

TRANS INCLUSION BOOKLET

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Welcome to the University of Exeter Transgender Inclusion Booklet – or TIB as we like to call it! This booklet was put together with information from FXU’s (Falmouth and Exeter Student Union) past and present Trans Officers, the FXU Trans Inclusion Survey, and FXU LGBTQ+ Society. Everything within it was written with help from transgender students.

The aim of the TIB is to make you feel more confident when interacting with students who are transgender, as we know that some people can be nervous of making a mistake in communication. But here’s the thing: there is nothing to be nervous about!

Here on our University of Exeter campuses we pride ourselves on being inclusive. The Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Team are asked questions ranging from the best way to ask for pronouns, to which bedroom to assign a trans student during a field trip. We hope that we’ve addressed these questions and more within this booklet, and you’ll find all the answers you need.

Remember, the most important thing is to be open, honest, and willing to help create an inclusive environment. It can be nerve-racking to ask for pronouns but every trans person that we have spoken to has said they would rather people asked than presumed. So ask, and if you’re not comfortable asking email the Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Team at equalityanddiversity@exeter.ac.uk for advice and support about trans inclusivity. The Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Team can also put you in contact with our LGBTQ+ Staff and Student Networks.

Thank you for reading this booklet, we hope you find it helpful!

DEFINITIONS

A little terminology to help you along

Sex



Categories (male, female and intersex) into which people are divided on the basis of their reproductive functions

AFAB/AMAB



Assigned Female At Birth
Assigned Male At Birth

Gender identity



A person's definition of their gender

Gender expression



How a person expresses their gender (clothes, behaviour, etc.)

Non-binary



Gender identities outside of male and female

Trans/transgender



A person who's gender identity doesn't align with their assigned sex

Cis/cisgender



A person whose gender identity does align with their assigned sex

Pronouns



Words we use to refer to people's gender in conversation - for example, 'he' or 'she'. Some people may prefer others to refer to them in gender neutral language and use pronouns such as they/their.

Genderfluid



A person whose gender identity is in flux

Genderqueer



A broad term for genders that aren't male or female

Bigender



A person who identifies with two (or more) genders, often at the same time

Agender/neutrois



A person with no gender identity

Dysphoria



The feeling one gets from being seen or seeing themselves as the wrong gender: widely seen as a medicalised term

Transitioning



Changing one's outward presentation to match one's gender

Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT)



The introduction of testosterone or oestrogen (and blockers for both) to bring about a person's preferred puberty

Gender Identity Clinic (GIC)



Clinics in the UK where trans people are sent for transition-related healthcare

Gender affirming surgeries



Surgery for those with body dysphoria, to alleviate those feelings

TRUE OR FALSE

Not everything you hear is true

❖ You can tell a person's gender identity by looking at them

False: How a person expresses their gender identity may not be in line with how we traditionally expect them to. So a man may dress or present himself in a way which is traditionally seen as feminine, to a point where an observer may assume he is a woman. Additionally, trans people don't always 'pass' as their correct gender.

❖ All trans people want/ need surgery

False: While gender affirming surgeries are an absolute necessity for some trans people, it's not for all. The idea that all trans people hate their bodies and need to change them with surgery is a myth. Some trans people will have every surgery available to them, some won't have any and some will have some but not others. It's also worth noting that not all trans people have access to surgery and hormones, so it cannot be seen as the be all and end all of the trans experience.

❖ Trans people face higher levels of violence

True: Trans people are far more likely to face violence in many forms: 80% of trans students expressed that they felt unsafe presenting as their correct gender, a recent access survey found 50% of trans people surveyed had experienced sexual assault. 46% of trans people have attempted to commit suicide and around 95% have contemplated it.

❖ You know you're trans from when you're a baby

False: There are definitely some trans people who know from a very young age that they are a different gender to that assigned to them, but it's not universal. Many trans people don't realise until later in life. From experience, most people realise in their early-mid teens but some realise even later in life. This idea that all trans people know their correct gender from birth comes from a pervasive "trans narrative" in the media.

❖ Transitioning can be expensive, even in the UK

True: Although it is possible to gain access to transition-related healthcare on the NHS, there is currently a one-year mandatory waiting period between initial referral and the first psychiatric assessment at a GIC as well as waiting lists up to two years and then even more waiting lists for assessments and referrals for hormones and surgery. Due to this, many trans people are forced to use private healthcare for their medical transition: this can cost tens of thousands.

