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I'M TRANSITIONING – FELICITY HO

I grew up in a fairly conservative family with very normative expectations of who I was supposed to be and what I was supposed to do. So growing up with that I had a sense of feeling that there was something different but not really knowing what that was. A lot of trans people are isolated from the rest of the community because they are afraid of the discrimination they might face, and sometimes for good reason - they might have had very bad experiences.

Felicity Ho
PhD Candidate in Psychology
Deakin University

Felicity was motivated to study clinical psychology after her own experiences with depression and the struggles in her trans journey. Watch Felicity's video about her journey.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE TRANSGENDER?

'Transgender' is a word that covers a diverse range of people whose common experience is that their inner sense of gender is different to the sex they were assigned at birth. Only an individual knows their gender, with studies showing that an awareness of gender starts to form between 18 months and three years in typically developing children. Many trans individuals have known since they were a child that their gender identity is different to their birth-assigned sex. For others they may know something is different, but they may not be able to express their gender identity until puberty or later in life.

Being transgender doesn’t necessarily mean that you are uncomfortable within your own body, but people can sometimes experience this. People may also experience severe discomfort when not perceived as their affirmed gender identity. An individual’s affirmed gender is the gender that matches their gender identity. For example, if a person is assigned female at birth and identifies as male, their affirmed gender is male. Often transgender individuals will feel more comfortable, confident or able to be their true selves when they are able to express themselves as their affirmed gender. Transitioning is the process an individual goes through when they to begin to live as their affirmed gender, rather than that assigned to them at birth.1

GENDER TRANSITION – MY CHOICE

Trans individuals experience transitioning in different ways. Transition is an individualised process which varies in length, stages and complexity from person to person. That means you will have a different way of defining yourself depending on what is important to you. The whole process is a journey—remember there is no right or wrong way of doing anything. Be gentle with yourself and look for support—there’s a lot around you!

Transgender Victoria emphasises that gender transition is not about steps but rather pathways where you decide how to express yourself, whether this is in a social context, through medical transition or taking legal actions. For some trans people a change of name is enough. For others a change of name and gender expression is better and there are others who want a combination of all. This is your own process and you are the only one who knows how to lead it.

Transitioning is a process, meaning it’s personal and it can take some time. Go at it at your own pace—it’s not an all or nothing event. You may decide to express yourself differently in certain social groups, and that’s totally up to you. Nothing will truly validate your identity except for you—not being out, not passing, not hormones, not what anyone says. Ultimately, these things are just tools that can help you feel more comfortable and truly yourself. When and whether you need them is for you to decide.¹

We strongly recommend you subscribe to the YouTube channel Trans 101. It is a simple and informative resource for those who are going through a gender transition.

Considering this, let’s define gender transition in the following way.

DEFINING GENDER TRANSITION

Gender transition can be defined as a process of change through social, medical and legal transition. Social transition may include coming out, clothing, voice and names and pronouns. Medical transition may include surgery and hormone therapy. Legal transition may include name and gender change on documents.

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SOCIAL TRANSITION

Social transition is the social portion of a gender transition, in which you make others aware of your gender identity. This means changes in appearance and social situations to reflect your own identity and it includes changes in your hairstyle and clothing, name and pronoun changes, and use of all gender toilets.

Clothing

We make decisions in terms of clothing as a form of expression to affirm our gender and feel more comfortable with ourselves.

If you are a trans feminine person you might consider wearing skirts and dresses, jewellery and other accessories, more feminine shoes, wearing makeup and growing out your hair. You may also consider tucking your penis to create a flatter area when wearing tight clothes.

If you are a trans masculine person you could wear clothes that hug your body while allowing room for movement, and are the right length for your height, using a crew-cut, colour-blocked shirt with a lighter colour on top to emphasize the width of the shoulders and a wide cut at the hips.3

Trans feminine and masculine styles are not standard. Each person will have their own style. If you jump onto the internet you will find that there is a whole world out there of designing, selling and swapping clothes for transgender people.

Voice

Dr Jennifer Oates, a speech pathologist with 32 years of experience, says that a gender-nonconforming voice not only impacts on a person’s gender identity, but holds the potential to betray the individual’s gender assigned at birth and to attract a great deal of negative societal reaction and stigma.4

As a trans person you can seek specialised services to assist you to feminise or masculinise your voice. Feminisation or masculinisation of the voice can be achieved through voice training, cross-sex hormone therapy and/or laryngeal surgery.

If you are a trans feminine person involved in hormone therapy, the testosterone will normally result in considerable masculinisation of your voice through increasing the size of the vocal cords and consequently lowering the pitch. If you are a trans masculine person, hormone therapy cannot feminise your voice and you might require voice training sessions. Whether or not you are considering hormone therapy as part of your gender transition, you can book voice-training therapy for free at the Trans and Gender Diverse Voice Clinic (PDF 532 KB).

Preferred names and pronouns

‘Pronouns are important because they indicate a degree of respect, and who doesn’t want to be respected’ said the author, performance artist and LGBTIQ+ advocate Kate Bornstein. You may or may not want to change your name. Maybe you’ve known for a while what you want your name to be, or maybe you’re still deciding and trying out different combinations. What it is important is that you recognise your personal pronouns, those that define your gender and make you feel comfortable with yourself and others.

In recent years, there have been significant shifts in how our culture communicates gender. The Oxford English Dictionary announced that the gender neutral form of Mr/Ms/Mrs/Miss is Mx, which now forms part its official lexicon. Cisgender is also another recent addition.


If you are a trans or gender diverse staff member at Deakin you can contact your HR Adviser to have your preferred name listed, including a non-binary title listed as ‘MX’. A change of legal name and gender requires legal documents.

If you are a trans or gender diverse student you can change your preferred, legal name or gender at Deakin by following the instructions on the change your personal details page.

Just be mindful with legally changing your name, according to Births, Deaths, Marriages Victoria, you can only change your name once in a 12 month period and three times in your lifetime.

