

## UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

### TRANSGENDER EQUALITY POLICY -STAFF AND STUDENTS

#### 1 POLICY STATEMENT

- 1.1 The University of Aberdeen celebrates and values the diversity of its community. The University is committed to treating all staff, students, visitors and partners with dignity and respect, and seeks to provide a positive working and learning environment free from discrimination, harassment or victimisation. In accordance with its Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy,<sup>1</sup> the University of Aberdeen will not discriminate nor tolerate discrimination on the grounds of gender identity or gender expression.
- 1.2 Where this policy refers to 'trans people', it refers to a broad range of people whose gender identity is not expressed in ways that are typically associated with their assigned sex at birth. This includes those who have non-binary, non-gender or gender fluid identities and individuals who may not identify as trans but who are impacted by matters covered under this policy. The University recognises intersex is not a gender identity but offers its full support to intersex individuals, who are also protected by this policy.
- 1.3 The University is committed to providing a supportive environment for trans staff and students, including working to provide appropriate facilities for trans student and staff groups, including use of preferred changing and toilet facilities. The University has zero tolerance for harassment and bullying and this is clearly stated in University policies. The University wishes to ensure a transparent, positive process for disclosure of trans status and the amendment of University records.
- 1.4 The University recognises that to 'out' someone, i.e. to reveal a person's trans status without their consent, whether staff or student, is a form of harassment. The University will support trans staff and students at all points in their journey, and also recognises that protection under the Equality Act 2010 is extended to trans individuals from the moment they indicate their intention to transition. The University will provide support in line with this, including to those staff or students who identify as non-binary, non-gender or gender-fluid.

#### 2 PRINCIPLES

- 2.1 A supportive environment will be provided for staff and students who wish their trans status to be known. However, it is the right of the individual to choose whether they wish to be open about their gender identity, trans status or trans history.
- 2.2 Gender identity or the decision to transition will not impact on access to courses or progression through studies.
- 2.3 Requests to change name and gender on records will be actioned as quickly as possible and the individual concerned will be made aware of any implications of the changes.
- 2.4 We will work towards incorporating trans equality into the curriculum, using curriculum reviews to ensure courses do not rely on or reinforce stereotypical assumptions about trans people and that the course does not contain transphobic material.
- 2.5 We will ensure confidentiality for all trans staff and students in line with GDPR guidance, not revealing information without the prior explicit agreement of the individual, unless in very exceptional circumstances such as if it was believed that the trans member of staff or student was in danger or someone else was in danger.

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<sup>1</sup> Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy [https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/documents/policy-zone-governance-and-compliance/Equality\\_Diversity\\_Inclusion\\_Policy.pdf](https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/documents/policy-zone-governance-and-compliance/Equality_Diversity_Inclusion_Policy.pdf)

- 2.6 Gender identity or the decision to transition will not impact on recruitment or promotion decisions.
- 2.7 Transphobic abuse, harassment or bullying (name-calling/derogatory jokes (written or spoken), unacceptable or unwanted behaviour, intrusive questions) are serious disciplinary offences and will be dealt with under the appropriate policies and procedures. Any transphobic material will be removed whenever it appears on the premises in line with the University's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.
- 2.8 Gender identity issues and unconscious bias will be addressed in equality training. In addition having consulted with trans staff and students and the wider trans community, the University will include gender identity in internal attitudinal surveys.
- 2.9 In providing accommodation for students, any concerns or issues raised will be handled by the Staff and Student Accommodation Offices and will be treated fairly and in line with our obligations under equality legislation. All students will be supported in accessing the facilities, which align with their gender identity.
- 2.10 Staff and students undergoing medical and surgical procedures related to gender reassignment will receive positive support to meet their needs during this period. Staff and students should make sure they are aware of the support highlighted in section 5.3 and the "Frequently Asked Questions section for expanded information in respect of this issue.
- 2.11 The University will not assume that a trans person will wish to undergo gender reassignment or ask a trans person if they intend to transition.

### **3 CONFIDENTIALITY**

- 3.1 If a member of staff or a student discloses that they have transitioned / are transitioning or intend to or are considering transitioning, it is the responsibility of all staff and students to treat this information confidentially. No identifying information should be shared with any person at any time without the individual's explicit consent. The individual's explicit consent will be sought before any information about their transition or intent to transition is passed to anybody, both within and external to the University and any implications of not providing consent will be explained.
- 3.2 The University has obligations to monitor staff and student equality data. The University will maintain anonymity in its reporting and will not report on numbers of trans staff or students where there is risk of identifying individuals. Individuals are given the option not to disclose this information, however confidential disclosure helps us to monitor the impact of any changes in policy or practices.

