

Policy Proposal: The creation of a new student officer role, a ‘Men’s Welfare Officer’

What would you like the Union to do?

We would like the union to implement a new student officer position, titled ‘Men’s Welfare Officer’, to help shed light on male-specific issues, whilst also positioning men as agents of positive of social change.

In partnership with the new TeamUCL men’s mental health campaign, ‘All Jokes Aside’, the role would:

- Act as a way to engage male-identifying students in mental health and well-being resources
- Become access point to the pastoral services that we provide, by signposting students to key resources.
- Position men as agents of positive change, by supporting with key campaigns and initiatives across the Union, such as efforts to reduce instances of sexual harassment and violence.
- Hold voting rights in all three Policy Zones, the Union Executive, and the Equality, Diversity, & Inclusion committee

The TeamUCL ‘All jokes aside’ campaign includes a range of services to cater to male-identifying students at UCL to meaningfully engage in activities to support their mental health and wellbeing, such as:

- Team UCL Talk Club - A talk and listen group, where male-identifying students can share thoughts and worries, and be listened to in a confidential space.
- Men’s Health Active - A programme of weekly sports, fitness and activity sessions to support mental wellbeing.
- A landing page that provides access to volunteering opportunities, mental health charities, suicide prevention services, and student support at UCL.

The role would act as a spearhead of this campaign and ensure students are aware of the services available. The would be supported by a full programme of training, development and support that officers receive, to help build the skills and knowledge required and to support longer term personal development.

Why would you like to do this?

Every day, Men face an array of issues that require solutions and preventative mechanisms.

- 115 people die by suicide in the UK every week - 75% of those deaths are male (ONS)
- Men have the highest drop-out rates at university
- Men often don’t feel heard and therefore struggle to express their emotions

At UCL, preceding the new All Jokes Aside campaign, there were not any services targeted specifically at male-identifying students. In addition to this, there are a number of networks dedicated to other groups that face their own specific issues, but none that exist for men. The solution to this is to provide easy access routes for students to seek aid by having an individual spearhead it, similar to that of the other liberation roles (Women’s officer,

LBTQ+ officer, POC officer, and their respective networks.)

Men's officers have been introduced at other universities for similar reasons, and have been successful, such as at Plymouth and UWE, where the role has pioneered the creation of services for men's mental health and even contributed towards raising awareness of harassment issues faced by all students.

How will this affect students?

Students will be impacted in a variety of ways, but primarily by providing a new access point to our support services and making them more visible.

This proposal will strive to cater to individuals that are in need of help, as well as work together with other student officers to build an even stronger support network.

On a wider scale, this policy will allow for a repositioning of men as agents of positive change, which hopefully, will have a long-lasting impact on all students and the issues that they face.