

Guidance on the use of Pronouns for Staff and Students and Glossary of Terms in relation to Equality and Gender Identity

The University of Bolton has produced this guidance to raise awareness and to support staff and students on the use of Pronouns and terminology in relation to equality and gender. All members of the University community are encouraged to familiarise themselves with this guidance in order to foster an inclusive environment for all. Using pronouns is entirely optional and should only be done if you feel comfortable doing so, however respecting others when they use pronouns should be adhered to.

Pronouns: “words we use to refer to people’s gender in conversation - for example, ‘he’ or ‘she’. Some people may prefer others to refer to them in gender neutral language and use pronouns such as they/their and ze/zir.” People may change the pronouns.

We encourage staff and students who are comfortable to do so to introduce themselves with their pronouns, for example, in meetings, lectures and by including them on email signatures. This helps not only to create a more inclusive environment but avoids making assumptions about someone's gender identity based on their appearance, name, their gender expression/or presentation, or other characteristics.

Options where to use Pronouns

- Email signature: Add your pronouns to your email signature by putting your name (he/him), (she/her) or (they/them) or “My pronouns are...”. This helps everyone to refer to each other in a respectful way.
- Zoom and Microsoft Teams: Add your pronouns to the end of your name.
- Social media: Add your pronouns to your bio or your screen name on the social media platform(s) you are using.
- Policies and letters: There is no reason to use gendered pronouns in any policies or letters you are writing (unless writing to a specific person and they have already told you their pronouns). Check through your work and replace 'he/she' with they and if addressing letters or emails, use a gender-neutral address such as “To whom it may concern” or “Dear Student/Colleague”.

Pronouns:

- **He/him/his:** These pronouns can refer to people who identify as boys or men but are not limited to male people. While he can be an affirming pronoun for some people, we can't assume that all people who appear to be masculine or affirm a male identity and use he/him/his pronouns.
- **She/her/hers:** Like the he/him/his set, she/her/hers refer to people who identify as girls or women but are not limited to female people. Likewise, we can't assume that all people we assume who appear to be feminine use or affirm female identity and use she/her/hers pronouns.
- **They/them/their:** In addition to its use as a plural pronoun, they/them/their has a rich history of use as a gender neutral singular pronoun in the English language. They is often used in reference to a singular person whose gender pronouns are unknown, such as in the sentences “Someone left their umbrella here. How can we find out who they are?” or “I’m not sure what their pronouns are. I should ask them next time.” It’s also very important to respect that some

people specifically use they/them/their pronouns instead of he or she to represent their identity outside of the gender binary.

- **Ze/hir/hirs, ze/zir/zirs:** The ze/hir, ze/zir pronoun sets come from the trans community as another gender-neutral pronoun set. It's up to each individual to decide which pronoun best fits them and their identities. Ze is typically pronounced like the letter Z. Hir is typically pronounced like the word "here." Zir is typically pronounced like "here" with a z in front.

Just use my name: Like identities, pronouns can be complex and fluid. Some people don't use pronouns, some people use different pronouns in different settings, and sometimes we forget to ask for pronouns or aren't comfortable doing so. It's appropriate to use the name a person shares with you.

How do I ask for a person's pronouns?

Just ask, rather than assume someone's pronouns, ask them how they like to be addressed. Like a name, we can't know how to best respect a person in conversation without introductions. Introduce yourself with your own pronouns to open the door for others to feel comfortable sharing their name and pronouns with you too.

Also know that it's okay if a person does not want to share their pronouns with you. Make sure that you don't force someone to share their pronouns. If you are unsure of someone's pronouns and they haven't shared them with you to be certain just use their name or they/them.

Lectures / Conferences

When addressing a lecture or conference, when welcoming guests please use the term "Distinguished Guests" rather than "Ladies or Gentlemen" or informally do not use the term "Guys" you could try to use "Folks".

What if I make a mistake?

Navigating new ways in which to address people can be difficult. If you make a mistake, apologise as soon as you recognise your error, politely correct it and move forward. Continuing to mis-gender someone, however, can be harmful. Here are few steps to keep in mind:

- Realise your impact. You may hurt someone by mis-gendering or possibly outing them in a public setting;
- Apologise, remember not to out someone in public apology. Sometimes a quick apology is most appropriate;
- Follow up in private if necessary. Remember it's not about making yourself feel better but identifying ways to support a person who you may have unintentionally disrespected and hurt. Ask them if they need anything from you and share your plans to getting their pronouns right.

Glossary

Terminology changes and its use can be highly individualised. It is important to be mindful of trends in language as people may associate some terms to be inappropriate, even if used by a particular community.

