



How to be a Trans Ally at Griffith University

Human Resources | Corporate Services
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Introduction

Griffith University celebrates diversity and promotes equity and inclusion. We do not discriminate on the basis of sexuality, gender identity or gender expression. We believe that providing a work environment based on respect, trust, and collaboration creates an exceptional employee experience where employees can bring their whole selves to work and thrive in their careers.

- The term **transgender** describes people whose gender identity is different than the identity they were assigned at birth.
- The term **gender diverse** is an umbrella term that encompasses a range of different gender identities outside the binary notions of man/male or woman/female, such as non-binary, agender, genderfluid, genderqueer, etc.

For many transgender (or trans) and gender diverse (TGD) 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 work or study settings. Providing an inclusive environment will not only enhance academic success and job satisfaction for TGD people, but will also ensure compliance with Griffith's **Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy**, Gender Affirmation Inclusion and Support Procedure, and equal opportunity legislation requiring educational institutions to not discriminate on the basis of gender identity and/or expression.

This document includes:

- Top tips on being an active Ally to trans and gender diverse staff and students at Griffith;
- How to provide support to a trans or gender diverse applicant during a hiring process;
- Trans and gender diverse terminology and definitions;
- Frequently asked questions;
- Griffith Policies and Procedures; and
- Resources to learn more about trans and gender diverse issues.

Our Strategic Commitments

As a values-led University, we are committed to embracing diversity, including in recruitment, promotion and professional development, and enabling a culture that ensures that all staff and students, including LGBTQIA+ staff and students, are provided with a safe and supportive environment (Griffith University Strategic Plan, 2020-2025).

Griffith is committed to social justice and the UN Sustainable Development Goals including Reduced Inequalities and Gender Equality. Stonewall International has produced a document translating Sustainable Development Goals to LGBT inclusion (see [The Sustainable Development Goals and LGBT Inclusion](#)).



Harassment, bullying and discrimination

All members of the University community are entitled to be treated with fairness and respect and experience a work and study environment free from unacceptable or unlawful behaviour, including harassment, bullying and discrimination regarding your sexual orientation, gender identity or intersex status. The University is committed to ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of its staff, students, contractors and visitors while undertaking work, study or research activities, and as such, actions that constitute assault, discrimination, harassment, bullying or vilification will not be tolerated.

If you or a staff or student that you are supporting feel as though there has been discrimination, harassment or bullying, there are trained **Harassment and Discrimination Contact Officers** (HDCO) located on each campus who you can talk to. The role of a HDCO is to be a confidential point of contact to listen to concerns, explain University policies and procedures, and provide information on reporting options. Please refer to the Harassment and Discrimination Contact Officer Network list for information on Contact Officers who are trained LGBTQIA+ Allies.

Contact and feedback

For more information or if you have any feedback on this document, please contact the HR Inclusion and Development team.

Tips for being a Trans Ally

1. BEING A TRANS ALLY IN THE WORKPLACE/CLASSROOM*

Minus18's [How to be a trans ally](#) resource has a fantastic definition on what being an Ally means: *An Ally is someone who supports and advocates for the fair treatment of a community other than their own. Allyship is also active and understanding this is an important part of being an ally. 'Ally' is not a label you can give yourself, it is something you have to continually work towards.*

Trans and gender diverse people face disproportionate challenges, and you can use your voice and action to make a difference. These points below are some of the ways in which you can show your Allyship to trans and gender diverse people (both staff and students) whilst at Griffith but can also apply more broadly too.

RESPECT PRIVACY & KEEP YOUR CURIOSITY TO YOURSELF

Often 'coming out' as trans is a very different experience compared to 'coming out' as having a diverse sexuality. Where 'coming out' in terms of sexuality can be incredibly empowering for some members of the rainbow community, unfortunately oftentimes, the same cannot be said for a trans person when disclosing their trans history. Knowledge of someone being trans or gender diverse can impact how they are treated by others. Respect that everyone's story is their own to share.

