

# Guidance and Support for LGBT+ Students and Staff

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## **Guidance and Support for LGBT+ Students and Staff**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This guidance is part of a series which outlines support for students and staff at the University of Strathclyde, with a particular focus on promoting equality of opportunity, diversity and preventing discrimination irrespective of: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, care experience or socio- economic background. These guidance documents underpin and should be read in conjunction with the University's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.
- 1.2. As a socially progressive, people-oriented organisation, the University values the diversity of our student and staff populations and seeks to create a culture where everyone is welcome and thrives within our institution. We work to ensure that our students, staff and visitors, as well as those who apply to study or work at the University, are treated fairly regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. The University will take prompt action in response to any alleged discrimination, victimisation or harassment based on sexual orientation or gender identity.
- 1.3. This document aims to promote understanding and provide clarity on issues which may be of particular relevance to LGBT+ students and staff. It provides guidance for staff and line managers on support for students and staff and on ensuring an LGBT+ inclusive environment.

## 2. DEFINITIONS

- 2.1. Key definitions are outlined below to assist understanding and promote inclusion of LGBT+ students, staff and visitors. A fuller glossary of terms can also be found in section 7 of this guidance.
- 2.2. **'LGBT+':** an umbrella term encompassing a range of sexual and gender identities. In terms of sexual orientation, this includes but is not limited to: lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual, asexual and aromantic association. In terms of gender identity, this includes but is not limited to: transgender, non-binary, genderfluid and other gender non-conforming identities. This guidance also covers those who identify as intersex and/or who have intersex conditions.
- 2.3. **Sexual orientation:** sexual orientation refers to a person's sexual and/or romantic orientation/attraction towards persons of the same sex or gender, persons of the opposite sex or gender or persons of either sex or gender. This also encompasses asexuality, defined as a lack of sexual orientation to others.

## 2.4. Gender/gender identity/gender reassignment:

**Gender:** often expressed in terms of masculinity and femininity, gender is a social construct, largely culturally determined and is assumed from the sex assigned at birth. Gender is not and should not be assumed to be binary.

**Gender Identity:** a person's innate sense of their own gender, whether male, female or something else, 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 gender affirming medical intervention, but 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.

2.5. **Sex:** assigned to a person on the basis of primary sex characteristics (genitalia) and reproductive functions. Sometimes the terms 'sex' and 'gender' are interchanged to mean 'male' or 'female', despite having different meanings.

2.6. **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.

2.7. **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.

## 3. GENERAL GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

3.1. Any student who perceives that they may have been treated in an inappropriate manner on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity should normally speak to their Adviser of Studies/Personal Development Adviser or equivalent in the first instance. Members of staff should normally speak to their line manager. Alternatively, support and advice can be obtained via the channels listed in section 3.2 below.

3.2. Any student, staff member or visitor to the University who is subject to or witnesses inappropriate behaviour, verbal or physical harassment or other discriminatory acts based on sexual orientation or gender identity can report this via the channels below. This can include posters, stickers or graffiti which contain homophobic, biphobic or transphobic language. Further sources of support and advice for individuals who have experienced discriminatory behaviour related to sexual orientation or gender identity are listed in Sections 4 and 5 of this guidance.

- [Report and Support](#) online reporting facility
- University Security, Level 1, Livingstone Tower, Richmond Street, Glasgow  
Tel: 0141 548 3333 (open 24hrs)
- Student Support services, Level 1 Floor, McCance Building, Richmond Street, Glasgow: Tel: 0141 548 4273/2753 (open 10am to 4pm, Monday to Friday)

- Strath Union Advice Hub, 90 John Street, Glasgow: Tel: 0141 567 5040 (drop-in 10am to 4pm)
- [Dignity and Respect Advisers](#)

Information on support for staff who have experienced gender-based violence is also available within the [Gender-Based Violence Policy](#).

- 3.3. The sexual orientation, gender reassignment or trans status of an individual should not be disclosed by others without their express consent. Students and staff have the opportunity to anonymously disclose such information when they register to study or work at the University, to assist with equality monitoring. Provision of this data is entirely voluntary and no individual should be pressured to do so.

Data relating to a person's sexual orientation or sex life is considered to be 'special category' data under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and therefore has additional protection. More information on GDPR and special category data can be obtained from the University's [Information Governance Unit](#).

- 3.4. Staff and students are encouraged to adopt LGBT+ inclusive practices and language, to help to ensure all students, staff and visitors experience an inclusive campus environment, regardless of sexual orientation, gender expression or gender identity.

Examples of inclusive practice are listed below, with additional resources in Section 6 of this guidance.

