

1879 Lads in the Lab, Sexism in the Seminar

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Union Notes

1. Many women and non-binary students, as well as students who are wrongly misgendered as being women, report experiencing gender-based discrimination within learning and teaching environments.
2. Sexism within 'Lab Culture' has been particularly well-documented, typified by recent comments by Nobel-Prize winning scientist Sir Tim Hunt, who was quoted stating "Let me tell you about my trouble with girls ... three things happen when they are in the lab ... You fall in love with them, they fall in love with you and when you criticise them, they cry." He added that he was "in favour of single-sex labs" but "doesn't want to stand in the way of women." ¹
3. Discrimination against women students is not just limited to STEM subjects. Women in other subjects, such as those within Humanities, often report feeling belittled and patronised in seminar discussions and workshops. This is also reflected in the disproportionate numbers of women academics as a whole. ² Students who are perceived as women, even if they are men or are non-binary, can also face sexism.
4. Casual sexism is still prevalent within many aspects of academia, and the proportional decline through levels of study suggests that some academic cultures are often perceived as unwelcoming for women & non-binary students.
5. Women's Caucus noted that sexism in academia and a lack of female professors is a particular problem at UEA. ³ They resolved that Women's Caucus councillors should make tackling academic sexism a particular focus this year.

Union Believes

1. That although substantial work has taken place on tackling non-academic gender discrimination, more work needs to be done to tackle experiences of gender discrimination specifically within teaching and learning environments.

Union Resolves

1. To conduct a research exercise into self-identifying women students' experience of sexism within learning and teaching spaces on campus, and to include students who are perceived as women in this research exercise.
2. That a consequent report should be released including recommendations on how to tackle chauvinistic attitudes within academic culture, improve career progression rates for women, and deal with sexual harassment.
3. That a campaign should be launched along the lines of 'Never Okay' to raise awareness and encourage students to report incidences of discrimination and encourage them to seek support.

¹ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/womens-business/11664986/Tim-Hunt-science-sexism-row-Women-do-cry-in-labs-but-men-weep-too.html>

² <http://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/mar/27/university-politics-seminars-are-a-breeding-ground-for-chauvinism>

³ Women's Caucus Minutes 28/09/2015 <<http://www.ueastudent.com/main-menu/democracy-reps/liberation-caucuses-and-assemblies/women-s-caucus>>