This glossary refers to terms published by Stonewall - <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/help-advice/faqs-and-glossary/list-lgbtq-terms> and the Proud Trust - <https://www.theproudtrust.org/>

LGBTQ+

L – Lesbian are women who are attracted to women

G – Gay men are attracted to men, Gay can also be used to describe lesbians

B – B stands for Bi, Bi people are attracted to more than one gender

T – T stands for Trans, Trans means that the gender you were given at birth doesn't match the gender you feel yourself to be

Q – Q stands for Queer and sometimes Questioning – **Queer** is used to identify someone who doesn't identify as being straight, it's historical use as a derogatory term, it is not embraced by all LGBTQ+ people. However, many younger people are now using this term as they feel it does away with a single letter being added to an acronym. **Questioning**, a person who is exploring or questioning their gender identity or expression. Some may later identify as Transgender or gender non-conforming, while others may not. Can also refer to someone who is questioning or exploring their sexual orientation.

+ - This is used by people who don't feel the LGBTQ does not accurately capture or reflect their identity.

You may see LGBTQI, LGBTQI+, LGBTQIA or even LGBTQIA+

I – adds intersex to the definition (see below)

A – adds asexual or aromantic or agender (see below)

Acquired gender

A legal term used in the Gender Recognition Act 2004. It refers to the gender that a person who is applying for a gender recognition certificate (GRC) has lived for two years and intends to continue living in. Affirmed gender may be used when a person has Transitioned but has decided not to apply for a GRC.

Affirming

The unequivocal support for an individual person's gender identity or expression, regardless of the biological sex they were assigned at birth; the systematic support to ensure that Transgender people and communities are fully represented, included, valued and honoured.

Affirming Pronouns

Refers to the most respectful and accurate pronouns for a person, as defined by that person. This is also sometimes referred to as “preferred gender pronouns,” although this phrasing is increasingly outdated. To ascertain someone’s affirming pronouns, ask: “What are your pronouns?”

Agender

A person who does not identify as having a gender identity that can be categorized as male or female, and sometimes indicates identifying as not having a gender identity.

Allies of Trans People

Usually a cis(cisgender) or non-Trans person who supports members of the Trans communities.

Asexual and Aromantic

Asexual is a sexual orientation, but instead of describing the gender the person is attracted to it describes the lack of attraction.

Aromantic may experience sexual attraction but they experience little to no romantic attraction to other people.

Biological Sex

A person’s combination of genitals, chromosomes and hormones, usually categorized as “male” or “female” based on visual inspection of genitals via ultrasound or at birth. Many assume that a person’s gender identity will be congruent with their sex assignment. Everyone has a biological sex.

Bigender

A person who experiences gender identity as two genders at the same time, or whose gender identity may vary between two genders. These may be masculine and feminine or could also include non-binary identities.

Bi

Refers to an emotional and/ or sexual orientation towards more than one gender. Bisexual or Biromantic may also be used.

Butch

A term used to describe a masculine person or gender expression. Traditionally through specifically used by lesbians/gay women.

Cross-Dresser

Someone who wears the clothes usually expected to be worn by someone of the ‘opposite’ gender. Other terms include ‘transvestite (now becoming a dated term and disliked by some) and ‘dual role’. A cross-dresser is unlikely to have a full-time identity as a member of their cross-dressed gender and typically does not seek medical intervention.

Cisgender

A term used to describe people who are not Transgender. Cisgender is based on the Latin prefix cis which means 'on this side of'. The Latin prefix Trans means 'across from' or 'on the other side of'. The use of cisgender is debated within the Trans community and some people prefer the term non-Trans as it familiarises the use of the term Trans.

Femme

A term used to describe a feminine person or gender expression. Traditionally though specifically used by lesbians/gay women.

Fluid(ity)

Generally, with another term attached, like gender-fluid or fluid-sexuality, fluid(ity) describes an identity that may change or shift over time between or within the mix of the options available (e.g. man and woman, gay, bi and straight).

Gender

Gender refers to the cultural and social distinctions traditionally associated with men and women. It consists of three related aspects: a society's constructed gender roles, norms and behaviours which are essentially based on the sex assigned at birth; gender identity, which is a person's internal perception of their identity; gender expression, which is the way a person lives in society and interacts with others.

Gender does not necessarily represent a simple binary choice; some people have a gender identity that cannot be defined by the use of the terms woman or man. It should be noted that currently, for the purposes of UK law, gender is binary – people can only be male or female.

Gender expression

While gender identity is subjective and internal to the individual, gender expression refers to all of the external characteristics and behaviours that are socially defined as either masculine or feminine, such as clothing, hairstyle, make-up, mannerisms, speech patterns, names, pronouns and social interactions.

Typically, Trans people seek to make their gender expression match their gender identity, but this is not always possible. It is best practice to not assume someone's gender identity on the basis of their gender expression. If you are not sure, it is best to ask a person how they would like to be addressed.