- Avoid making assumptions about people's sexual orientation or gender identity. Assumptions can lead to an environment where students or staff are put in a position where they feel pressured to 'come out' at university or work at a time or in a situation not of their own choosing.
- Small changes can make language more inclusive. For example, in social invitations or conversations, using the word 'partner' rather than gendered terms (e.g. boy/girlfriend, wife/husband).
- Pronouns are words such as 'she', 'he' and 'they' which refer to a person. Sharing and respecting pronouns can help to promote inclusivity of non-binary identified individuals, transgender people or anyone who may not immediately be read as the gender they identify as. Staff or students may wish to share their own pronouns when introducing themselves in person or by email and ask colleagues or peers which pronouns they use, to avoid misunderstandings or embarrassment.

- 3.5. The University has gender neutral toilet facilities available on campus, for use by students and staff.

- 3.6. Students or staff undergoing gender reassignment or transition may choose to make changes to their name or gender on their student or staff record. Information on the processes for this is contained in sections 4.2 and 5.4.

**Documentation/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 the GRC, but may ask for other forms of official identification. It should be noted that there can be cost implications in changing identity documentation and that students and staff may not be able to achieve this immediately. The University will be flexible wherever possible and be clear about what information is required as well as any alternatives that can be offered. Where it is possible to change details such as name and gender on university documents and processes, the University is committed to doing so in as straightforward a way as it can.

#### 4. SUPPORT AND INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS

- 4.1. The following support services are available to offer support, information and advice to students or to staff supporting students:

- [Access, Equality and Inclusion Service](#)
- [Disability and Wellbeing Service](#)
- [International Student Support](#)
- [Financial Matters](#)
- [Accommodation](#)
- [Careers Service](#)
- [Strathclyde Students' Union Advice Hub](#)
- [Student LGBT+ Society](#)
- [Dignity and Respect Advisers](#)
- [Support for trans and non-binary students and staff](#)

- 4.2. **Changes to name/gender:** students can make changes to their name on their student record via Pegasus (personal tab). Updated student cards (name and/or photograph) to reflect changes can be obtained by emailing [studentbusiness-science@strath.ac.uk](mailto:studentbusiness-science@strath.ac.uk) (regardless if a Science Faculty student or not) – please ensure the name change has been actioned on Pegasus prior to emailing.

In order to make changes to gender on their student record, students should email [studentbusiness-science@strath.ac.uk](mailto:studentbusiness-science@strath.ac.uk) . If a student has applied for University accommodation they should liaise directly with them regarding the change in personal details.

Always remember to quote your University Registration Number in any communication.

4.3. **Absence:** students who require to take time off from their studies, including to access gender affirming healthcare, should follow the normal process for recording absence and notifying the University of personal circumstances outlined below:

- **Absences of seven days or less:** if a student has been absent from the University for seven days or less, they should record a self-certification online via PEGASUS using the Personal Circumstances link under the Services tab
- **Absences of more than seven days:** where sickness or healthcare requirements result in absence of more than seven days, students are required to submit a medical certificate (signed by a medical practitioner who is not a member of their family) to Student Business.
- **Prolonged absence:** if a student needs to interrupt their studies for part of a session, they should contact their Adviser of Studies/Personal Development Adviser or equivalent. In certain circumstances, they may be recommended to apply for voluntary suspension. Further information is available within the [Voluntary Suspension Guidelines](#).
- We encourage students who believe they may require extended absence due to gender affirming healthcare to discuss this with the University so that they can be offered appropriate support and advice. Please see 4.1 for support services.

4.4. **Study Abroad:** students who are considering or planning on studying abroad and have specific queries or concerns regarding the context for LGBT+ people and communities in-country can discuss this with their Adviser of Studies/Personal Development Adviser or equivalent, or the relevant [Study Abroad or Exchange team](#).

## 5. SUPPORT AND INFORMATION FOR STAFF

5.1. The following support services are available to offer support, information and advice to staff or line managers:

- [Human Resources](#)
- [Access, Equality and Inclusion Service](#)
- [Disability and Wellbeing Service](#)
- [Occupational Health](#)
- [Dignity and Respect Advisers](#)
- [LGBTQI+ Staff and PGR Student Network](#)

5.2. **Family Friendly Policies and Procedures:** the University has a range of benefits and policies which help staff to balance work and family commitments, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or marriage/civil partnership status. This includes maternity leave and pay provisions, paternity/maternity support, adoption leave and pay, shared parental leave, parental leave and support for carers. More information is available on the [dedicated University web pages](#).

5.3. **International travel on University business:** staff who are planning to travel abroad on University business and have specific queries or concerns regarding the context for LGBT+ people and communities in-country can discuss this with their line manager or Head of Department.

Advice and information on risk management for staff can be obtained from Safety, Health and Wellbeing.

Guidance is also available from the UK Government: [LGBT foreign travel advice](#).

5.4. **Changes to name/gender:** Staff may make a request to HR to issue a new Staff ID and to change your 'Known As' status and this ensures that communications from the University to you are addressed by way of your preferred name.

It is not possible for legal reasons to make a formal change to your gender (which will change payslips, pensions and other correspondence) until such times as a Gender Recognition Certificate has been issued.