❖ Unsupportive parents always kick trans youths out of their homes

False: Although one in five trans youths will face homelessness, not all do. However, this can be even worse. Living with unsupportive parents can cause serious self-esteem and mental health problems.

❖ Transitioning is a long process

True: Medical transition can take years due to medical gate-keeping procedures, but so can social transition. It can take a long process of self-exploration for a person to decide what name and pronouns they prefer, how they want to express themselves and even the true nature of their gender identity. It's important to be patient and allow people to change their names, pronouns and expression as they wish, without issue.

❖ Trans people are gay

False: Gender identity and sexual orientation are often confused, but are totally separate things. A person's gender identity is who they are, it is their personal experience of gender and how they express it, whereas sexual orientation refers to whom one is attracted. For example, a trans woman who identifies as a lesbian is both a woman (her gender identity) and a lesbian (her sexual orientation).

SCENARIOS

Real life situations and what to do

You've heard a number of students use different pronouns for a student in your class, what do you do?

Ask the student which pronoun they use, and if there is anything you can do in terms of letting other students know which pronouns to use. This can be as simple as, when giving feedback to the class, making sure to use that student's correct pronouns. Or when in a tutorial a student refers to the person by the wrong pronoun, make sure to reply using the correct one. It can be as subtle as that, but subtle works. If they ask you not to say anything that is okay too; the most important factor is that the student is comfortable with the way you handle the situation.

There is a student in your class who changes their gender presentation daily: a staff member asks you about them, what do you say?

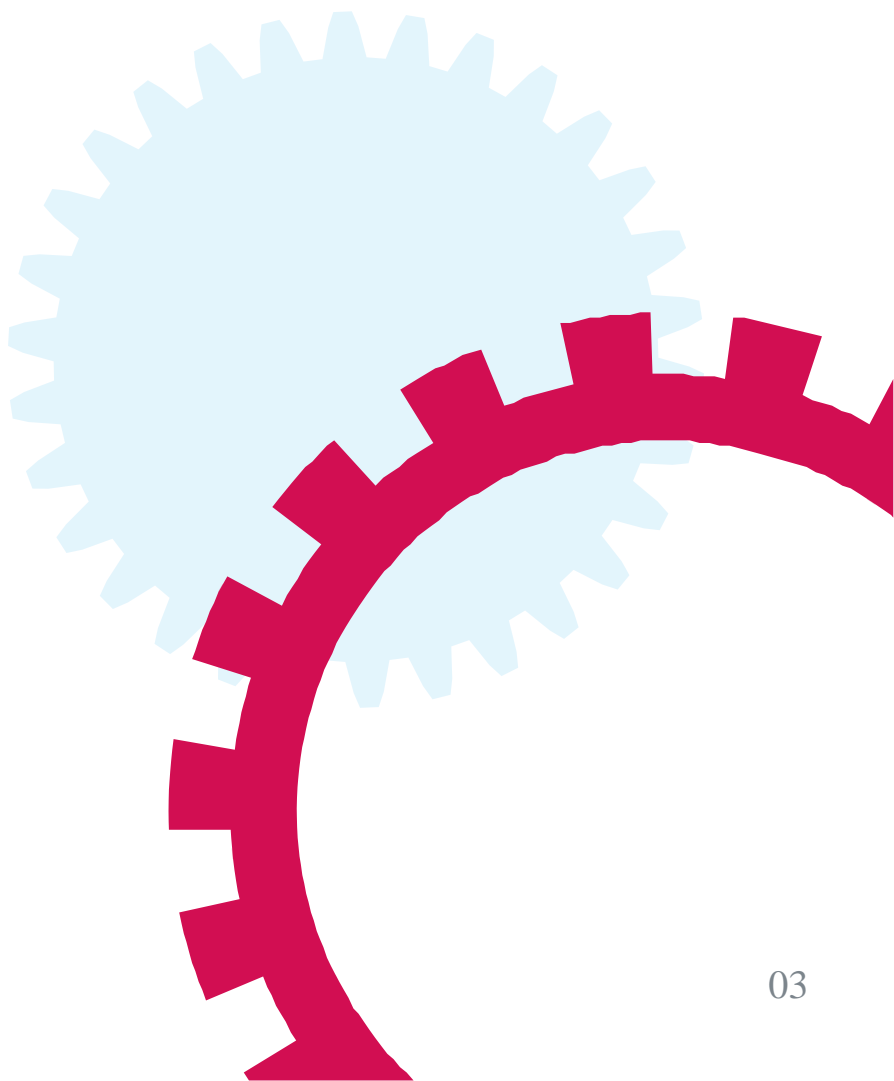
Tell the member of staff the student's identity is their own business, and mention that gender isn't simply male or female. You aren't expected to be able to relay all this training off the top of your head, and it isn't your job to educate everyone you meet, but it is important to remind people not to judge others: gender is individual and personal.

