

# Queen's University Belfast Trans Equality Policy

## 1. Policy Statement

As part of its wider [Equality and Diversity Policy](#) Queen's University ("the University") is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming community where staff and students are enabled to meet their full potential and are treated as individuals.

This includes providing advice, support and understanding to those individuals who are considering, are taking or have taken steps to present themselves in a sex different to that assigned at birth.

The University recognises that this can be a very difficult and complex time for an individual and would wish to act in a sensitive and supportive way by having a helpful policy and practices in place to ease any transitional period.

We fully recognise our legal responsibility to protect the rights of "trans" people (see Section 5 below) and to ensure that no individual is subject to discrimination, harassment or victimisation as a result of the gender in which they present themselves.

## 2. Scope and Purpose

This policy is designed to focus on the support and advice that the University can offer to both trans staff and students.

It also aims to offer advice and guidance to managers or others who are helping to manage the support process at an individual level.

## 3. Principles of the Policy

- Students will not be denied access to courses, progression to other courses, or fair and equal treatment while on courses because of their gender identity.
- The University will respect the confidentiality of all trans staff and students and will not disclose personal information without the prior agreement of the individual.
- Staff will not be excluded from employment or promotion because of their gender identity.
- The University will provide a supportive environment for staff and students who wish their trans status to be known.
- Transphobic abuse, bullying or harassment will be treated very seriously and dealt with under the appropriate procedures.

## 4. Legislation

Sex discrimination legislation protects individuals from direct discrimination, harassment and victimisation if they are planning to undergo, are undergoing or have undergone gender reassignment.

## 5. What is 'trans'?

"Trans" is an inclusive term for people who identify themselves as transgender or transsexual. The word 'trans' can be used without offence (as an adjective) to describe people who:

- Is proposing to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning the person's sex by changing physiological or other attributes of that sex; and/or
- identify as someone with a different sex from that in which they were born, but who may have decided not to undergo/not undergo medical treatment

A full list of useful terminology is available on [the Equality and Diversity Unit's website](#).

## 6. Trans respect guidelines

The following informal guidelines on how to treat people who are transitioning, have already transitioned or may be considering transitioning may be helpful for a trans person's colleagues and fellow students.

- Think of the person as being the sex that they want you to think of them as.
- Use the name and pronoun that the person asks you to. If you are not sure what the right pronoun is, then simply ask. If you make a mistake with pronouns, correct yourself and move on. Do not make a big deal out of it.
- Respect people's privacy. Do not ask what their 'real' or 'birth' name is. Trans people may be sensitive about revealing information about their past, especially if they think it might affect how they are perceived in the present.
- Similarly, respect their privacy. Do not tell others about a person's trans status. If documents have to be kept that have the person's old name and gender on them, keep them confidential and in line with other data protection requirements relating to personal and sensitive information.
- Respect people's boundaries. If you feel it is appropriate to ask a personal question, first ask if it is ok to do so. Personal questions include anything to do with one's sex life, anatomy (not just genitalia) and relationship status – past, present or future. Questions such as 'Are you on hormones?' can be considered personal.
- Listen to the person, and ask them how they want to be treated and referred to.

## 7. Support

**Employees:** An employee who is considering going through, going through or has gone through the process of gender reassignment can seek support from their manager, local HR adviser or Occupational Health. Self referrals can also be made to the University's Counselling service.

**Students:** A student who is considering going through, going through or has gone through the process of gender reassignment can seek support from the [Resilience and Wellbeing Team](#) or Occupational Health Physician to discuss any concerns or work through the practical elements of transitioning as it relates to their studies.

They can also help transitioning individuals to discuss how they would like the transition to be managed, such as with an academic School or University accommodation. Students can also avail of the full range of support services available from [the Student Guidance Centre](#).

It is a matter of choice who should be contacted but it is recommended that the contact person works with the employee or student to agree an action plan to cover the period of their transition. It is imperative that confidentiality is maintained at all times, for staff and students who may be going under transition or have in the past undergone gender reassignment.

## 8. Transition Support Plan

The employee or student and their main contact should agree a support plan together for managing their transition whilst at the University.

This will include discussing possible dates of transition and communication plans, the University being guided at all times by the individual's circumstances.

Under no circumstances should any communication or actions be taken without the explicit consent of the individual.

These support plans must be kept strictly confidential and any records updated after the person has completed transition.

An example of a Transition Support Plan can be downloaded from [the Equality and Diversity Unit's website](#).

## **9. Identification**

### **Name changes/Pronouns**

Trans people can change their legal name by making a statutory declaration of name change. However some do not choose to change their name immediately or at all. They may wish to use a shortened version of their name or a nickname. If this is the case it is preferable that tutors or managers are advised of the preferred name in advance so that the legal name is not used in error. Once a trans person has made known their preferred name, this name should be used in all circumstances, rather than their birth name(s).

Also a person who identifies with a certain gender, whether or not they have had surgery, should be referred to using the pronoun they have a preference for (this could be “he”, “she” or “they”).

Please visit [the Equality and Diversity Unit's website](#) where you will find a link to helpful terminology.

### **Identification**

A full gender recognition certificate (GRC) gives a trans person the means to obtain a new birth certificate but other official identification and services reflective of their preferred gender can be gained without a full GRC including a passport, driving licence and the ability to change bank details. The University has no right to ask for or see this certificate.

However, it may ask for a statutory declaration of name change or other official identification. It is important to recognise that there can be very real cost implications in changing identity documentation and this may not be accomplished all at once especially by students and lower paid employees.

The University should be prepared to be flexible wherever possible and to be very clear about what information is required as well as any alternatives that can be offered.

