



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

RECOGNISING AND COUNTERACTING MICROAGGRESSIONS AGAINST TRANS AND/OR NON-BINARY PEOPLE

A Resource for Academics

Abstract

This resource has been co-produced with students at the University of Edinburgh to help staff understand and recognise microaggressions based on transphobia and misunderstanding of the trans and/or non-binary experience. The resource provides practical steps to counteract microaggressions and transphobia and create identity safety for all our students and colleagues.

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Recognising and Counteracting Transphobia and Microaggressions against Trans and/or Non-binary people

This resource is intended to help you to:

- Understand what transphobia and microaggressions are
- Recognise transphobia and microaggressions against trans and/or non-binary students
- Understand the effect of transphobia and microaggressions on student wellbeing and participation
- Provide insight into the lived experience of trans and/or non-binary students
- Learn some practical ways to counteract microaggressions and create an inclusive environment for all students
- Find further reading and resources

Microaggressions are “Everyday verbal, non-verbal and environmental slights, snubs or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory or negative message to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership”. They are the many small (but significant) ways people experience the effects of stereotyping and hatred on a daily basis and have a corrosive and damaging effect on the wellbeing and health of individuals.

Although microaggressions are almost always the result of stereotyping of certain groups, learned through our social conditioning, for trans and/or non-binary people they are more

usually due to transphobia, misinformation or ignorance. We are often unaware of how this can affect trans and/or non-binary people.

For Trans and Non-binary people, they often take the form of:

- 'Off the cuff' or deliberately derogatory remarks
- Questions or comments that reveal assumptions based on stereotypes or misinformation
- Denial or erasure of gender identity
- Hostile or cis-normative environments
- Undermining in public
- Denial of individual prejudice
- Questioning lived experience

What does it mean to be Trans and/or Non-Binary?

Gender is traditionally linked to the sex assigned to us at birth, based on external anatomical features. In other words, our bodies at birth will be given a designation of male, female or intersex. However, gender is the *experience and lived reality* of being male, being female or both/neither or another gender.

For around 99% of the population, the sex they have been assigned (typically based on visual assessment of their external genitalia) corresponds to their gender identity and would be described as cisgender. This 99% will have never experienced a disconnect between their assigned sex and their gender identity. 'Gender' is a complicated concept which not only includes one's internal sense of where we are on the male/female spectrum but is also used to describe traditional and stereotyped gender expressions. Much of the latter has rightly been critiqued and criticised for limiting and distorting how people are able to express their gender identity. These pressures to conform to outward expressions of gender remain powerful forces in societies today.

There are people who find the sex they are assigned at birth does not match their gender identity; their internal sense of where they exist in relation to being female or male. For some, they feel strongly that they are of the 'opposite' gender and for others, there is a sense of fluidity between genders or that the gender descriptions available do not match their gender identity at all. People experiencing this are defined as transgender. When this experience results in distressing feelings it is described as 'gender dysphoria'. Not all trans people will experience dysphoria, but they may still identify as trans because their assigned sex does not match their gender identity and they are experiencing 'gender incongruity'.

This is an almost unimaginable situation for cisgender people. Our relationship to our bodies is an intensely personal and powerful experience. Cisgender people maybe think we could relate to the feeling of disliking or even hating our bodies, but it is a mistake to think that the trans and/or non-binary experience is solely about bodies. This tends to be one of greatest misunderstandings about what it means to be trans and/or non-binary (and possibly the source of microaggressions which focus on anatomy and biology). For trans

and/or non-binary people, while rectifying the gender mind/body mismatch is essential, living and being recognised and accepted as their gender identity is also very important.

Because of this, while some people feel the tension so strongly that they seek surgical remediation, others choose to express their gender without the need for surgery, but make use of hormone treatment, and some may not feel the need for medical intervention in order to lead life as their true gender. Many trans people identify as one of the two binary genders (male/female) as their primary identity. Non-binary people do not define their gender in a 'binary' (either male or female) way. All of these experiences are mainly referred to as 'trans' or 'non-binary' as adjectives, i.e. trans woman, trans men, non-binary person. You might also hear the words, 'genderfluid' or 'gender non-conforming', although the latter can apply to anyone who doesn't conform to expected gender expressions in their social-cultural context.

You don't need to make distinctions between men and trans men or women and trans women, any more than you would need to make a distinction between men and black men or women and disabled women. That is why 'trans' is an adjective.