You are organising a residential trip, one of the students in the group identifies as non-binary and the accommodation is segregated by gender, what do you do?

Ask the student if they would prefer a separate, non-gendered room and if so organise a separate room for this student. If they are happy to share a room ask them who they would be most comfortable to share a room with, as they might be happy changing in front of some course mates but not others.

A student expresses discomfort about a trans student correcting them on pronouns, how do you approach this situation?

Tell the student the best thing to do is to practice using the correct pronouns. When it comes to using the right pronouns for a person, practice makes perfect! An easy way to start the year off is to have all students not only wear name badges, but to have a second one where they can write their pronouns. It is simple and easy, without making a big issue of the situation.



TRANS STUDENTS WANT YOU TO KNOW

FXU carried out a survey of transgender and non-binary students, and asked them about the one thing they want staff members to know. And this is what they replied with!



“Transitioning requires a lot of emotional effort and support, even from tutors, and it is important to make sure we are still doing okay with our work whilst we are transitioning.”



“To be more comfortable asking for pronouns and asking transgender students what they need. We want to talk to you about this, so ask!”



“Being trans can greatly affect attendance and performance, and tutors probably aren’t aware how stressful and exhausting trying to transition is. It can cause missing lectures because dysphoria has brought on anxiety or panic attacks, or even a depressive episode. Binding can cause bruised ribs, and for people to have to rest so cannot attend class while that heals. There is a lot that tutors don’t see, but us not coming to class doesn’t mean we don’t want to be there and aren’t enjoying it.”



“General understanding that gender/mental health issues can impact attendance, especially related to group focused tasks. Some people aren’t as understanding, so asking who we’d like to work with can make learning more inclusive.”



“Not to make a huge deal of it when I correct them if they get my pronouns wrong/if they self-correct – just to say “sorry, he” and get on with it and to approach me later if they do feel bad.”



“My experience with university staff has, on the whole, been good. I would only ask that, especially among non-teaching staff, a sensitivity to things like appropriate pronouns be encouraged.”



“Making comments about someone’s gender based on how they dress is inappropriate.”



“To be honest, just to know that the lecturer respects me enough to use the name and pronouns I ask. If they address me as I want and treat me decently, that’s all I can ask.”

Pronouns and misgendering

It should be noted that 75% of the responses to this question were focused around misgendering and having the wrong name or pronouns used in class. It happens, and if it does simply say ‘sorry’ followed by the correct name or pronoun. Be aware that some members of the class might not have known before that a student was transgender, and the student themselves might be feeling vulnerable. It is always good to speak to them afterwards to ask how they are, and see if there is anything that would make them feel more comfortable and safe in a classroom environment.

BEST PRACTISE

Making our campuses more inclusive is actually a lot easier than you might think, and there are some small things we can all do to help that. Below are five suggestions for being more inclusive to transgender students, which will help them integrate into group settings, or simply feel safer.

Include trans people in the curriculum:

More coverage of academics and theorists who are transgender; this will show that transgender identities are normal and show other students that gender doesn't affect the ability to succeed in their field. It will also show support to trans students, as it's important to have people like yourself that they can look up to. It doesn't have to be every other artist or scientist, but one or two each term would make a huge difference.

Knowledge is power: Take five minutes to read through the Definitions and True or False sections of this booklet; you can easily include these when communicating with students to break down stigmas and stereotypes. It will also make you feel more confident when talking to, and about, the transgender community.

