# UK universities buck trend to support trans students



As protections for LGBTQ+ students are rolled back in the US, top universities in the UK are reportedly adjusting their curriculums to create a more inclusive environment for transgender and non-binary students, as revealed by an audit conducted by the Daily Mail. A number of institutions belonging to the prestigious Russell Group are now integrating 'queer perspectives' into their courses, a shift that reflects ongoing discussions about inclusivity and representation in education.

The term 'queer', which was historically viewed as derogatory, has been reclaimed by transgender activists and many within the gay community as a term of empowerment. This movement aligns with broader efforts to 'decolonise the curriculum', which advocates for the inclusion of more diverse perspectives, particularly from ethnic minority writers.

One notable initiative is at Warwick University, which has launched a 'Queering University Programme'. This initiative advises faculty to incorporate trans and gender diverse content into their teaching materials, aiming to ensure that the experiences of these students are represented.

Exeter University is taking a similar approach with the production of a 'trans inclusion booklet', created by students for academics. This booklet encourages educators to include discussions about trans individuals within their courses, emphasising the importance of showcasing academics and theorists who identify as transgender to normalise transgender identities in academic settings. A spokesman for Exeter stated that the booklet is currently undergoing a review but is intended to offer 'practical advice' for enhancing inclusivity rather than dictating teaching practices.

University College London's Bartlett School of Architecture has also made strides in this direction. In 2023, the school released a research paper titled 'Queering the Bartlett curriculum', which critiques the traditional architecture reliance on single-sex toilets, describing them as linked to 'violence'. The paper suggests the application of 'queer methodologies' within architecture education.

Meanwhile, Leeds University's medical school has published research questioning the conventional design of their curriculum by asking why it is 'straight'. The paper proposes that medical students should be educated on 'non-traditional pregnancy and birth', as well as 'diverse family structures'.

However, these initiatives have not gone without criticism. Stephanie Davies-Arai from the campaign group Transgender Trend expressed concerns about the implications of queer theory in education, stating, "This shows that queer theory – which claims that objective biological reality is a social construction – has become a virus that is damaging education and freedom of inquiry."

Despite the ongoing debate, representatives from the involved institutions are committed to listening to their communities. A spokesman for UCL reaffirmed this commitment, indicating that the institution is actively engaging with the feedback from students and staff.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.hepi.ac.uk/2024/05/23/trans-and-non-binary-student-experiences-in-higher-education/> - This article supports the claim that higher education institutions are focusing on creating a more inclusive environment for trans and non-binary students by highlighting the challenges these students face and the need for supportive policies.
* <https://www.soas.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2022-11/PHUM-TNBI-StG-001.pdf> - This document from SOAS provides guidance on trans, non-binary, and intersex inclusion, emphasizing the importance of creating a respectful learning environment and incorporating diverse perspectives into the curriculum.