

Policy Proposal: Toilet Transformation Programme – UCL IOE

To be discussed at: Welfare & Community Zone

What would you like the Union to do?

I would like the union to actively campaign to push for at least half of the IOE toilets to be transformed and refurbished as unisex toilets. At present there are many binary loos in operation on various floors throughout the IOE, segregating the genders and creating gendered bathroom experiences. Toilets should have no gender assigned to them.

Why would you like to do this?

Firstly, and most importantly, this is like the scene in 'Hidden Figures' where the character played by Kevin Costner tears down the sign that says 'whites only' on toilet doors. Segregation according to gender is now becoming equally as abhorrent and while some toilets in the IOE have been newly installed as unisex, even they still make use of gendered door signs connoting the idea of binary male/female differences even while indicating that the toilets are for any gender. If we are truly forward thinking then we should not be connoting along these lines at all. Some countries in Europe are already way ahead of the UK in e.g. passports where more than 2 genders are recognised.

Secondly, the toilets themselves in the IOE desperately need an upgrade. Most are in need of refurbishment, as has been reported in many student feedback opportunities previously.

How will this affect students?

Removing binary gender door signs and replacing with a sign that indicates the room is merely a toilet will be a norm changer. As Sapir and Whorf argue, the language we use changes the way we think - the same is true of language or imagery of signs. The world is not binary anymore (has it ever been?).

Ensuring that all toilets within the IOE are non-gendered will create great impact beyond the current level of tokenism deployed, where only some toilets (the new ones) are unisex.

Most of the students at the IOE are current or aspiring teachers- this will further transform the mindset of the next generation of teachers to go out and make a change in the classrooms of tomorrow. Refurbishing toilets in general will demonstrate a greater level of care of the well-being of students and staff alike, who also use these facilities.