- Do not ask about trans people's bodies, whether they've had any surgeries or if they're undergoing hormone therapy. Affirming one's gender is not a linear process that starts or stops at a specific time. It's often evolving, ongoing and very different for each person. What trans people choose to do with their bodies is personal and no one else has a right to know.
- 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. This guide and the additional resources in the [Key contacts and resources section](#) is a good place to start!
- Do not make assumptions about the person's sexual orientation or personal relationships. Gender affirmation is about a person's core sense of their gender, not their sexual identity. The sexuality of transgender and gender diverse people can cover the full human spectrum – they may identify as heterosexual, gay, lesbian or bisexual, etc, or they may use another term or choose not to label their sexuality at all.

BE AWARE OF PRONOUNS

Pronouns are one way people refer to each other and themselves. Please refer to our [How to be an LGBTQIA+ Ally](#) guide for more information on what pronouns are, how to use them, ways to incorporate your personal pronouns in your email signature, and gender-neutral pronoun options in Arabic, Mandarin, French, German, Italian, Japanese and Spanish.

- If you forget someone's personal pronouns or simply don't know, it's OK to ask what someone's pronouns are!
- Provide support as an Ally to normalise pronouns in introductions. This could be by doing things such as adding them to your email signature (see Griffith's [Pride Pack](#) for email signatures) and/or wearing a pronoun badge.

DON'T BE A BYSTANDER

- Call out [transphobic](#) behaviour and don't stand by if you see or hear something harmful. An Ally's actions carry a lot of weight and can have a significant impact on cultural change and community allyship.

- If you hear someone being misgendered or misnamed (and you know they wouldn't want to be) step in to correct them. This can be a simple, 'Their pronouns (or name) are [insert name or pronouns here]' (or similar).
- Do not condone or participate in gossip, jokes, flippant remarks or sexual innuendos about the person or their TGD 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 a person's gender identity.

IT'S OK TO MAKE MISTAKES

- If you use the incorrect name or pronouns, the best thing to do is apologise and move on. Don't make a scene or try to justify the mistake as this will only cause more harm.
- Acknowledge that you are an imperfect Ally, you may make mistakes and that is OK. Correct yourself and be guided by the person.
- Be as open and honest as you would like your colleague/student/peer to be with you.
- If this is new for you and if you feel awkward, you can acknowledge it and see if the person who has come out to you as trans or gender diverse is OK with you asking questions or talking to you more about their experiences.
- Ask your colleague/student/peer to be honest with you about what you say or do and if there's anything you do that makes them uncomfortable which may be awkward if or when it happens, but it lets them know you are open to being corrected and learning.

RESPECT IDENTITIES

- Don't ask a person what their dead/former/birth name was or why they chose their 'chosen' name. The same can be said for the language or terms they use to identify themselves with. Trans people also don't need unsolicited advice about whether you think their name or clothes suit them or not.
- Avoid backhanded compliments or 'helpful' tips. While these comments are often well intentioned, if the person wants advice they will ask.
- Remember that if a person goes through gender affirmation while employed or studying at the University, while their gender and name and presentation may all be different to what you knew before, their basic character and personality hasn't changed – in most other respects they are still the same person as before, just happier and more authentic!

DO YOUR OWN RESEARCH

If you know someone who is openly trans, this doesn't mean that they are your only source of information. Listen to those who are in a position to share their lived experiences but understand not everyone is comfortable doing this. Ask yourself, would you ask a cisgender colleague that same question?

SUPPORT ALL GENDER / GENDER-NEUTRAL SPACES

Don't worry about what bathrooms trans people use. It can take an incredible amount of courage for someone to step into a bathroom or space that matches their gender identity – they need your support not your opinion.

**These tips have been adapted from RMIT's [Top 10 tips to be an effective trans ally](#) resource.*

2. BEING A TRANS ALLY IN THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS

Being an Ally to trans people during the hiring and recruitment process is as equally important as being an Ally to trans people when they are employees.

While being transgender or gender diverse should not be relevant to the job application process, trans and gender diverse people experience discrimination by way of (but is not limited to):

- Refusal to hire.
- Privacy violations.
- Harassment on the job.

These are common occurrences experienced by TGD people and occur at even higher rates for trans people of colour.

Many trans and gender diverse people report changing jobs to avoid discrimination or the risk of discrimination.

Griffith has a responsibility to ensure that all people feel included throughout the job hiring process, including those who are trans or gender diverse. Trans and gender diverse people should know from the very beginning that they are applying for a safe workplace which will not discriminate against them should they choose to be out about their gender identity.

