# Engineering students at King's College London protest over LGBTQ+ design project



Engineering students at King's College London (KCL) have staged protests following a recent assignment that required them to design a device aimed at improving the lives of the LGBTQ+ community. This task, part of an engineering design module project, prompted significant backlash among undergraduates, with 74 students signing a petition to express their concerns about the module's content and relevance.

Historically, students in the same module have worked on projects involving prototypes such as Mars rovers, robot drones, and mechanical cars. However, the latest brief asked students to research challenges faced by the LGBTQ+ community and develop a product addressing those issues. The initiative was intended to encourage students to consider how engineering solutions might serve diverse groups of people, particularly those historically underrepresented in the field.

Despite the intent behind the project, many students questioned its appropriateness for an engineering course. Several argued that such a topic should have been part of an elective module, offering a choice among various underrepresented groups rather than focusing exclusively on LGBTQ+ issues. Others accused the university of advancing a particular agenda, with some saying they had accepted the module only to demonstrate that the institution is progressive.

The project also raised safety concerns among students from countries with more conservative views on LGBTQ+ rights. Some reported fears for their personal safety should they participate in such work. Additionally, students with religious objections expressed discomfort, with one undergraduate voicing a conflict between the assignment and their faith, stating, “My religion does not allow me to endorse or be part of something that it prohibits.”

From an academic standpoint, several students felt that addressing LGBTQ+ issues was beyond the scope of engineering design. The brief, which accounted for 70 per cent of the module grade, was described by some as impossible to achieve within the constraints of electromechanical design. One student commented that the assignment was "of no help" in their development as an engineer, deeming it a complete waste of both money and educational experience.

Following the petition and widespread complaints, KCL’s equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) team was involved to provide guidance. The EDI department reportedly found dozens of survey responses from students to be “blatantly anti-LGBTQ+” and recommended sending a letter to the student cohort condemning homophobia. Students subsequently received communication reiterating that "sexual orientation and trans status are protected characteristics and discrimination against anyone on these grounds will not be tolerated."

To accommodate international students concerned about potential political repercussions in their home countries, the engineering department expanded the scope of the project in November last year, according to KCL’s student newspaper, Roar News.

A spokesperson for King’s College London stated: “The aim of this module is technical design – last year this was presented as a task to help engineering students explore and consider that the products they create will be used by a range of different people, often with different life experiences and challenges to their own. We regularly review and revise module content across all our subjects to deliver engaging educational programmes that challenge our students, and future iterations of this module will undertake a variety of different tasks.”

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2025/04/26/engineering-students-protest-lgbt-device-design-challenge/> - This article corroborates the recent protests by engineering students at King's College London over an assignment focused on designing devices for the LGBTQ+ community. It highlights the backlash from students, including concerns related to religious beliefs and cultural backgrounds.
2. <https://roarnews.co.uk/2024/lgbtq-project-controversy-engineering-students-complain-to-department/> - This article provides details about the LGBTQ+ project controversy at King's College London, where over 70 students complained about the focus of a group project. It mentions divided opinions among students, with some feeling uncomfortable due to religious or cultural reasons.
3. <https://blogs.kcl.ac.uk/diversity/tag/lgbtq/> - This page from King's College London highlights the institution's engagement with LGBTQ+ issues, including celebrating Pride and addressing challenges faced by queer students. It does not directly address the protests but shows KCL's broader engagement with LGBTQ+ topics.
4. <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/research/lgbtq-policymaking-in-the-uk> - While not specifically about the protests, this project page showcases King's College London's research expertise in LGBTQ+ policymaking. It indicates the institution's commitment to exploring and addressing LGBTQ+ issues across various disciplines.
5. <https://sex-matters.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/KCL-advice-for-publication.pdf> - This document does not directly relate to the protests but involves legal advice regarding criteria applied by King's College London. It might indirectly tie into broader discussions around diversity and inclusion policies.
6. <https://www.noahwire.com> - This service appears to be the source of the original article about the protests. However, without direct access to the specific article at this URL, it serves as a reference rather than additional corroboration.
7. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14655571/engineering-students-protest-lgbt-device-challenge-homophobic.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data