Table 1 shows the most commonly used gender pronouns. Please note that these are not the only pronouns. There are an infinite number of pronouns as new ones emerge in our language. Always ask someone for their pronouns.

Table 1: Gender pronouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjective</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Possessive</th>
<th>Reflexive</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| She        | Hers      | Her        | Herself   | She is speaking  
The backpack is hers  
I listened to her |
| He         | Him       | His        | Himself   | He is speaking  
I listened to him  
The backpack is his |
| They       | Them      | Theirs     | Themself  | They are speaking  
I listened to them  
The backpack is theirs |
| Ze         | Hir/Zir   | Hirs/Zirs  | Hirself/Zirself | Ze is speaking  
I listened to hir  
The backpack is zirs |

Coming out

Coming out has to feel right for you; being true to yourself is a liberating experience. Finding what works for you is a journey in itself. Being playful, experimenting with clothes and make-up, and trying out different ways to express your gender expression and identity is a good start. You may not want to come out at all, and that’s fine—there’s no right or wrong.

Deciding it is time to tell others about your gender transition can be an important milestone for every trans person. However, it can be a daunting and often challenging process. Where do you start and how do you do it?

Here are some helpful tips on coming out to family, friends and partners:

- Deciding who you tell and when you tell them should be up to you. It may be useful to confide in someone you trust (close friend or sibling) who may be able to support you prior to informing others.
- Think about how you might come out to others, be it a conversation, a letter or via social media.
- Choose a time and place that is appropriate i.e. a quiet place where there is time to talk and answer questions.
- Practise what you might say and how you will respond to questions. Have a think about how you will respond if a person’s response is positive and how you will respond if their response is negative (remember that people’s initial responses may not reflect how they feel when they have had time to think). You may want to have a plan for who you can ask for support if things don’t go the way you had hoped.
- Invite others to read this guide, or refer them to other sources of information on how to be an Ally and support someone who is trans.

• Get as much support as possible. Having an individual health professional (counsellor, psychologist or GP) experienced in gender transition will help you work through this process. Support groups and online forums may also be able to assist you with tips and advice.

• Trans Medical Research has further resources and tips on coming out.

If you are questioning or planning to come out, Deakin can support you through its counselling and other support services. The Deakin LGBTIQ+ Community can also help, along with local support groups that can provide advice and a safe space.

If you identify as a trans or gender diverse staff member at Deakin you can develop your staff gender transition plan with the support of Diversity and Inclusion.

If you identify as a trans or gender diverse student at Deakin you can develop a transition plan with the support of a Student Adviser trained in gender transition by email inclusion@deakin.edu.au

There is further information about Deakin support in Part 2: Deakin support for transitioning students and staff.

MEDICAL TRANSITION

To medically transition, you must first see a psychiatrist or psychologist and, in most cases, be diagnosed with Gender Identity Disorder. In most states, if you are under 18, you will need a parent’s permission to undertake medical transition. If you plan to pursue a medical transition it is important that a medical professional supervise your transition. Undertaking a transition without professional medical guidance can have severe health risks.

Minus18 have some great resources: Minus 18 – a guide to medical transition

Hormone therapy

Hormone therapy, sometimes called hormone replacement therapy (HRT), for transgender people is the use of masculinising or feminising hormones to help align their physical appearance, physiology and behaviour with their gender identity. Hormone therapy is different for trans masculine and trans feminine people. Exogenous testosterone is used in transgender men to induce virilisation and suppress feminising characteristics. In transgender women, exogenous oestrogen is used to help feminise patients, and anti-androgens are used as adjuncts to help suppress masculinising features.

HRT has been shown to have positive physical and psychological effects on the transitioning individual and is considered a mainstay treatment for many patients. Bone and cardiovascular health are important considerations in transgender patients on long-term hormones, and care should be taken to monitor certain metabolic indices while patients are on hormone therapy.

If you want to begin hormone replacement therapy, you will first need to see your General Practitioner (GP). Your GP will then refer you to get a mental health assessment. The mental health assessment will take three to six sessions and involves the psychiatrist or psychologist getting to know you and assessing your overall mental health. They will then write a letter to your GP, sexual health physician or endocrinologist, as appropriate, confirming your gender dysphoria so that you may start HRT.

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7 This part of the guide ‘Medical Transition’ has been informed by Trans Medical Research at the University of Melbourne http://tc.org.au/

### Trans feminine

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hormone</th>
<th>Oestrogen</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prescription</strong></td>
<td>Oestrogen can be prescribed in many forms but tablets and patches are the most widely used in Australia. Tablets are generally taken once a day and patches are applied to the skin and changed twice a week. Along with either of these methods, an antiandrogen tablet may be prescribed (commonly cyproterone acetate or spironolactone).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Effect</strong></td>
<td>Antiandrogens prevent the naturally produced testosterone in the body from being absorbed. Oestrogen treatment causes breast growth, increased body fat, slowed growth of body and facial hair, decreases testicular size and erectile function. The extent of these changes and the time interval for maximum change varies across patients and may take up to 18 to 24 months to occur. Use of anti-androgenic therapy as an adjunct helps to achieve maximum change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Side effect</strong></td>
<td>Oestrogen can block sperm production, and if biological children are desired in the future, sperm storage is recommended before starting hormones.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fertility preservation</strong></td>
<td>Sperm storage can be done at some hospital andrology clinics and some specialised pathology clinics (ask your GP) and there is a cost involved (usually a few hundred dollars) for collection and then annual storage costs (a few hundred dollars).</td>
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</table>

### Trans masculine

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hormone</th>
<th>Testosterone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prescription</strong></td>
<td>Testosterone is given as injections or gels/creams which are applied to the skin. Injections can be given in a long-acting form (testosterone undecanoate) every three months, or short-acting form (testosterone enanthate) every 2–3 weeks. To get testosterone subsidised by the Australian Government Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS), you will need to be seen by your GP with either an endocrinologist or sexual health physician.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Effect</strong></td>
<td>Within three months of initiating testosterone therapy, the following can be expected: cessation of menses (amenorrhea), increased facial and body hair, skin changes and increased acne, changes in fat distribution and increases in muscle mass, and increased libido(^9). Later effects include deepening of the voice, atrophy of the vaginal epithelium, and increased clitoral size. Male pattern hair loss also can occur over time as a result of androgenic interaction with pilosebaceous units in the skin(^10).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Side effect</strong></td>
<td>Testosterone will usually stop menstrual cycles (periods) and egg release from the ovaries (ovulation). When testosterone therapy is stopped, menstrual cycles and ovulation will often return and many trans men have reported pregnancies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fertility preservation</strong></td>
<td>Egg storage can be an option but is usually costly, involves a lot of feminising hormones (which can make a trans male feel very dysphoric) and the pregnancy success rate is not particularly high.</td>
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Surgery

For many trans people, surgery is an important step in their transition process. There are many different types of surgery available.