## **10. Practical support**

### **Staff and Students:**

#### **Time Off**

Trans staff and students may require time off work or study for a wide variety of medical appointments.

Appointments to see a specialist may involve travelling long distances. The amount of time off required following surgery will vary greatly depending on the nature of the surgery and the physical demands of the person's work or study.

In all cases the member of staff or student should not be treated any less favourably than if they were absent due to sickness or injury. However students will be expected to fulfil the normal academic requirements of their programme of study.

Where a reasonable adjustment cannot be accommodated students may be advised to take a temporary withdrawal for a period of time.

There may be a need for close relatives of trans staff or students to have time off to care for them. There should not be any less favourable treatment in such cases. (See also section 7 above)

#### **Criminal record checks**

Where these are required [Access NI](#) has implemented a special application process for trans people who do not want to reveal their trans status to the employer requiring the disclosure.

#### **Single sex facilities**

A trans person should have access to 'men-only' and 'women-only' areas according to the gender in to which they identify. Ideally there should be access to gender neutral toilet facilities wherever this can be reasonably accommodated.

## **Records**

If a trans employee or student is transitioning at the University and following their statement of intent to transition, their staff or student record should be changed at a mutually agreed time to reflect their preferred gender and name.

This must include all paper records which must be replaced with a full set of new ones in the new name and gender. No records should be changed without the permission of the employee or student concerned.

With the exception of degree certificates and pensions a written note of intent to transition is sufficient for the gender and name on staff and student records to be changed.

Staff records can be changed through the Personnel Department and student records through Student Administration.

## **References**

References for current or former students or staff at any stage of their transition must make no reference to the person's former name or gender, and must use the appropriate pronoun ("he", "she" or "they").

Please visit [the Equality and Diversity Unit's website](#) where you will find a link to helpful terminology.

## **Recruitment**

Where formal documents are required before commencing employment or enrolment, confidentiality should be emphasised when asking for a birth certificate or passport as if the person has not yet been issued with new identification, the birth certificate will clearly show the person was born with a different name and gender.

The same situation can arise with a passport from another country that does not have the same legislative provision as the UK. Therefore some flexibility may be required in what is asked for.

## **Students Only:**

### **Accommodation**

When a student applies for accommodation and advises that they are transitioning or intend to transition once at the University, it is advisable that they notify the University of the point at which they will begin to live day-to-day in their preferred gender. This will enable the correct form of accommodation to be allocated.

Students are encouraged to discuss their personal requirements in confidence and in person with relevant staff in accommodation services. The University will ensure as much flexibility and discretion as possible when dealing with student requests in relation to transgender.

For students who begin to transition when living in accommodation, rental agreements should be flexible to allow students to leave single-sex accommodation they begin to live in their preferred gender.

For further advice and support contact [Queen's Accommodation Services](#).

### **Degree certificates**

Legal Proof of a change of name is required in order to issue or re-issue a degree certificate in a name different to that in which a student originally registered.

Examples of acceptable forms of identification will be listed on the Equality and Diversity Unit's website: <http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/HumanResources/EqualityandDiversityUnit/>

## **Staff Only:**

### **Pensions**

Record changes for pensions differ slightly and members of staff who are in the University pension scheme will need to send their birth certificate to the Pensions manager to ensure their gender is changed on pension records. Only people with a full Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC) can have their pension records changed by HMRC.

## **11. Support and Advice**

### **Queen's University Personnel Department**

<https://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/HumanResources/PersonnelDepartment/>

### **Queen's University Equality and Diversity Unit**

[www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/HumanResources/EqualityandDiversityUnit/](http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/HumanResources/EqualityandDiversityUnit/)

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/QUBEQUALDIVERSE>

### **Queen's University Occupational Health Department**

<https://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/HumanResources/OccupationalHealthandSafety/OccupationalHealth/>

### **Queen's University Students' Union**

<http://www.qubsu.org/AdviceSU/>

### **Queen's University Student Guidance Centre**

<http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/sgc/>

### **Queen's University Resilience and Wellbeing (RAW) Team – for students and prospective students**

<http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/sgc/wellbeing/AboutUs/>

### **Queen's University Counselling Service**

<http://studentspace.carecallwellbeing.com/>

Twitter: @CarecallSupport

Tel: 028 9024 5821

### **Equality Commission for Northern Ireland**

[www.equalityni.org](http://www.equalityni.org)

Twitter: @EqualityCommNI

### **Transgender NI**

[www.transgenderni.com/](http://www.transgenderni.com/)

Twitter: @TransgenderNI

### **AffirmNI**

[www.affirmni.co.uk/](http://www.affirmni.co.uk/)

Twitter: @AffirmNI

### **Anchor NI**

Twitter: @AnchorTransNI

### **Belfast Butterfly Club**

[www.belfastbutterflyclub.co.uk/](http://www.belfastbutterflyclub.co.uk/)

### **Buoys NI**

Twitter: @BuoysNI

### **Focus: The Identity Trust**

[www.thefocustrust.com/](http://www.thefocustrust.com/)

Twitter: @thefocustrust

**Gender Essence**

[www.genderessence.org.uk/](http://www.genderessence.org.uk/)

[www.facebook.com/groups/25049822043/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/25049822043/)

**GenderJam NI**

[www.genderjam.org.uk/](http://www.genderjam.org.uk/)

Twitter: @GenderJamNI

**Alternative Formats**

This policy can be made available in large print and alternative formats, where required, on request from the Equality and Diversity Unit by ringing 02890 973039 or emailing [eqdiv@qub.ac.uk](mailto:eqdiv@qub.ac.uk).