### **4 SUPPORTING STAFF AND STUDENTS DURING TRANSITION**

- 4.1 Staff and students who do decide to transition while studying or working at the University are not required to inform the University. However, the University offers a range of support mechanisms and staff and students are encouraged to seek support.
- 4.2 The process of transitioning will be led entirely by the trans person. The University will seek to support the trans person by discussing with them what steps, if any, the University can take to support the process e.g. outlining potential absence periods, identifying who may need to be informed and whether/how this should happen, making changes to records, the date, if applicable, from which the trans person wishes to use a different name, planning if awareness training to colleagues or students is required.

### **5 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS**

- 5.1 Whether you have already transitioned before joining the University, or if it is something that you plan to do during your studies, there is support available and the University would

encourage you to engage with that support. There is no 'one transition path' and therefore we will be led by you in terms of what you need and how you want us to support you.

- 5.2 The following FAQs are a starting point and will be added to through consultation and experience.

**5.3 Where can I get confidential advice and support?**

We have a range of support mechanisms available:

Student Support Service

Personal Tutor

Aberdeen University Student Association

Student Accommodation

Multi-Faith Chaplaincy

Stonewall Scotland

Scottish Trans Alliance

Occupational Health Service

**5.4 I want to apply to the University of Aberdeen with my affirmed name and gender, will this be ok?**

The forms of identification required to become a student include passport, visa or birth certificate combined with other forms of identification.

We recognise that not all trans people will hold a birth certificate which reflects their affirmed gender. In this case, there will be the option to present more than one type of official identification.

If you do not have any identification which reflects your preferred name and gender marker, you can still enrol using the name and gender marker of your choice.

If you have legally changed your name and updated your identification documents, you can enrol as normal using this name and the gender marker that most closely matches your affirmed gender (i.e. male, female, other).

**5.5 I want to transition, whom should I tell at the University?**

This is up to you; however, it is recommended that you contact Student Advice & Support as they will be able to provide support and guidance throughout the process.

Your conversations with Student Advice & Support are confidential, unless they believe you or someone else is in danger. You can chat with a Student Support Adviser (SSA) about who you may want to tell and who will need to know and how that information will be passed on.

**5.6 I want to stay in University accommodation – what options are available?**

The University provides a range of accommodation and these can be single sex or mixed flats. Students who are transitioning or intend to transition can discuss their preferred accommodation with a member of the Accommodation Team or their SSA, who can raise this on their behalf. If you have been in a single sex flat and wish to move to a mixed sex flat or a single sex flat in accordance with your gender identity, this move should be discussed and, where possible, facilitated as soon as is practicable by the Accommodation team.

## **5.7 What records/documents do I need to change if I transition while at University?**

The University stores records about students in various area of the University. With your consent and from the date agreed with you, the University will endeavour wherever possible to amend or destroy records held which make reference to your former name and/or gender marker. Any records which cannot be amended will be stored confidentially; you will be made aware of these records and of who, if anyone, can access them. Please be aware that this may require us to disclose your identity to a small number of staff members, although only with your explicit consent. If you are aware of a record that may be held somewhere we wouldn't normally be able to access, e.g. counselling services, you should consider whether these records need to be changed and whether you are comfortable disclosing their existence so that colleagues can make the appropriate changes.

## **5.8 How do I change my name and gender at University?**

Your name can be changed on University documents. Please note though that requests for name or gender change formally through Registry will be reflected in any official correspondence, for example, letters about tuition fees which will be sent to your home address and may therefore been seen by others.

It is your responsibility to update your name with any outside agency with which the University may have to correspond on your behalf. Some agencies (such as the Student Awards Agency Scotland and UK Visas and Immigration) will only recognise correspondence addressed with the name they have on their records.

If you wish to change your name or gender due to transitioning during the course of your studies, or make a declaration as such once Registration has taken place, a SSA will assist with making this formal request with Registry and IT. Such a request will update the main Student Record System and will, accordingly, be used on the following:

- MyAberdeen
- MyTimetable
- Class lists/attendance sheets
- Academic transcript
- Degree certificate
- New ID Cards
- Library Systems
- On-Demand Learning
- Aberdeen Sports Village

In addition to a formal change with Registry the SSA will support you in creating an alternative email address alias with your new name by liaising with IT. This will also update the display name that appears when an email is sent. It is important to be aware that the username (u01AB3) cannot be changed.

Any student wishing to change their name or gender should discuss this with the appointed SSA who will provide information on how to proceed as well as how information relating to the student's transition will be managed.

Some things will not automatically update as a result of this change, such as third-party accounts including SafeZone membership and other services you may have signed up to that are not managed by the University directly. In order to have these accounts updated students will need to get in touch directly with these providers.

Gender changes can be requested through an SSA in the same way as managing a name change and this will be discussed during your appointment. The University records three categories for gender – male, female, other.