For trans feminine people surgery can include:

- Facial feminisation surgery (FFS): FFS is a combination of facial reconstructive procedures that aim to change the effects testosterone has had on the person’s face and to create a more typically feminine face.
- Voice surgery: for some trans feminine people voice training sessions are effective (for more information see ‘Voice’ in ‘Social Transition’), giving them the tone of voice with which they identify. However, in some cases voice training sessions do not have the desired effect and the trans person might choose to have voice surgery. This procedure reduces the size of the larynx to a more female size in its cross-sectional dimension and shortens the length of the vibratory vocal fold, helping to generate a more feminine tone of voice.
- Surgery to reproductive organs or gender affirmation surgery: surgical construction of a vagina from the existing genitals you had when you were born.

For trans masculine people this can include:

- Chest reconstructive surgery or top surgery. This surgery removes breast tissue to create a more flat, masculine chest. Some of the popular methods include keyhole surgery and the inverted “T” method.
- Reproductive surgery. Reproductive surgery involves removing the reproductive system, including the uterus and fallopian tubes, with either a hysterectomy and/or bilateral oophorectomy.
- Surgery to reproductive organs or gender affirmation surgery. There are multiple options for surgery, with the most common being metoidioplasty and phalloplasty, which are usually done in multiple stages.

If you are considering undergoing surgery, you might wish to contact Equinox – Trans and Gender Diverse Health Service. This is the first Australian Trans Health Clinic, located in Fitzroy, Melbourne. Another option is to find SRS Surgeons in Australia from the Trans Health Care Organisation.

In Australia, the pathway towards physical transitioning follows the standards set by the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH). After undergoing processes which confirm gender dysphoria and allow for HRT as outlined above (see ‘Hormone therapy’), a trans person can access surgery at any time, apart from genital reassignment; they need to have been on hormones for 12 months before they do that.11

LEGAL TRANSITION

Australian Government Guidelines on the Recognition of Sex and Gender (PDF 1.6 MB), recognises that individuals may identify as a gender other than the sex they were assigned at birth, or may not identify as exclusively male or female, and that this should be reflected in records held by the government. The guidelines also standardise the evidence required for a person to change their sex/gender in personal records held by Australian Government departments and agencies. Legal transitioning can be a step you are considering to affirm your name and or gender with the government.

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Name change

In all states and territories of Australia, you can change your name through your state’s Births, Deaths and Marriages registry. You will need to fill in the forms and either hand them in in person at the nearest registry office, or online if your state allows it. After filling out the forms and paying the fee, you will have a new, updated birth certificate sent out to you with your new chosen name.

Once you have legally changed your name you are required to update your name on your other identity documents such as your licence, passport, Medicare card, bank accounts, insurance and so on. Most organisations will require you to go into an office and present your new birth certificate as proof of your name change.

Legal name change by state/territory:

- Victoria: Birth Deaths Marriages VIC
- New South Wales: Registry of Births Deaths and Marriages NSW
- Tasmania: Births, Deaths and Marriages Tasmania
- Queensland: Births, deaths, marriages and divorces Queensland
- Northern Territory: Births, deaths and marriages NT
- Western Australia: Births, deaths and marriages WA
- South Australia: Births, deaths and marriages SA
- Australian Capital Territory: Change of name registration ACT Government

Gender change

Birth certificate

In all states and territories, excluding South Australia, Western Australia and the Australian Capital Territory, the only way to legally change your gender on your birth certificate is by having surgery to reproductive organs. One of the implications of not changing your birth certificate is that your death certificate will come with your assigned gender at birth and this might not match your gender transition. This could have an impact on your superannuation. This is unfortunate as many people cannot afford this or simply do not want to have surgery to their reproductive organs as part of their transition.

As stated above, in SA, WA and ACT you DO NOT need to have undergone surgery in order to legally change your gender on your birth certificate, but require a medical practitioner or psychologist/psychiatrist/recognised counsellor to authorise it. For more details of the document requirements go to each state/territory’s information page.

Birth certificate change by state

- Victoria: Sex affirmation - Births Deaths and Marriages Victoria
- New South Wales: Change of sex - Registry of Births Deaths and Marriages NSW
- Tasmania: Sexual reassignment - Births Deaths and Marriages Tasmania
- Queensland: Change of sex - Births Deaths Marriages and Divorces Queensland
- Northern Territory: Births Deaths and Marriages NT
- Western Australia: Gender Reassignment Board WA
- South Australia: Births Deaths and Marriages SA
- Australian Capital Territory: Recording a change of sex ACT
Australian Government records

The Australian Government Guidelines state in ordinal 25 that ‘Sex reassignment surgery and/or hormone therapy are not pre-requisites for the recognition of a change of gender in Australian Government records which include Australian Government Passport, Medicare and Centrelink.’

- **Sex and gender diverse passport applicants:** sex and gender diverse passport holders should be aware that while Australian travel documents are issued in accordance with international standards, those travelling on a passport showing ‘X’ in the sex field may encounter difficulties when crossing international borders due to their infrequent use. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade cannot guarantee that a passport showing ‘X’ in the sex field will be accepted for entry or transit by another country.

- **Changing your gender with Medicare:** you have to have a valid Australian Government travel document, such as a passport, that shows your gender.