Gender incongruence and gender dysphoria

Gender incongruence is a medical term used to describe a person whose gender identity does not align, to a greater or lesser extent, with the sex assigned at birth. Where this causes discomfort, it is known as gender dysphoria. Gender dysphoria 'is a term describing the discomfort or distress caused by the discrepancy between a person's gender identity (their psychological sense of themselves as men or women) and the sex they were assigned at birth (with the accompanying primary or secondary sexual characteristics and or expected social gender role)' (NHS, 2013).

Gender dysphoria is not considered a mental health issue but unmanaged dysphoria or the social stigma that may accompany it and any changes a person makes to their gender expression can result in 'clinically significant levels of distress' (NHS, 2013). In order to qualify for NHS medical assistance to

Transition, a Trans person in the UK must have a diagnosis of gender dysphoria. As not all Trans people have gender dysphoria this presents a significant barrier to accessing medical support and the provisions of the Gender Recognition Act.

Gender Fluid

A person whose gender is not static and changes throughout their life. This could be on a daily/weekly/monthly basis and will be different for everyone.

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

The legal term used in the Equality Act 2010 to describe the protected characteristic of anyone who 'proposes to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning the person's sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex' (Equality Act, 2010).

Intersex

Intersex is not the same as gender identity or sexual orientation. Until recently, parents of intersex babies were encouraged to elect for surgery so that their child would conform to stereotypical male or female appearances. As a result, many intersex people can encounter difficulties as the gender assigned at birth may differ from their gender identity. Some intersex people may decide to Transition to their self-identified gender and start to identify as Trans.

Legal sex

A person's 'legal' sex is determined by their sex on their birth certificate and the assumption made at birth is that their gender status (boy, girl) matches.

Misgendering

You misgender someone when you refer to them using a word, especially a pronoun or form of address, that doesn't correctly reflect the gender they identify with.

Non-binary

Non-binary is used to refer to a person who has a gender identity which is in between or beyond the two categories 'man' and 'woman', fluctuates between 'man' and 'woman', or who has no gender, either permanently or some of the time.

People who are non-binary may have gender identities that fluctuate (genderfluid), they may identify as having more than one gender depending on the context (e.g. bigender or pangender), feel that they have no gender (e.g. agender, non-gendered), or they may identify gender differently (e.g. third gender, genderqueer, gender-neutral).

Pansexual

Pansexual – A person who is emotionally romantically, and or sexually attracted to people regardless of their gender or sex. This attraction doesn't have to be equally split across genders or sexes. Often

shortened to Pan – Bisexuality and Pansexuality are often confused. While the two are very similar, some people can identify as both, the key difference is that they have differing histories and communities.

Outed

When a lesbian, gay, bi or Trans person's sexual orientation or gender identity is disclosed to someone else without their consent. This is considered a criminal offence.

Self-identified gender

The gender that a person identifies as. The Trans community is campaigning for UK law to be based on self-identification as is currently the case in other European countries.

Sex

Sex refers to the biological status of a person as male or female in their physical development. Sex is judged entirely on the genital appearance at birth but internal reproductive organs, skeletal characteristics and musculature are also sex-differentiated.

Sex Assigned at Birth

The determination of a person's sex based on the visual appearance of the genitals at birth. The sex someone is labelled at birth. Some shortened examples can be AFAB (assigned female at birth) and AMAB (assigned male at birth.)

Sexual orientation

Sexual orientation is different from gender identity. Trans people, like any other people, can have a wide range of sexual orientations beyond those recognised by the Equality Act.

Transition

Transition is the process of a person changing their social role in order to match their gender identity. Examples of Transitioning include telling friends, family and colleagues, changing names, asking people to use different pronouns and changing the way their gender is expressed. For some people, this may involve medical assistance such as hormone therapy and surgery.

Transphobia

Transphobia is a term used to describe the fear, anger, intolerance, resentment and discomfort that some people may have as a result of another person being Trans. This can result in discrimination, harassment, victimisation and hate crime.

Transsexual

Transsexual is a term that was traditionally used to describe a person diagnosed with gender dysphoria. Trans people have become increasingly uncomfortable with the use of this term preferring Trans or Transgender instead. While some people may find the term offensive, others may use it to describe themselves.

We understand that trying to get to grips with the meaning of key terms can be confusing.

The University has published this glossary of key terms to help all in the University community with these definitions. However, we recognise that this is not a fixed list and it will change over time to reflect changes in the language in use.

With this in mind we want to hear from our staff and students on how best to ensure the language we use is inclusive and reflects all identities and all members of the University community. If you have suggestions regarding this guide, please get in touch via email with your feedback to studentlife@bolton.ac.uk.