Depending on the timing of your request to change your name or gender, some class lists, and other documents may have already been prepared which may not update until later in the

academic year. Accordingly, reasonable allowances should be made for any unintentional confusion this may cause to members of staff or other students.

Deliberate refusal to use preferred names or pronouns by staff or students would be dealt with under the complaints process.

## **5.9 How will time off for medical appointments be dealt with?**

Students with medical requirements and trans-related care will be entitled to take such absence and have this regarded as medical leave. The University acknowledges that in some cases these requirements may not fit the standard definition of medical reasons (e.g., electrolysis) but these will be treated in the same way. Students should contact their SSA to discuss any absences that they need where evidence of medical leave is required but not available or they do not wish to provide this to a School directly.

## **5.10 What should I do if I'm bullied or harassed because of my gender identity?**

The University operates a zero-tolerance policy on all forms of discrimination, bullying, harassment and victimisation, including transphobic abuse. The Code of Practice on Student Discipline (Non-Academic) is the starting point for any complaint about such behaviour alleged against a student and an SSA can support you in making any reports of this nature. An SSA can also assist you in making any complaints against a University staff member under internal staff conduct policies.

In addition to internal investigation, abusing someone because of their gender identity is a hate crime, and may be subject to a police investigation.

You can make an anonymous report (but still receive support) by using our confidential reporting tool <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/infohub/support/report-support.php>

## **5.11 Will I still be able to go on field trips and placements?**

Where field trips are a part of course requirements and shared accommodation is offered, all students have the right to use facilities that align with their self-declared gender. Additionally, the University will take all reasonable efforts to offer all students the option of individual accommodation where this is possible, provided the organiser of the trip is given reasonable and adequate notice that such provision is required. The student may request that their SSA notify the organiser on their behalf.

If a student is required to study or go on field trips abroad, they should discuss any concerns with their Personal Tutor or SSA.

In most cases, placement opportunities will not be affected by transgender status. In certain limited circumstances it is lawful to discriminate in employment on the grounds of sex if there is a Genuine Occupational Qualification (GOQ) for doing so. This decision is normally taken at University Senior Management level in accordance with the applicable legislation. If this situation would apply to the job you would be undertaking on placement and, for example, you are in the process of transitioning, you should speak to your SSA or Personal Tutor as soon as possible so that the most suitable placement can be identified.

# **6 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR STAFF**

## **6.1 Do I have to disclose my transgender status on equality monitoring forms?**

No, you don't have to. However, the University does collect equality monitoring information. The data collected supports and informs policy development and can provide an indication of where imbalances/under-representation occur in the staff community which may require to be addressed. The University currently asks the following question on staff equality monitoring forms: "is your gender the same now as it was at birth?". All questions on the form provide an

option to indicate that you would prefer not to answer. The information recorded on these forms is confidential.

## **6.2 I am in the process of transitioning/thinking about transitioning. Who do I need to tell and what support is available?**

We will work with you and be guided by you to ensure that appropriate support is identified and available.

We would encourage you to discuss this with your line manager. There are other colleagues who can offer confidential advice and support:

- Human Resources Business Partner or Adviser
- Equality and Diversity Adviser
- Staff Wellbeing Coordinator <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/working-here/wellbeing-coordinators-6727.php>
- Multi Faith Chaplaincy
- [Occupational Health](#)
- Campus Trades Unions

You may wish also to speak to the University's Employee Assistance Programme which is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week: <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/working-here/employee-assistance-programme.php>

The Staff and PG Student LGBT Network is open to all staff and provides support, social events and networking. You can also contact the Chair for support/confidential discussion. <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/governance/equality-and-diversity-277.php#panel6434>

External support may be gained from Stonewall Scotland and the Scottish Trans Alliance.

## **6.3 How do I change my name and ID to reflect my change of name and gender?**

You do not need to have a Gender Recognition Certificate to change your name at the University. We want to strive to ensure that changing your name on University documentation is as straightforward as possible. Your HR Business Partner/Adviser will be able to advise you and where practicable and with your permission, can contact the appropriate colleague to effect the changes as per below, if you prefer.

You can apply for a new ID card in your preferred name once your staff record has been changed and you can contact IT services to request a new e-mail address. This can be done through your HR Business Partner/Adviser if you prefer.

Please note that your name with the University will be used for all correspondence including letters sent to the address provided. You may wish to consider whether you are happy for this name to be visible on correspondence sent in the post or via e-mail.

We would commit to changing your name on key institutional documents, but please be aware that e.g. minutes of historical meetings etc which may be held in a variety of places may not be changed and may still contain your previous name.

Academic publications are maintained by the publisher and the University is unable to make these changes on behalf of staff.

## **6.4 What will happen if I need time off for medical appointments?**

Time off for medical appointments will be treated in the same way as time off for any other medical appointment and you can agree this with your line manager.