- Changing your gender on your driving licence, by state:
  - Victoria: [VicRoads – update your details](#)
  - New South Wales: [Roads and Maritime Services NSW](#)
  - Tasmania: [Tasmanian Government – Transport](#)
  - Queensland: [Queensland Government – Transport and motoring](#)
  - Northern Territory: [Driving and transport NT](#)
  - Western Australia: [Department of Transport WA](#)
  - South Australia: [Vehicle registration SA](#)
  - Australian Capital Territory: [ACT driver licence information](#)

**Updating gender, title and email at Deakin**

Current Deakin students can update their personal details online.

Find more information in Part 2: Deakin support for transitioning students and staff.
PART 2: DEAKIN SUPPORT FOR TRANSITIONING STUDENTS AND STAFF

Deakin offers a great deal of support to help you through what might be a challenging time for you. You can complete a Gender Transition Plan which will help identify the actions that have to be taken to successfully transition at Deakin. Deakin staff will discuss your plan with you and help implement it.

TRANSITIONING STUDENTS – DEAKIN SUPPORT

You can make contact with Student Central for advice and assistance with your gender transition and they will assist you in completing a Student Gender Transition Plan whether you study on a physical campus or through our Cloud Campus. You will be designated a single point of contact to work with to implement your plan. The Student Adviser trained in Gender Transition Support may assist either in person or online. You can contact inclusion@deakin.edu.au with any queries.

Academic extension and adjustments

Academic extension

If you wish to seek an extension for an assignment, you will need to apply by email directly to your Unit Chair, as soon as you become aware that you will have difficulty in meeting the scheduled deadline, and at least three days before the due date.

Academic extensions are for no more than two weeks; extensions beyond two weeks will require special consideration.

Special consideration

Special consideration is used when two weeks’ academic extension is not enough to meet academic requirements. If granted, special consideration will give you the opportunity to either undertake an assessment task at another time or take additional time to complete the assessment task.

To apply you will need to upload supporting documentation as follows:

- If you are going through a social transition and are receiving support from a LGBTIQ+ organisation or counselling, ask them for a written statement confirming this support. You may be able to apply based on medical grounds or based on hardship or trauma related to your social transition.
- If you are receiving hormone treatment, ask your doctor for a medical certificate, so you can apply on medical grounds related to your transition, or based on hardship or trauma related to the impact of your transition on your study performance.
- If you are going through a medical transition that includes surgery, ask your doctor for a medical certificate and apply on medical grounds related to your surgery.

Longer term adjustments

If you are experiencing mental health problems or medical problems due to your gender transition, whether it is social, medical or legal, and require a long-term adjustment for your studies, the Disability Resource Centre (DRC) can provide support.

The DRC focuses on providing services for students with health and mental health conditions that affect their study or participation in University life.
Types of support available for students:

- Assistance communicating your needs to academic staff. For instance, notifying others about your gender transition and change of pronouns.
- Alternative assessment arrangements: adjustments for class-based assessment tasks – such as assignments, group work, oral presentations, in-class or online tests – can be negotiated with academic staff. These adjustments can be identified for you in a Learning Access Plan, and can include: extensions for assignments; additional time to complete lab tasks or practical assessments; or consideration of an alternative form of assessment (e.g. written work instead of class presentation, oral presentation instead of written).
- Longer library loan periods and off-campus library services.

You can request support from the DRC online and will require supporting documentation.

Taking a break from study

Intermission is an approved break from study up to 12 months during your course. You can apply to intermit your course via StudentConnect.

Leave of Absence is available for international students for up to 10 days. It can support students travelling overseas for family emergencies or essential surgery. Supporting documents are required with applications for Leave of Absence.

Updating gender, name and title details

You can update your gender, preferred name or legal name either online or by email, attaching the required documents. This will affect how your name and gender appear on DeakinSync, StudentConnect, CloudDeakin and other Deakin documentation.

Find out more on the Change your personal details page.

If you wish to amend your title, email submit-docs@deakin.edu.au outlining the title you wish to have recorded. Available titles include Miss, Mx (gender-neutral title and may be used by any person), Mr, Mrs and Ms.

Updating email/username

Currently an email address and/or username can only be changed under certain circumstances, including legal name change, disability reasons or to avoid obscenity/profanity/explicit words.

Students can request a change to their email address and/or username by contacting the IT service Desk or calling 1800 463 888.

New ID card

If you have changed your legal name and require a new Student ID card, contact Student Central or email the Student Advisers at inclusion@deakin.edu.au

Financial support for Hormone Treatment Support (HTS)

Financial assistance for this treatment will only be available where demonstrated financial hardship exists. Students seeking financial support should apply using the financial assistance application form.
TRANSITIONING STAFF – DEAKIN SUPPORT

Human Resources and Diversity and Inclusion will work in collaboration to support your gender transition. Complete a Staff Gender Transition Plan and contact the Diversity and Inclusion Project Adviser to discuss this, by email: ramon.martinezmendoza@deakin.edu.au or by telephone: (03) 5227 8670. The transition plan allows a better understanding of the support you require in terms of:

- legal name change
- preferred name
- updating your title
- updating your email
- updating your gender
- advising your manager/supervisor and colleagues
- providing Transgender Awareness Training for your work area to foster a more inclusive work environment
- changes to hours of work
- returning to work considerations
- flexible working arrangements
- special considerations
- University counselling and support services
- gender transition paid leave.

DEAKIN SERVICES, GROUPS AND RESOURCES

Deakin Medical Centres

- Referral to Deakin support services or other specialist services, both public and private.
- Assistance with administration of medication i.e. testosterone injections.
- Assistance with coordination of services and information as required.
- Medical centre staff have received LGBTIQ+ Awareness training.

Counselling

- Students can access psychological support and counselling by registered psychologists and social workers who have received LGBTIQ+ Awareness training. You may also be referred to other Deakin support services or external specialist or longer term support services as required.
- Staff can access Deakin’s Employee Assistance Program. Please ensure you select a counsellor with a rainbow flag by their name. They have received LGBTIQ+ Awareness training.