WHAT CAN I DO?

The Queensland *Anti-Discrimination Act 1991* specifies that direct and/or indirect discrimination on the basis of gender identity is prohibited in the workplace.

All employees have the right to be treated with respect and given fair and equal opportunities in a safe and supportive environment. Griffith has zero tolerance for discrimination and takes an active role in ensuring the workplace is a safe and supportive environment. Management is committed to supporting the rights of employees transitioning and ensuring the principles outlined in the Code of Conduct are upheld.

Examples of discrimination based on gender identity include:

- Repeated unreasonable behaviour that is victimising, humiliating, intimidating or threatening.
- Example: continually using incorrect names or pronouns.
- Invasive, inappropriate questioning about a person's physical characteristics or their sex life (this may also constitute sexual harassment).
- Any form of harassment or bullying, including ridiculing or ignoring someone because of their gender identity.
- Denying someone training and promotion opportunities because of their gender identity.
- Changing the nature of the employee's job, such as taking them off customer service duties, because of their gender identity.
- It is unlawful to discriminate against a person on the basis of their gender identity.
- Example: 'A refuses to employ B, who is Transgender, not because A dislikes Trans people, but because A knows that B would be treated badly by other staff, some of whom are prejudiced against Trans people. A's conduct amounts to discrimination against B.'

You can:

- Challenge unconscious bias (e.g., hiring managers making decisions based on judgments they are unaware of and that are influenced by their background and personal experience). All employment related decision making should not be based on a personal attribute such as gender identity but instead based on an individual's merits. In addition, how 'merit' is constructed needs

to be examined to ensure that this is not affected by preconceived ideas about what capabilities an individual might bring to the job or whether they will be a good 'cultural add' for a workplace.

- If the applicant has not provided their pronouns in their application, ask them what their pronouns are and use them.
- If the applicant has provided a chosen name, use that name regardless of whether they have legally changed it or not.
- Ensuring that you treat the applicant with respect and apologise immediately if you accidentally use the applicant's 'deadname' (see [Commonly used terminology](#) below) or the wrong pronouns.
- When contacting referees, be conscious that an applicant may have previous workplaces which include records in their deadname. If the applicant has disclosed that this may be the case, it might be appropriate to ask them how they would like you to approach the situation.
- Consult with the HR Inclusion and Development team if you have questions or concerns about interviewing or hiring a TGD applicant.

Frequently asked questions

WHAT DOES 'TRANS' AND 'GENDER DIVERSE' MEAN?

Transgender (or Trans) and Gender Diverse (TGD) is a broad umbrella term for people whose gender identity, expression or behaviour is different the sex that was legally assigned to them at birth. It is inclusive but not limited to transgender, non-binary and agender people.

Please refer to [A-Z OF GENDER IDENTITY AND GENDER AFFIRMATION](#) for further terms and definitions.

WHAT IS GENDER AFFIRMATION/TRANSITIONING?

A trans or gender diverse person has always been trans or gender diverse, regardless of whether they've undergone any process to affirm their gender socially and/or physically. Gender affirmation, sometimes referred to as 'transitioning' is the process where a trans or gender diverse person takes steps to socially and/or physically feel more aligned with their gender. There is a wide range of ways this process differs between people. Some people may change how they interact with others, and others may change their appearance or seek medical assistance (through surgeries and hormones) to better express their gender.

For example, they might (but not necessarily) update their name from Samuel to Sam and use 'they' instead of 'he'. They may also start dressing differently. The way someone dresses and outwardly presents is referred to as a person's gender expression, which may be a part of someone's gender affirmation.

There is a difference between someone's gender and their sex characteristics. Gender relates to a person's concept of self, whereas sex refers to the physical characteristics that are associated with biological sex and reproduction. Some trans people choose to align their sex characteristics with their gender through surgery and/or hormones, however this is not always the case. There are many ways an individual may affirm their gender (discussed further below).

WHAT HAPPENS DURING GENDER AFFIRMATION/TRANSITIONING?

Each person's affirmation journey is different. Some people may decide to have surgery or undergo hormone therapy, others may choose not to or are unable to access these interventions (for example, due to financial constraints).