For cisgender people, this can often be a very difficult concept to understand or even accept. There remains considerable ignorance about the trans and/or non-binary experience. Despite advances in LGBTQ+ visibility and acceptance, the 'T' element is easily overlooked as well as the fact that gender and sexuality are not the same phenomena. The LGBTQ+ community fought for liberation together, but their experiences and challenges are different.

What does 'transition' mean?

Transition is the process that individual undertakes in order to live in their true gender identity. It should not be thought of a 'becoming a [gender]', instead it is a process towards living in the gender identity that conforms with the persons' experience. The children, young people or adults who reach this point, will have probably felt confused, troubled, distressed and anxious about their experiences, which they would have realised were not shared, understood or accepted by their fellow humans. Voicing their thoughts may have brought ridicule, invalidation, rejection and violence. They are likely to have been silenced, forced to keep their feelings secret, and to develop gender presentations that caused deep feelings of existential doubt and confusion.

Transition can be a personal and deeply reflective process, where highly philosophical questions about the nature of being human, what it is to be male, female, both or neither, must be considered. There are many practical and possibly medical decisions to be made and there are other social and cultural consequences to consider.

Because of this, transition, when it is finally achieved, can be the cause of enormous happiness and relief. For many it is considered a journey from dysphoria to euphoria. It can be a time to enjoy being who one feels one has always been. It is deeply sad, therefore, that for many trans and/or non-binary people, this is often accompanied by increased hostility, rejection and violence from transphobic members of society.

Because everything is a question, we end up being quite existential. When you answer these questions you feel like you've gone somewhere and you feel like, Oh, I found truths about myself and ways that I like to think about myself and things that I like about myself that maybe I wouldn't have been encountered otherwise. It's wonderful.

I'm really happy that I reached the point of feeling comfortable with my gender. It is so amazing. I wouldn't change it for anything. I feel privileged.

I find being trans so liberating and joyful.

What is Transphobia?

Transphobia is the hatred, fear, disbelief, or mistrust of trans and gender non-conforming people. Trans and non-binary people have always existed within all societies and there are documented instances from at least 4500 years ago. Some cultures still accept three or more genders (non-binary), while the male/female binary is the most commonly accepted elsewhere. Various religious, social and cultural factors, including modern medicine and psychiatry contributed to the hostility towards trans people which persists in the UK today. In the second half of the 20th Century, trans people were recognised through wider LGBTQ+ awareness and there was a gradual improvement in social acceptance.

In recent years, however, there has been a resurgence of transphobia in the mainstream and social media, which has fuelled increased transphobic hate incidents in society. This has largely been linked to proposals to reform the 2004 Gender Recognition Act which gives trans people the right to change the sex on their birth certificate to match their lived gender identity. The proposed reform would streamline the process, making it less intrusive and costly. Many people refer to these changes as giving trans people the right to 'self-ID', but it is, more correctly, a legally-binding 'self-declaration'. This increased transphobia been particularly severe for trans women, who have been the target of high-profile, celebrity campaigns that deny the trans experience and deliberately suggest trans women pose a threat to cis women by distorting statistics of male violence to imply it is a characteristic of trans women. A particular strand of feminism (gender-critical) voices concerns that recognising the rights of trans women will negatively impact the 'sex-based' rights of cis women and that predatory men will exploit the proposed right to self-declaration to access women-only spaces or to gain advantage in sports and the workplace. This effectively makes trans women the focus of blame for the actions of predatory men.

As with all majority populations, some cis people feel they are 'normal' because all the messages and structures of society are set up for them. This is described as 'cisnormativity'. They may feel that their majority status gives them the right to comment upon and designate trans and non-binary people as deviant, abnormal, dangerous and misguided.

I think especially in the age of the internet, feeling like you don't understand something or that you're not a world leading expert, threatens people because they don't want to feel like they're confused or that they don't know something, or that something challenges what they think they know. Most trans people are just people trying to live their lives and not be a threat to anyone at all. They actually want to be less of a threat to themselves and to other people by being in a comfortable headspace.

This is often situated in comments about dress, because gender conformity is traditionally socialised through appearance. Talking about whether a trans person can 'pass', a problematic concept at the best of times, brings hateful comments such as "you'll never be more than a bloke in a dress" as well as ideas that trans people who do 'pass' are being deceptive. Stereotypes of male/masculine and female/feminine are therefore weaponised against trans and/or non-binary people in ways that are different to cis women and men. Gender-critical feminists have also criticised trans women for perpetuating stereotypes of femininity, another example of harmful gate-keeping of another person's gender presentation. In truth, none of us should be commenting on other people's dress choices and external features or assuming gender identity on that basis and we could do well to challenge our strong social conditioning when we become aware of it.