5.5. **Absence:** staff should follow guidelines as suggested in the [Sickness Absence Management Policy](#)

## 6. SUPPORTING STUDENTS OR STAFF UNDERGOING TRANSITION OR GENDER REASSIGNMENT

6.1. Students who intend to undergo or are undergoing transition or gender reassignment and would like to inform the University or seek support can speak to their Adviser of Studies/Personal Development Adviser or equivalent, or Head of Department. Support is also available from the services listed in section 4.1, including the [Support for trans and non-binary students and staff](#)

6.2. Staff can speak to their line manager and support is also available from the services listed in section 5.1. The University recognises that a person's transition is individual to them and will work with them to agree upon a tailored approach suited to their needs.

6.3. It is suggested that meetings take place between the student/staff member and Adviser of Studies/line manager (or equivalent) to cover the following aspects and agree an appropriate action plan to cover the period of transition.

- Mutual understanding of the transition process that the student/staff member intends to follow and the key elements and milestones in the chosen process
- How best to communicate during any period of absence, for example to access gender affirming healthcare
- Discussion on how, by whom and when best to inform colleagues/peers of the anticipated point of gender transition in terms of: personal presentation, changes to names and pronouns etc., and the related communication content and style to fellow students and/or relevant staff members



- Proposed date to resume studies and/ or return to work in the new gender
- Agreeing commencement point for using facilities appropriate to the new gender. The University supports people using facilities for the gender in which they present themselves
- No communication or actions should be taken without the explicit consent of the student/staff member. Action plans must be kept strictly confidential and should be destroyed after the period of transition is complete

## 7. FURTHER RESOURCES AND TRAINING

7.1. **Equality Impact Assessments:** the University, in common with all public authorities in Scotland, has a legal requirement to ensure that its policies and practices do not disadvantage or discriminate against people and to consider how it can use policy and procedure to advance equality. This is a key element of our vision to be a socially progressive university that makes a positive difference to the lives of its students and staff, to society and to the world.

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is a systematic and evidence-based process which helps the University to make sure that our policies and practices are the most effective that they can be for our students, staff and the wider communities they affect.

EIAs can support equality of opportunity and inclusion for LGBT+ students and staff by ensuring that new or revised policies and procedures consider potential negative or positive impacts upon LGBT+ people.

The University's EIA Tool provides a step by step process and guidance on carrying out Equality Impact Assessments. Staff can access this via the EIA SharePoint site.

7.2. **Staff and student training:** the University has a range of online training courses to help promote student and staff awareness and understanding of specific equality, diversity and inclusion issues. These can be accessed via the links on the Equality and Diversity Courses

Specific courses are compulsory for all staff to complete and are included in new staff induction checklists.

7.3. **External organisations:** the external organisations below offer a range of support and advice for LGBT+ people and information on supporting LGBT+ inclusion:

- Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)
- Advance HE: resources on equality, diversity and inclusion in higher education
- Stonewall: LGBT rights charity
- LGBT Youth Scotland: Scotland's national charity for LGBTI young people
- Equality Network: working for LGBTI equality and human rights in Scotland

- Scottish Trans Alliance: working to improve gender identity and gender reassignment equality, rights and inclusion in Scotland

#### 7.4. Glossary of terms<sup>1</sup>

The list below is not exhaustive. Consideration should be given to the fact that many LGBT+ terms relate to personal identities and therefore may be used by different people to mean different things.

**ACE:** an umbrella term used to describe a variation in levels of romantic and/or sexual attraction, including a lack of attraction. Ace people may describe themselves using one or more of a wide variety of terms, including, but not limited to, asexual, aromantic, demis and grey-As.

**BI:** an umbrella term used to describe a romantic and/or sexual orientation towards more than one gender. Bi people may describe themselves using one or more of a wide variety of terms, including, but not limited to, bisexual, pan, queer, and some other non-monosexual and non-monoromantic identities,

**GAY:** refers to a man who has a romantic and/or sexual orientation towards men. Also a generic term for lesbian and gay sexuality - some women define themselves as gay rather than lesbian. Some non-binary people may also identify with this term.

**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 conform to societal expectations of gender may not, however, identify as trans.

**HETEROSEXUAL/STRAIGHT:** refers to a man who has a romantic and/or sexual orientation towards women or to a woman who has a romantic and/or sexual orientation towards men.

**LESBIAN:** refers to a woman who has a romantic and/or sexual orientation towards women. Some non-binary people may also identify with this term.

**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.

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/help-advice/glossary-terms>

**PAN:** refers to a person whose romantic and/or sexual attraction towards others is not limited by sex or gender.

**QUEER:** queer is a term used by those wanting to reject specific labels of romantic orientation, sexual orientation and/or gender identity. It can also be a way of rejecting the perceived norms of the LGBT community (racism, sizeism, ableism etc). Although some LGBT people view the word as a slur, it was reclaimed in the late 80s by the queer community who have embraced it.

**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.