Below are some possible aspects of a person's affirmation, but there are many more possibilities:

- **Social affirmation** is when a person makes changes in appearance and social situations to reflect their gender. This may include changes to hairstyle and clothing, name and pronoun changes, and use of different bathrooms/gendered facilities. They may choose to do this all at once, or only in specific social circles such as with close family and friends.
- **Legal affirmation** involves updating legal documentation (such as a birth certificate or drivers' licence) to match the person's affirmed gender and name. This can contribute to protecting the individual from being unintentionally outed through disclosure of an incorrect gender marker on their records.
- **Medical affirmation** can include hormone therapy to help develop secondary physical characteristics of gender (such as voice deepening or development of breast tissue) or gender confirmation surgery so that genitalia reflect the person's gender. The terms 'top surgery' (breast augmentation or reconstruction) or 'bottom surgery' (construction and/or removal of genitalia and/or sex organs) are often used.

Remember, it is inappropriate to ask unnecessary details about someone's genitals or any surgery they may or may not have. This is personal information and the decision of the individual to disclose.

Commonly used terminology

PRONOUNS AND WHY THEY ARE SO IMPORTANT TO TGD PEOPLE

For trans and gender diverse people, pronouns are an incredibly important part of their identity. Pronouns are something that cisgender (i.e., non-transgender) people most likely take for granted as it is something that they don't have to think about often, if at all. You can't always know what someone's pronouns are by looking at them. Asking and correctly using someone's pronouns is one of the most basic ways to show your respect for their identity.

It is also important to note that someone's pronouns do not necessarily indicate their gender, but it is up to the individual whether they disclose their gender to you or not.

For TGD people, when someone refers to them with the wrong pronoun, it can make them feel disrespected, invalidated, dismissed, alienated, or dysphoric (often, it makes them feel all the above).

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

Please note that gender-neutral or gender inclusive pronouns, like 'they', do not associate a gender with the individual who is being discussed (e.g., someone whose pronouns are they/them is not necessarily non-binary). If you do not know someone's personal pronouns, 'they' is an accepted pronoun to use (rather than assuming) until you have a chance to ask. Never refer to a person as 'it' (unless they ask you to) which is an offensive slur used against TGD individuals.

To gain a better understanding of how to use gender-neutral pronouns correctly, Minus18 has a [great resource](#) to help you practice.

A-Z OF GENDER IDENTITY AND GENDER AFFIRMATION

Our [How to be an LGBTQIA+ Ally](#) guide has some definitions for commonly used trans and gender diverse terminology: transgender or trans, gender diverse, gender expression, gender incongruence, cisgender, and gender affirmation.

Below is a list of additional terms that are used frequently when discussing trans and gender diverse people and experiences that has been built to complement the gender identity definitions provided in the How to be an LGBTQIA+ Ally guide.

Some terms and definitions have been adapted from the Australian Government Guidelines of the Recognition of Sex and Gender, the Australian Human Rights Commission, and the Pride in Diversity/ OII Employers Guide to Intersex Inclusion, 2014.

Affirmed gender is the gender/s which one identifies, which may or may not match the person's assigned sex at birth. This includes gender diverse identities.

AMAB/AFAB stand for Assigned Male/Female at Birth and **PMAB/PFAB** stand for Presumed Male/Female at Birth.

Deadnaming is a name for when a trans or gender diverse person is called or referred to by their legal or previous name rather than their chosen name.

Gender affirmation (also known as **transitioning**) refers to the process where a TGD person takes steps to socially and/or physically feel more aligned with their gender. There is a wide range of ways this process differs between people and for some, it may include a change of name and/or pronouns or adopting a different style of clothes they wear. Some people may change how they interact with others, and others may change their appearance or seek medical assistance (through surgeries and hormones) to better express their gender.

Please note: 'Gender affirmation' is the recommended terminology unless a trans or gender diverse (TGD) person has indicated otherwise. This is to separate from the assumption that TGD people change from one gender to another or need to go through a 'transition' to live as their authentic self.

A person's **gender** (or **gender identity**) refers to their personal internal and individual expression of gender, which may or may not conform to traditional or societal expectations.

The **gender binary** refers to the classification of gender into two distinct groups: male/man or female/woman. Non-binary genders are any genders that are not *just* male or female.

