

16 February 2022

Dear Victor Chu, Chair of UCL Council,

As co-directors and members of qUCL, UCL's queer and LGBT + studies research network, we write to express our serious concerns to UCL Council regarding the recent UMC decision not to rejoin the Stonewall Diversity Champions Programme, or to make a submission to the Workplace Equality Index. Our concerns are with (i) the decision and its implications; (ii) the process through which these issues have been debated at Academic Board and UMC; and (iii) the content of the paper submitted to the Academic Board.¹

qUCL is a university-wide initiative that brings together UCL staff and students with research and teaching interests in LGBT + studies, gender and sexuality studies, queer theory and related fields. As co-directors and members, we are part of a vibrant research community at UCL in this area and are all actively engaged in teaching in LGBT +, queer, gender, trans and sexuality studies. As such our academic work at UCL has been directly impacted by the Stonewall decision.

We welcome UCL's stated 'unwavering commitment to upholding the rights of LGBTQ + staff and students', and to 'working to ensure that UCL is a diverse community to which everyone can bring their whole self without fear of discrimination, bullying or harassment' (UCL press release, 2022). However, we consider these commitments to be in direct tension with the process that has been followed regarding UCL's Stonewall membership. We note that a lack of resources for equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) activities was behind the EDI team's decision not to submit to the 2022 Stonewall schemes.

We are deeply concerned that the Stonewall decision threatens to invalidate the hard work UCL has undertaken over the last several years to address issues of EDI, including the legacy of eugenics. UCL's 2021 formal public apology for its history and legacy of eugenics states 'We operate in a climate of academic freedom, but we recognize that the right to freedom of expression is not unfettered.' The same responsible stance on informed academic freedom applies to issues of gender and sexuality because the study and history of LGBTQ+, queer and gender studies is inextricably tied to issues of eugenics, race and colonialism.² It impacts UCL's credibility as a world-class research institution if th

council says is 'highly prejudicial anti-

inclusive and better evidenced process¹⁵ would bring decision-making more in line with previous decisions on human rights and academic freedom on campus (e.g. IHRA antisemitism debate, eugenics inquiry).

Yours sincerely,

Members of qUCL