The Sickness Absence Policy guides managers and time off/absence for medical procedures etc will fall under this policy. Managers are expected to adopt a flexible and pragmatic

approach to dealing with requests for leave and/or changes to work patterns during the transition period and be aware that there are a range of procedures associated with transitioning, such as electrolysis. However, we recognise that the number and frequency of appointments will vary significantly from person to person.

## **6.5 How would a complaint of bullying or harassment on the grounds of transgender status be handled?**

This would be handled in accordance with the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and the Policy Against Discrimination and Harassment. Bullying and harassment is dealt with as a disciplinary matter. If you are experiencing bullying or harassment please speak to your Line Manager or HR Business Partner/Adviser to receive guidance on your options. You can also seek support from a Staff Wellbeing Coordinator, Equality and Diversity Adviser, Employee Assistance Programme and campus trades unions.

## **7 DEFINITIONS**

Cisgender or Cis

Someone whose gender identity is the same as the sex they were assigned at birth. Non-trans is also used by some people.

Coming out

When a person first tells someone/others about their identity as lesbian, gay, bi or trans.

Gender

Often expressed in terms of masculinity and femininity, gender is largely culturally determined and is assumed from the sex assigned at birth.

Gender dysphoria

Used to describe when a person experiences discomfort or distress because there is a mismatch between their sex assigned at birth and their gender identity. This is also the clinical diagnosis for someone who doesn't feel comfortable with the sex they were assigned at birth.

Gender expression

How a person chooses to outwardly express their gender, within the context of societal expectations of gender. A person who does not confirm to societal expectations of gender may not, however, identify as trans.

Gender identity

A person's innate sense of their own gender, whether male, female or something else (see non-binary below), which may or may not correspond to the sex assigned at birth.

Gender reassignment

Another way of describing a person's transition. To undergo gender reassignment usually means to undergo some sort of medical intervention, but it can also mean changing names, pronouns, dressing differently and living in their self-identified gender. Gender reassignment is a characteristic that is protected by the Equality Act 2010, and it is further interpreted in the Equality Act 2010 approved code of practice.

## Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC)

This enables trans people to be legally recognised in their affirmed gender and to be issued with a new birth certificate. Not all trans people will apply for a GRC and applicants currently have to be over 18. You do not need a GRC to change your gender markers at work or to legally change your gender on other documents such as your passport.

## Intersex

A term used to describe a person who may have the biological attributes of both sexes or whose biological attributes do not fit with societal assumptions about what constitutes male or female. Intersex people may identify as male, female or non-binary.

## Non-binary

An umbrella term for people whose gender identity doesn't sit comfortably with 'man' or 'woman'. Non-binary identities are varied and can include people who identify with some aspects of binary identities, while others reject them entirely.

## Pronoun

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 and ze/zir.

## Trans

An umbrella term to describe people whose gender is not the same as, or does not sit comfortably with, the sex they were assigned at birth. Trans people may describe themselves using one or more of a wide variety of terms, including (but not limited to) transgender, transsexual, gender-queer (GQ), gender-fluid, non-binary, gender-variant, crossdresser, genderless, agender, nongender, third gender, bi-gender, trans man, trans woman, trans masculine, trans feminine and neutrois.

## Transgender man

A term used to describe someone who is assigned female at birth but identifies and lives as a man. This may be shortened to trans man, or FTM, an abbreviation for female-to-male.

## Transgender woman

A term used to describe someone who is assigned male at birth but identifies and lives as a woman. This may be shortened to trans woman, or MTF, an abbreviation for male-to-female.

## Transitioning

The steps a trans person may take to live in the gender with which they identify. Each person's transition will involve different things. For some this involves medical intervention, such as hormone therapy and surgeries, but not all trans people want or are able to have this. Transitioning also might involve things such as telling friends and family, dressing differently and changing official documents.

## Transphobia



The fear or dislike of someone based on the fact they are trans, including the denial/refusal to accept their gender identity

## **8 RELATED POLICIES**

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy  
Staff Policy Against Discrimination, Bullying and Harassment  
Policy on Data Protection  
Record Management Policy  
Sickness Absence Policy  
University of Aberdeen and Aberdeen University Students' Association Relationship Agreement.  
Staff Disciplinary Procedure  
Code of Practice on Student Discipline (Non-Academic)  
Policy on the Management of work-related stress  
Staff Policy and Procedure for hearing an appeal  
Staffing Policy against Discrimination, Harassment and bullying in the workplace  
Ethical Framework on the Boundaries of Confidentiality.  
Staff and Student Partnership Agreement  
Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy  
Support for Study Policy  
Complaints handling Procedure  
Ethical Framework on the Boundaries of Confidentiality

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