Genderfluid is a gender identity for a person with shifting or changing gender.

Gender non-conforming is having or being perceived to have gender characteristics, appearance and/or behaviours that do not conform to traditional or societal expectations of particular genders.

Misgendering occurs when a person is described or addressed using language that does not match their gender identity. For people with intersex variations, this may include a presumption that they are non-binary, just as much as assumption that they are a man or a woman. This can occur when using pronouns or gendered language, or when assigning genders to people without knowing their gender identity.

(Biological) **Sex**, also referred to as 'sex assigned at birth', refers to the chromosomal, gonadal, and anatomical characteristics associated with biological sex. These are usually described as 'Female' and 'Male'; however, there are variations to this binary (please refer to the 'Intersex People' section of the [How to be an LGBTQIA+ Ally](#) guide).

Sex characteristics are the physical parts of the body that are related to body development, regulation, and reproduction. The term 'sex characteristics' is more accurate than 'biological sex', 'biologically male', or 'biologically female'. The gendering of physical body parts is a significant source of stigma and discrimination for both TGD and intersex people.

Transphobia is a term used to describe the irrational fear, hatred, aversion to or discrimination against people who are transgender or gender diverse, or people who are perceived to be TGD.

Key contacts and resources

1. CONTACTS FOR FURTHER SUPPORT

If you would like to chat to someone for more support and information on gender diversity and other areas discussed in this document, you could approach the following contacts:

Any enquiries related to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, Payroll or general HR enquiries:
hrandsafety@griffith.edu.au

Griffith Ally Network and Griffith Pride Committee: ally@griffith.edu.au

2. RESOURCES AND WEBSITES

GENDER IDENTITY, EXPRESSION AND SEX

[Pride in Diversity – Let’s Talk Gender](#)

TERMINOLOGY AND LANGUAGE

[Queensland Human Rights Commission – Why Pronouns Matter](#)

[Student Diversity and Inclusion – Words Matter](#)

[Pride in Diversity – Terminology and Definitions](#)

[ABC – Sexuality and Gender Glossary](#)

[LGBTIQ+ Health Australia – Inclusive Language Guide: Respecting People of Intersex, Trans and Gender Diverse Experience](#)

ALLYSHIP

[How to be an LGBTQIA+ Ally at Griffith](#)

[GLAAD – Tips for Allies of Transgender People](#)

[Healthline – How to be Human: Talking to People Who are Transgender or Nonbinary](#)

HEALTH AND TRANS ISSUES

[LGBTIQ Health Australia](#)

[TED Talk – Ivan Coyote: Why we need gender-neutral bathrooms](#)

TRANS AND LGBTQIA+ SUPPORT NETWORKS

[Griffith Ally Network](#)

[Australian Transgender Support Association Qld \(ATSAQ\)](#)

[Sisters & Brothers NT – Celebrating Diversity](#)

[Black Rainbow](#)

[Minus18](#)

MEDICAL AND SUPPORT SERVICES

[QLife](#) provides anonymous and free LGBTQIA+ peer support and referral for people in Australia

[Diverse Voices](#) provides telephone and online counselling to LGBTQIA+ people

[QLD Health Gender Services](#)

Counselling through the University's Employee Assistance Program, [Converge International](#), which has a LGBTQIA+ specialist phone line

[Student Health, Counselling and Wellbeing](#)

[Griffith Health & Medical Services](#)

[Griffith Chaplaincy](#)

RIGHTS AND DISCRIMINATION

[Queensland Human Rights Commission: Trans@Work](#)

[Australian Human Rights Commission: Human rights and gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex people](#)

[Justice Connect: How to Deal with Gender Discrimination](#)

OTHER GRIFFITH WEBPAGES AND RESOURCES

[Gender Affirmation Inclusion and Support Procedure – Griffith University](#)

[Gender Affirmation at Griffith University](#) (Gender Affirmation Guidelines for staff and students and those supporting them)

[LGBTQIA+ webpage](#)

[Staff Equity, Diversity and Inclusion webpage](#)

[LGBTQIA+ resources and support](#)

[Trans and Gender Diverse Inclusion webpage](#)

[Griffith Policy Library](#)