Harassment and Discrimination Contact Officers

- Staff who are trained to assist staff and students with enquiries about discrimination, sexual harassment or bullying.

Deakin LGBTIQ+ Community

- You can join the Community by emailing lgbtiq@deakin.edu.au. There is also an LGBTIQ+ Working Group and a number of Project groups which you can be part of. Email lgbtiq@deakin.edu.au to find out more.

Gender and Sexuality Studies Research Network
Student groups

- Deakin Geelong Queer Collective
- Deakin Pride Queer Society (Facebook)
- Deakin University Student Association (DUSA)
- DUSA Queer Officer, Vanessa Agar: dusa-queer-officer-2018@deakin.edu.au

Support and advice for students and staff

Email Diversity and Inclusion: lgbtq@deakin.edu.au

EXTERNAL SERVICES, GROUPS AND RESOURCES

Services

- QLife: telephone counselling, information and referral line and online chat available 3pm to midnight, seven days per week, Free Call 1800 184 527
- Transgender Victoria TGV consults with the trans and gender diverse (TGD) community to understand the issues that matter and impact their lives.
- Trans101 YouTube channel
- Minus18 Australia's largest youth led organisation for gay, lesbian, bisexual and trans youth.
- Gay and Lesbian Health Victoria (GLHV) A lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) health and wellbeing policy and resource unit.
- Equinox Gender Diverse Health Centre Trans and gender diverse friendly GPs (bulk billing clinic) located in Fitzroy, VIC
- Clothes swapping services: The Shed, Seahorse Victoria Inc and Minus 18 organise clothes swapping during the year.

Voice therapy

- The Latrobe Communication Clinic is a great option for trans people; however there is a long wait (about eight months).
- Another option is to contact the Monash Gender Dysphoria Clinic and ask them to write a referral for the La Trobe Communication Clinic.

Legal advice

- For issues related to name changes, employment issues and discrimination law, the LGBTIQ Legal Service (a service of St Kilda Legal Service) can help you.
- If you are an international student undergoing a gender transition in Australia and you are in great danger if you go back to your country as a result of your gender transition, you might be eligible for a Protection Visa Sub Class 866.
- For free legal services make an appointment at Refugee Legal, or the AsylumSeeker Resource Centre.
- Check out the country list provided by the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex Association and read the State Sponsored Homophobia report to check the status of law in your country.

ALL GENDER TOILETS ON DEAKIN CAMPUSES

Deakin University provides all gender toilets and change rooms on all campuses and recognises that staff and students have the right to use toilets and other facilities, and wear the dress or uniform appropriate to their affirmed gender.
Each campus has facilities to support gender diverse staff and students at the following locations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Melbourne Burwood Campus</th>
<th>Geelong Waurn Ponds Campus</th>
<th>Geelong Waterfront Campus</th>
<th>Warrnambool Campus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F1.08.02</td>
<td>JC2.312.1</td>
<td>D1.216</td>
<td>E1.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F1.09.03</td>
<td>KC2.222</td>
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<td>E1.65</td>
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<tr>
<td>S1.24</td>
<td>KC2.223</td>
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<td>H1.19.03</td>
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<td>LA4.104</td>
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<td>LB2.215</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
PART 3: OPERATIONAL GUIDE TO SUPPORTING STAFF OR STUDENTS IN THEIR GENDER TRANSITION AT DEAKIN

Deakin sees the diversity of its staff and students as a great strength and a much valued asset for our learning community. We support diversity in the higher education sector and we recognise the rights of our lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex students and employees to learn, live and work, free of prejudice and discrimination, with all the essential freedoms enjoyed by other members of our University community and the broader population.

Professor Jane den Hollander
Vice-Chancellor

WHAT IS GENDER?

People tend to use the terms ‘sex’ and ‘gender’ interchangeably. A newborn’s sex is assigned either male or female, based on their genitals, and once a sex is assigned, we presume the child’s gender. Someone born with a penis will be a boy and someone with a vulva will be a girl. This classification of a person into two sets of gender roles and gender identities based on the shape of genitalia is defined as gender binary. Gender binary fails to capture the biological aspect of gender and excludes naturally occurring intersex conditions that demonstrate that sex exists across a continuum of possibilities.12

Documented sex/gender differences in the brain are often taken as support of a sexually binary view of the human brain (female brain and male brain). However, such a distinction would be possible only if sex/gender differences in brain features were highly binary (i.e., little overlap between the forms of these features in males and females) and internally consistent (i.e. a brain has only male or female features). However, in the recent research ‘Sex beyond genitalia: the human brain mosaic’13 a group of scientists from renowned universities around the world published research that demonstrates that regardless of the cause observed between sex/gender differences in brain and behaviour (nature or nurture), human brains cannot be categorised into two distinct classes of male brain or female brain. Rather, most brains are comprised of a unique mosaic of features, some more common in females compared with males, some more common in males compared with females, and some common in females and males. This study demonstrates that, although there are sex/gender differences in the brain, human brains do not belong to one of two distinct categories: male or female brains.

The ‘Sex beyond genitalia: the human brain mosaic’ study has implications for the classic definition of gender binary and develops the understanding that the relationship between a person’s gender and their body goes beyond one’s reproductive functions.

The diagram of Sex and Gender, below, takes the gender binary classification and re-adapts it into four levels of identities, where reproductive functions only relate to one part of an individual’s identity. In the diagram, Sex refers to the chromosomal, gonadal and anatomical characteristics associated with biological sex. The diagram adds three more dimensions:

1. Psychological sense of self or Gender identity, which refers to the way a person feels, presents and is recognised within the community, is the social identity.
2. Gender expression, which is linked to outward social markers, including a person’s name, outward appearance, mannerisms and dress.14
3. Sexual orientation, which relates to a person’s emotional sexual orientation towards: persons of the same sex; persons of a different sex; persons of the same sex and persons of a different sex; or persons of neither sex.

