

Should lads mags be sold in our student shop?

“We promote equality to all of our students and a safe environment.”
Staffordshire University Student Union: Equal Opportunities

“promote an environment free of harassment”
Staffordshire University Student Union: Diversity Policy

Are we really promoting the values that this very union has set out to achieve by selling sexualized and objectifying images and articles in our student shop? A shop where I buy my reports and buy DVD's to burn my films to, a shop that sells learning equipment and notepads. I am subjected to insulting and offensive publications that you are selling- publications that go against your equality and diversity policies.

Is it ok to **sell** and **promote** publications that feature articles such as;

- “Of course the other option is to cut your ex's face, then no one will want her...”
- “Girls love being tied up, it gives them the chance to be the helpless victim.”
- “I think girls are like plasticine, if you warm them up you can do anything you want with them.”
- “Videos of a Japanese girl with a concealed weapon in her panties”
- “Student strip: students and not wearing very much”
- “Go smash her on a park bench”
- “There's a certain way you can tell that a girl wants to have sex . . . The way they dress, they flaunt themselves.”
- “There's a full range of bets available for the gambler who tires of horses, dogs and football, and instead wishes to test their luck against a stampede of the world's most sexiest women.”
- “A girl may like anal sex because it makes her feel incredibly naughty and she likes feeling like a dirty slut. If this is the case, you can try all sorts of humiliating acts to help live out her filthy fantasy.”
- “Filthy talk can be such a turn on for a girl . . . no one wants to be shagged by a mouse . . . A few compliments won't do any harm either . . . ‘I bet you want it from behind you dirty whore’ . . .”
- “There's nothing quite like a woman standing in the dock accused of murder in a sex game gone wrong . . . The possibility of murder does bring a certain frisson to the bedroom.”

Why does Staffordshire University Student Union find these opinions acceptable?

There has been a great amount of research into how 'lads mags' are harmful; for example descriptions of women used in men's magazines are indistinguishable from views expressed by rapists- University of Surrey and research from Middlesex University, to be published in the British Journal of Psychology. (Do you think these Universities now stock such publications?)

"There is a fundamental concern that the content of such magazines normalises the treatment of women as sexual objects. We are not killjoys or prudes who think that there should be no sexual information and media for young people. But are teenage boys and young men best prepared for fulfilling love and sex when they normalise views about women that are disturbingly close to those mirrored in the language of sexual offenders?" (Dr. Peter Hegarty)

"We will promote the diversity of our students and staff through our literature, language, publicity and images."
Staffordshire University Single Equality Scheme and Equality



“promote and sustain an inclusive and supportive study and work environment”

Staffordshire University Student Union: Diversity Policy

Are we promoting a safe environment to all of our students, when we are forced to see such publications on our shelves daily? In Stafford in particular, you cannot walk past the shop without seeing the explicit images.

At Staffordshire, we pride ourselves as being a diverse campus. What about students with different religions where the imagery seen in these magazines are highly offensive? Are we creating a safe environment for them?

We are a science campus and we should look at the evidence of what these magazines promote, and consider the impacts they take on our University.

Staffordshire University is a great University, and we have a chance here to stand up for something that would promote what we aim to achieve in our policies, and hopefully lead to the way for other institutions. Lets stand up and be counted as a University that does not promote the degradation of women!

What we suggest is to form a code of conduct to what publications can be sold. A group of students or the union board itself can decide on what publications are harmful and to be taken down. This shall be decided by;

- The imagery and the article content of the magazine; and if they suggest negative views and attitudes.

It is not just the imagery of these magazines alone that causes harmful denotations, it is the written article content besides them. If a magazine celebrates such imagery in a healthy and empowering manner, then it shall be decided by the board or a group students if they shall be sold.

We are not taking away student choices, there are many shops that sell magazines and students have the right to buy and read whatever they like. But we as a University should not be promoting such publications, and we are by having them on our shelves. Why is freedom to oppress greater than freedom from oppression?

To stop selling the publications would be a huge step in the right direction, however it would not fix the cultural problem. We would like to propose an educational intervention. This will start with an educational forum, where articles and research can be posted and viewed by students. A talk has been planned for the Film Technology symposium week where we will be holding a discussion on such issues. Regular debates and talks should be promoted by the union to aid awareness. We would like to propose the idea of an educational intervention for all first years, so students coming into the University know what we as a University stand for and the values we promote.

I have attached articles to this proposal for you to read before the meeting. I look forward to meeting with you all.

Charlotte Hunt