little engagement (maybe from 2 or 3 people), this is fed back to LUU and then LUU feed back to university, OR LUU contacts random individuals they know are involved with trans organising. A trans caucus would provide an instant point of call for anyone wishing to discuss trans issues - as the university has had 'issues' accessing the feedback of trans students in the past.
- Anonymity – being visibly involved in trans advocacy is dangerous – the daily mail has already written a disparaging article about trans students in Leeds from October 2021; thankfully no individuals were named, but as we have named society members speaking to media outlets about their work, this puts them at risk of doxxing, threats, and harassment both on and off campus. Whereas members of working groups and advisory boards are fairly easy to find through staff records and meeting agendas etc, a caucus would be much more secure in providing the level of anonymity or visibility that members need.
 - Mobilising cis allies: trans voices are important, but we are a small minority on campus. Having cis allies, particularly cis women allies, who know how to amplify our voices are a very effective tool against the growing anti-trans 'gender critical' sentiment in the UK.
 - Supporting LGBT soc with links to the Gryphon, Scribe, LSTV and other media outlets on campus (such as the liberation podcast series).
 - Standing up to bullies – more active advocacy from LUU, recognising that the recent mainstreaming of anti-trans sentiment is not 'free speech' but is hate speech from a small but loud minority. LUU should speak out against anyone or any organisation that believes that trans people should not have the right to exist. LUU should have an absolutely zero tolerance policy to any form of transphobia.

I would like to explain why it is important for us to put as much effort as possible into making LUU a proactively safe and anti-transphobic place; the political climate in the UK is growing more and more anti-trans. Trans people are leaving the country as many do not feel safe here. The "gender-critical" movement is not just a fringe movement being mean to trans people, it is a mainstream, organised hate movement in the UK, aligned with the far-right, that has the backing of mainstream politics and

media, that seeks to make it impossible for trans people to exist at all, let alone with any shred of dignity. Prominent “GC” organisations are lobbying to make conversion “therapy”, a form of torture, legal and acceptable for trans people to be subject to. There is no ‘trans culture war’, there are trans people, and people who think we should not exist. Universities have been put on the forefront of this so called ‘culture war’, and as much as I hope this will not happen, there will come a time where LUU will be asked to platform anti-trans ideologies. We need to pre-empt any attacks on trans students immediately and make sure that trans students are able to do what they came to Leeds for – finish their degrees in peace and dignity.