‘The four scales are independent and go beyond our cultural expectation. For instance, a person with male anatomy could be attracted to men (gay man) or could have a gender identity of a woman (transgender), or could have a feminine gender expression on occasion. A person with female anatomy could identify as a woman, have somewhat masculine gender expression and be attracted to women: ‘It is a mix-and-match world, and there are as many combinations as there are people who think about their gender’.

**Diagram 1: Sex and Gender**

The diagram also addresses terminology like:

**Intersex**
Intersex is an umbrella term and not one single category. It relates to 30 or 40 different variations relating to physical, hormonal or genetic features that are neither wholly female nor wholly male, or a combination of female or male.

**Non-binary gender**
Refers to gender identities and expressions outside of the strictly ‘male’ or ‘female’ groups (can range through identities such as ‘agender’, ‘bigender’, ‘genderqueer’).

**Androgynous**
Partly male and female in appearance. This word has been substituted today for non-binary expression.

**Bisexual**
A person who is sexually and emotionally attracted to persons of the same, opposite or different sex.

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TRANSGENDER AND GENDER DIVERSE PRONOUNS

A pronoun is a word that a person uses to identify himself or herself. The most commonly used pronouns are she, her, hers and he, him, his. These are often referred to as female/feminine and male/masculine pronouns. For example, if a person’s pronouns are she, her, hers, and herself you would say: ‘She is speaking. I listened to her. The book is hers.’ If a person’s pronouns are he, him, his, and himself, you would say: ‘He is speaking. I listened to him. The book is his.’

Some people will prefer to use gender-neutral pronouns, or may request to have their first name used instead of a pronoun. If a person’s pronouns are they, them, theirs and themselves you would say: ‘They are speaking. I listened to them. The book is theirs.’ If a person’s pronouns are ze, hir, hirs and zirself you would say, ‘ze is speaking. I listened to hir. The book is hirs.’ Or ‘ze is speaking. I listened to zir. The book is zirs.’ Ze is pronounced like zee, and may be spelled zie or xe. Hir is pronounced like here.

These may seem grammatically challenging at first, but can be utilised effortlessly with commitment and practice.

Why do pronouns matter?

For many transgender and gender diverse people, the lack of congruity between their gender identity and their sex assigned at birth can create stress and anxiety, which can be magnified in the university setting. Providing an inclusive environment will not only enhance academic success and job satisfaction for transgender and gender diverse people, but will also ensure compliance with Deakin’s Diversity and Inclusion Policy and equal opportunity legislation requiring educational institutions to not discriminate on the basis of gender identity and/or gender expression.

You can’t always know what someone’s pronouns are by looking at them. Asking for and correctly using someone’s pronouns is one of the most basic ways to show your respect for their gender identity.

When someone is referred to with the wrong pronoun, it can make them feel disrespected, invalidated, dismissed, alienated, or dysphoric (often all of them). It is a privilege to not have to worry about which pronoun someone is going to use for you based on how they perceive your gender. If you have this privilege, yet fail to respect someone else’s gender identity, it is not only disrespectful and hurtful, but also oppressive. 17

We encourage and expect that you use a student or staff member’s chosen name and their pronouns. Not using a person’s correct name and pronouns can create a classroom/workplace environment that could be very difficult to thrive in.

How can I ask what pronoun they use?

Try asking: ‘What pronouns do you use?’ or ‘Can you remind me what pronouns you use?’ It can feel awkward at first, but it is not half as awkward as making a hurtful assumption.

TIPS FOR SUPPORTING A TRANSITIONING STAFF MEMBER OR STUDENT

Please consider these tips when supporting a transitioning staff member or student (provided by Charles Sturt University). 18

- Think of the person as being the gender that they want you to think of them as, and treat them accordingly.
- Use the name and pronoun that the person requests. If you are not sure, respectfully ask. If you make a mistake correct yourself, apologise and move on – don’t make a big deal about it.
- When writing about a transgender person, do not belittle their identity by putting their preferred name or pronoun in quotes or italics.

• Treat the person with the same level of respect and dignity you would accord any other staff member or student and that you would expect for yourself.
• Respect boundaries. Do not ask intrusive or intimate personal questions that you wouldn’t ask another person or wouldn’t want others to ask of you (for example, about their body, relationships, sex life or any medical intervention). If you feel it is appropriate to ask a personal question, check first if it is okay to do so.
• Do not assume that the person should automatically be willing to discuss transgender related issues with you, or expect them to be an authority on such topics – do your own research if you want to know more.
• Respect privacy. Do not tell others about a person’s trans status. Generally when a person transitions they describe themselves in terms of their preferred gender (e.g. as a man or as a woman), not as a transgender person. Some people may prefer other gender descriptions.
• Understand that the person is entitled to use the facilities appropriate to their preferred gender (such as bathrooms and change rooms), both during and after transition.
• Do not condone or participate in gossip, jokes, flippant remarks or sexual innuendos about the person or their trans status – be active in confronting or naming comments or behaviours that are transphobic. The University expects staff and students to treat each other with dignity and respect and will not tolerate discrimination based on gender identity.
• Do not make assumptions about the person’s sexual orientation or personal relationships. Gender transitioning is about a person’s core sense of their gender, not their sexual identity. The sexuality of transgender people can cover the full human spectrum – they may identify as heterosexual, gay, lesbian or bisexual, pansexual, asexual, fluid or they may use another term or choose not to label their sexuality.
• When a person has transitioned, appreciate that, while their gender may be different, their basic character and personality hasn’t changed – in most other respects they are still the same person as before.

PROCEDURE TO SUPPORT TRANSITIONING STAFF

• The Diversity and Inclusion Project Adviser discusses with the staff member their Staff Gender Transition Plan to outline the staff member’s needs in accordance with University policies. This might include: legal name change, preferred name, updating title, email update, advising their manager and colleagues, changes to hours of work, returning to work considerations, flexible working arrangements, special considerations, University counselling, support services and gender transition paid leave.
• Once the Transition Plan has been discussed, the Diversity and Inclusion Project Adviser will contact the HR Client Partner for the staff member to discuss processes to put into place to implement the Gender Transition Plan.
• The HR Client Partner will work at the organisational level, taking into consideration the procedures and policies to bring clarity on the steps to follow.
• The HR Client Partner and the Diversity and Inclusion Project Adviser will work on a case-by-case basis.
• Arrangements will be made to provide Gender Transition Awareness training to the staff member’s work area to ensure a more inclusive work environment during the staff member’s transition.
• The Gender Transition Procedure provides information and sets out University processes for supporting staff and students undertaking a gender transition.

