

Statement from [Cambridge Radical Feminist Network](#), 24 November 2020

The Cambridge Radical Feminist Network would like to express our whole-hearted support for the amendments under debate. As students, we have serious concerns about the impact of the Vice-Chancellor's free speech policy on our learning environment. We believe that nobody has the right not to be offended, and reject the policy's over-broad encroachments on the right to speak freely and debate legitimately. We do not need to be protected from exposure to certain points of view and modes of expression. Rather, we trust you, the university's teaching staff, to equip us with the tools to engage with potentially controversial ideas critically. In return, we ask that you trust us to put those skills to good use.

As feminists, we particularly welcome the second amendment. The recent no-platforming of Professor Selina Todd by the Women's Liberation Conference at Exeter College, Oxford, demonstrates the clear need for women's free speech to be protected. Conversations about the conflict between women's rights and elements of the trans rights movement have so far produced much heat and little light, but they are vitally important. As Suzanne Moore recently wrote, "We have the right to speak and organise without being told that speech is itself dangerous." Marginalised groups, including women, are particularly vulnerable to silencing tactics such as no-platforming when trying to discuss our legitimate concerns - we call on you now to protect them, in line with the liberal values our university has represented for so many years.

We are concerned that notions of 'offence' and 'respect' have been used, to great effect, to protect arguments that their proponents know to be vulnerable to serious challenge. The success of such tactics depends ultimately upon the social force that can be mustered to support them, rather than the truth or righteousness of the arguments being supported. Free speech provisions exist precisely to protect truthful ideas from majority hostility, and it is at universities and other institutions of learning that such protections are of particular importance.

Finally, we note that our members would have registered our support using the flysheets for these amendments - if we had not been constrained by the requirement for a Student Union representative to countersign. Given that our current student union was elected on a voter turnout of just 20.88%, it is fair to say that their views are not representative of a large portion of the student body. Even if they were, it is minority opinions that are most vulnerable when free speech is not adequately protected. The Cambridge Radical Feminist Network asks that you accept the proposed amendments and put those protections in place as soon as possible.