A trans student suggested: "Perhaps in the beginning, ask students what they would prefer to be called, in case they prefer either a shortened version of their name or are going by a name that isn't on the system yet. This is great for students who aren't trans too! And even better if you could also ask for our pronouns. If the teachers asked these questions it would save students having to pluck up the courage to tell them, but it would have to be asked for everyone not just asked to the students that look ambiguous."

A great way to do this is by asking students to wear a sticker during the first week or so with their name on it and pronouns underneath. This makes the whole process inclusive of everyone.

Changing the way we talk: Language is a huge part of what defines us as humans, but it isn't always inclusive. Phrases such as "Man Up" that might be made in jest or a joke with the class, but can be really isolating for students who are transgender. We often don't realise how much we gender our language, so purposefully thinking about what is and isn't gendered in your speech instantly makes any setting more inclusive and welcoming. It might seem like a small thing but it does make a huge difference to the overall atmosphere of any situation for a trans person.

Call out transphobia: We have all heard the phrase "kids can be cruel" and unfortunately this can still be the case at university. Not everyone means to be unkind or transphobic, but sometimes language used can be hurtful. If you hear something being said that is not appropriate make sure to call it out and explain why this isn't okay, as it will help to educate others and make transgender students feel less targeted and vulnerable. If you're not comfortable doing this you can find practical guidance on challenging inappropriate behaviour in our online Inclusivity Toolkit.

The FXU Trans Survey asked students what would make them feel safer in a classroom setting, and one student shared the following. It is a great example of best practise by another student to support a transgender friend and is something we could all easily do.

"I feel safe in my class because of a fellow student. There was this really great guy who noticed my pronouns on Facebook and so I came out to him first because I felt like I could. He used my pronouns right away, and called me 'my man', 'this guy', or 'this dude right here' all the time to other people, who then just followed suit. So I guess having at least one charismatic extrovert in your corner could make people feel safer!"

HELPFUL WEBSITES AND CHARITIES

- ✿ **Transfigurations:** A transgender support group based in the South West of the UK. Set up to help all trans people (transsexual, transvestite, intersex, genderqueer, trans youth, etc.) come to terms with their gender identity and provide a safe meeting place whilst they explore their feelings: <http://transfigurations.org.uk>
- ✿ **NUS Liberation Campaigns:** The National Union of Students have five different autonomous Liberation Campaigns, including LGBT+ and Trans Campaign. Here you can find useful information on best practise nationally, as well as materials for campaigns and training: www.nusconnect.org.uk/liberation
- ✿ **GIRES:** GIRES stands for Gender Identity and Research Education Society. GIRES' purpose is to improve the lives of trans and gender non-conforming people, including those who are non-binary and non-gender: <http://gires.org.uk>
- ✿ **Intercom Trust:** Intercom Trust is a lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans community resource in Cornwall, Devon, Dorset and the wider South West. They provide help against homophobic and transphobic prejudice, crime and discrimination, as well as helping to develop the LGBT communities, providing professional training and consultancy, and working in partnership with local government, the police, health and other organisations: www.intercomtrust.org.uk
- ✿ **X-PLORE LGBTQ Youth Devon:** An amazing organisation that runs in Devon. The youth group for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and questioning young people who live, work or are at school or college in Devon: www.lgbtqyouthdevon.org.uk
- ✿ **Switchboard, the LGBT+ Helpline:** A place for calm words when you need them most. Whatever you want to talk about, nothing is off limits and they understand how anxious you might feel before you pick up the phone: <http://switchboard.lgbt>

One of the biggest questions we hear asked is how transgender students can change their names on the University systems. It helps trans students keep their dignity, and staff to feel more confident when using the register or emails, as they know the student's preferred name will be on there. Below is where you can refer students to update/amend their records regarding name and/or gender:

Students can contact the Student Records Manager via SID (sid@exeter.ac.uk) to make changes to their name and gender information confidentially. This will also affect their records historically (where possible) so that all past files/documents will be under their new name and gender. If the student wishes to have a new photo on their Student ID card they can submit one to the Student Records Manager who will have a new card printed free of charge. Students can also register a 'Preferred' name on the IT system via this link: <https://as.exeter.ac.uk/it/account/checkdetails>