PROCEDURE TO SUPPORT TRANSITIONING STUDENTS

Gender Transition Plan

There are many factors to consider when a student is transitioning in a study environment. As well as the need for emotional support, there are systems considerations, such as changing an email account name or the gender on student systems. A Student Gender Transition Plan can assist the conversation between a student and Student Adviser to identify the aspects a student would like assistance or advice. The plan sets out the actions agreed upon by both the student and their Student Adviser related to their study at Deakin.
The **Gender Transition Procedure** provides information and sets out University processes for supporting staff and students undertaking a gender transition.

**Important:** The Gender Transition Plan is designed to cover all areas of support and consideration for a transitioning student so all questions within the plan should be covered in the initial meeting. The student will not ask for a Gender Transition Plan, it is the responsibility of the Student Adviser to ask further questions of the student to make them aware of what Deakin offers to support transgender students. Some aspects may need to be case managed to avoid the student going from one Student Adviser to another repeating their personal story.

**LGBTIQ+ Awareness and Ally training**

Deakin offers LGBTIQ+ Awareness training for staff. There are two types of training:

1. Scheduled training – accessed through DeakinPeople (search Ally)
2. Tailored training for your work area. Contact the Diversity and Inclusion Project Adviser at lgbtiq@deakin.edu.au and request a separate session tailored to your area’s needs.

Deakin also offers training sessions specifically about becoming an LGBTIQ+ Ally. You will learn what it means to be an Ally at Deakin, increase your knowledge, understanding and awareness of issues affecting members of the LGBTIQ+ community and become an active supporter of our LGBTIQ+ community.

For more information about this training email: lgbtiq@deakin.edu.au or visit [LGBTIQ+ Training](#).

**Academic considerations**

**Academic extension**

Advise students who wish to seek an extension for an assignment that they will need to apply by email directly to their Unit Chair as soon as they are aware that they may have difficulty in meeting the scheduled deadline, and at least three days before the due date.

An academic extension is for two weeks only; beyond this, advise them that they will require special consideration.

**Special consideration**

Advise the student that, if granted, special consideration will give them an opportunity either:

- to undertake an assessment task at another time or
- to take additional time to complete the assessment task

**Special consideration** is used when a two week academic extension is not enough to meet academic requirements. Students need to upload supporting documentation with their application.

Students need to be aware that they are able to apply for Special Consideration only on defined grounds:

- Students going through a social transition who are receiving support from a LGBTIQ+ organisation or counselling may ask them for a written statement confirming this support. They may be able to apply based on: medical grounds or based on hardship or trauma related to their social transition.
- If they are receiving hormone treatment, they should ask their doctor for a medical certificate, so they can apply on medical grounds related to their transition, or based on hardship or trauma related to the impact of their transition on their study performance.
- If students are going through a medical transition that includes surgery, they should ask their doctor for a medical certificate and apply on medical grounds related to this surgery.

**Longer term adjustments**

- The longer-term adjustments are mentioned in the Gender Transition Plan and are managed by the [Disability Resource Centre (DRC)](#).
- The Student Adviser trained in gender transition can support the student to fill in the online [DRC request form](#) or encourage the student to do it in their own privacy.
• The term DRC might alienate some trans students. It is important to emphasise to the student that the DRC works to support all students with health and mental health conditions, temporary or ongoing, or who are undergoing medical treatment, and focuses on providing services to support students in their study and participation in University life. The DRC is about accessibility.

• DRC staff must be notified of this request drcentre@deakin.edu.au

• Remember to follow up with DRC staff and the student to complete the final long term adjustments.

Please remember to ask the student if they require assistance to:

• inform their student coordinator (primary support person) of their decision to gender transition

• meet with their student coordinator to discuss their gender transition needs and the impact of their gender transition on their studies

• contact professional and support services for additional guidance and support.

Taking a break from study

Make sure students are aware that they can apply for a break in their study.

Intermission is an approved break from study for up to 12 months.

International students may apply for Leave of Absence for up to 10 days for travelling overseas for family emergencies or essential surgery. Supporting documents are required with applications for Leave of Absence.

Updating gender, name and title details

Updating gender details

Current Deakin students: advise that they can update their gender by completing the online change of gender form.

Past Deakin students wishing to update their gender details with Deakin: advise that they can email submit-docs@deakin.edu.au with information on the gender previously recorded, and how they now identify.

No supporting documentation is required for past or present students seeking to update their gender.

Variation to gender as recorded by the University will be confirmed by email within five working days of request for change.

Note that updating gender information will not automatically update any other University system information. The University uses gender information as part of its statistical collection and analysis processes, required by government legislation. It is essential that any changes to personal details are communicated to relevant government agencies.

Change of name

Advise students that they can email their legal name change request to submit-docs@deakin.edu.au attaching the required documentation. They will receive an email confirming the change within five working days.

Make them aware that their new name will appear in the Student Management System (SMS) and on future academic documents. However, the prior name will be maintained in the database and in other records such as previous existing electronic and paper records.

Also advise students that they can visit Student Central with the relevant original and/or certified documentation. Student Central staff will assist by scanning documents and forwarding to: submit-docs@deakin.edu.au
After updating their legal name, a student may request a new ID card by:

- taking their current Deakin Card to Student Central and requesting a new Deakin Card OR
- emailing their request to inclusion@deakin.edu.au

The updated Deakin Card will be provided at no cost.

Student name details are stored in the Student Management System and other systems that link to the Student Management System.

Please follow up with the student to ensure that the legal name is displayed in the Student Management System once the legal name has changed.

**Preferred name option**

Students should be made aware that they can change their preferred name at any time in StudentConnect. If their name does not appear as they would like in DeakinSync, StudentConnect and CloudDeakin, this can be addressed by changing their preferred name.

**Updating title details**

Advise students seeking to amend their title that they are required to email submit-docs@deakin.edu.au outlining the title they wish to have recorded. Available titles include: Miss, Mx (gender-neutral title and may be used by any person), Mr, Mrs and Ms.

Generally no supporting documentation is required, unless the title applies to an academic or professional qualification such as Doctor, in which case evidence of the qualification should be provided with the request.

**Updating email/username**

Currently an email address and/or username can only be changed under certain circumstances, including a legal name change, disability reasons or to avoid obscenity/profanity/explicit words.

If there are other reasons why a student would want to update their email address and/or username, these will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Students can request a change to their email address and/or username by contacting the IT Service Desk on telephone 1800 463 888 or email deakin@service-now.com

**New ID card**

If a student has changed their legal name and require a new Student ID card, contact Student Central or email the Student Advisers at inclusion@deakin.edu.au
Student services

Counselling
Deakin Counselling and Psychological Support (CAPS) service provides inclusive, respectful and supportive counselling for all Deakin students. To make an appointment with one of the psychologists or social workers who provide the counselling, call Student Life Health and Wellbeing services on your local campus. Counselling is offered face to face or by phone, with up to six sessions per calendar year. During busy times, there may be a two week wait for a first appointment. Those students who are assessed to require a same day appointment will be provided one.

Referrals to other services (online and face to face) will be made if the student would benefit from longer term counselling.

Students can request to have their preferred name recorded in the CAPS database by informing their counsellor. Students can also ask a question via the Deakin ‘Ask Counselling’ blog and a response from one of the CAPS counsellors will be posted within 72 work hours. If the question posed contains private or sensitive information, such information will be removed to ensure anonymity before posting the response. Please note this is not to be used for emergencies.

As the CAPS service is not a specialist service, CAPS counsellors will refer students to specialist support services when required.

LGBTIQ+ network
Connect the student with the Deakin LGBTIQ+ Community and ask them if they want to join the LGBTIQ+ Network by sending an email to lgbtiq@deakin.edu.au

Advice
Are you unsure what to do? Send us an email at lgbtiq@deakin.edu.au

Medical centres
Deakin medical centres can support students who are transitioning. It is important to establish expectations of what can be provided on campus. The service aims to be inclusive and respectful but is not a specialist service. They will provide medical care, information and resources, and referrals to external specialist services as appropriate.

They provide an option on registration forms as to preferred gender.

Customer Service staff have received LGBTIQ+ Awareness training.

There is an option to send an email to askanurse@deakin.edu.au to make first contact with the centre if a person prefers.

GPs can access the Health Pathways program and specialised services listed in contacts in Clinical Management software to refer students to external specialists in LGBTIQ health

Julie Stevens (Burwood Campus) and Katrina Molloy (Geelong Waurn Ponds Campus) have undertaken HOW2 training with GLHV. Students can be referred to them directly for assistance or via GPs.

Refer students to online resources and resources are available in waiting room areas for information.

Hormone Treatment Support (HTS)
Financial assistance for this treatment will only be available where demonstrated financial hardship exists. Students seeking financial support should apply using the financial assistance application form and submit to finasst@deakin.edu.au
Off-campus services

Swapping clothes
If a student is going through a social transition, they might require new clothes that fit their gender expression. This can be expensive or the student might not have the means to access to this. Students can contact the following organisations for swapping clothes events: The Shed, Seahorse Victoria Inc and Minus 18

Voice therapy
Deakin University does not provide voice therapy at the moment.
For students who seek voice feminisation or masculinisation, or for those with concerns about the quality of their voices, advise them to contact the Monash Gender Dysphoria Clinic to receive a referral from them for the La Trobe Communication Clinic.
If they would prefer to self-refer, ask them to contact the clinic on 9479 1921 or refer them to Speech Pathology Australia.

Legal advice

Discrimination and Sexual Harassment Legal Advice
For issues related to name changes, and discrimination law, the LGBTIQ Legal Service (a service of St Kilda Legal Service) can provide free services.

International Students – Gender Transition in Australia

- In some countries any same-sex act or being transgender can be illegal or punishable by death. Some international students who have undergone a gender transition in Australia may therefore be at risk upon returning home. Countries which have the death penalty are: Sudan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Mauritania, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Qatar, UAE, parts of Nigeria, parts of Somalia, parts of Syria and parts of Iraq. There are also 71 countries where same-sex acts are illegal. For an extensive list of these go to the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex Association and read the yearly report about State Sponsored Homophobia
- If an International student is at risk, they may be eligible for the Protection Visa Sub Class 866 and should be referred to a free legal service, such as Refugee Legal, or the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Deakin University gives special recognition and acknowledgement to the Trans Medical Research Group, The University of Melbourne [www.transmedicalresearch.org] who granted permission to reproduce significant portions of their important work in this guide.

Endnotes

The following resources are cited above:


Center for Gender Sanity http://www.gendersanity.com/coming_out_letters.html

Gender Spectrum Organisation https://www.genderspectrum.org/quick-links/understanding-gender/

Giltay EJ, Gooren LJ. Effects of sex steroid deprivation/administration on hair growth and skin sebum production in transsexual males and females. J Clin Endocrinol Metab 2000;85:2913-21. 10.1210/jcem.85.8.6710


National Centre for Biotechnology information https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5182227/


Queer Humboldt Organisation http://www.queerhumboldt.org/event/humboldt-area-trans-support-h-a-t-s/2018-08-25/

RMIT University http://www1.rmit.edu.au/browse/About%20RMIT%2F;ID=mro6j4e3wdyc.docx;STATUS=A


Transgender Victoria

Trans Medical Research at the University of Melbourne http://tc.org.au/

Trans Students Organisation http://www.transstudent.org/graphics


University of Wisconsin, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Resource Centre https://uwm.edu/lgbtrc/support/gender-pronouns/