People seem to want to police trans people's appearance - I dyed a streak of blond into my hair and people said, "oh but I thought you were trying to be a man" and I think it's like the same for trans women who then wear jeans and people are like, "oh, but like I thought you are a woman now."

If I dress in a tomboyish manner I notice people start using 'they/them' pronouns with me, despite the fact I've never used them, which they'd never do with a cis woman.

If you wear clothes and the clothes are fit for purpose, why does it matter what they look like? People want to wear things for themselves to make themselves feel good, and maybe to project a certain image or to have a certain effect. Why can't others just accept the effects and move on? People spend so much time thinking about what other people are doing. And for trans people that can be really uncomfortable

Some people use the phrase 'reasonable concerns' as a way to limit the rights of and marginalise trans and non-binary people. This is most common in the arguments about the use of female toilets and changing areas by trans women. While concerns for women's safety are valid, there is no evidence that trans women pose any more danger than other women. This type of 'reasonable concern' is used frequently by trans-hostile groups, such as ultra-right wing campaigners and certain feminists. Another 'reasonable concern' is alarm at the increase in gender identity services for children, despite evidence that early support for individuals reduces psychological problems and suicide in later life. There is considerable misinformation about what happens in gender identity clinics, deliberately circulated to create fear and moral panic. These tactics mirror those used by campaigners against same-sex marriage who cited concerns about how the reform would pose a threat to families.

Having said that, it is reasonable, in the face of so much misinformation and hostility, for people to have concerns and to seek information and reassurance. This is different to the use of 'reasonable concerns' by transphobic campaigners where accurate information is rejected or distorted in a similar way to the strategy of Islamophobes and anti-Semites.

"Reasonable concerns" is a big red flag phrase and it's used as well in racist circles especially in the way that Islamophobia plays out in society.

We're constantly consuming all this media that's like, "You have been brainwashed into thinking that this is who you are", which is ridiculous. Because it's not easy, and I'd rather not do all of this if I didn't have to. It would make my life so much less complicated. People don't choose this for fun.

As we live in a cisnormative society where the belief in a gender binary predominates and there has been a history of invisibility of trans people, we may not question our bias and behaviours toward trans and non-binary people and be easily influenced by arguments which, in the context of different races or religions, we would otherwise find odious.

We need to understand that transphobia is every bit as unacceptable as racism and homophobia.

Trans and/or non-binary students

University can be a place where young people can embrace and learn to express their gender identity, but unfortunately also a place where they can feel unsafe. You may or may not know who your trans and/or non-binary students are and what struggles they are facing. In addition to experiencing the transphobia outlined above, which negatively affects mental and emotional wellbeing, your students may be facing some additional challenges you should be aware of, such as:

Navigating the Gendered Environment

We are generally aware of how the environment poses challenges to disabled people and black people in terms of access and welcome. However, for trans and/or non-binary students the environment is one of the greatest causes of stress and no less so at university. Cis people have almost no awareness of how many challenges trans and non-binary people face during a day while doing things the rest of us take completely for granted. Gendered spaces such as toilets and changing rooms give rise to stressful decision-making or fear of hostility. This is exhausting.

To access the gym at Kings buildings you have to go through a changing room, which is either the female changing room or the male changing room so you can't physically get into the gym without dealing with these things and potentially people looking at you, potentially people asking you why you're there, people kicking you out it's so it's like there's so many situations where you are exposed to, like that, categorization that other people put on you. Just because you are the way you are, there's like no way for you to escape it really.

Unsupportive or rejecting families

Some students may have been disowned by their family or may be at risk if their family finds out. Financial insecurity may accompany this situation with students either receiving no financial support or support being contingent on conforming to a false gender identity. International students may face different forms of social-cultural disapproval and risk.

Visible anti-trans campaigns

Nowadays it is unlikely for LGB+ people to be faced with widespread public campaigns that are explicitly homophobic or mainstream media articles that question their right to exist, but this has become a reality for trans and/or non-binary people on a regular basis. Recent consultations on reform of the Gender Recognition Act have given anti-trans campaigners a vehicle for spreading misinformation and stoking hatred. This has appeared in social media, mainstream media and paid advertising in newspapers. This has been taken up by some staff and students within the University with leaflets and stickers featuring anti-trans rhetoric being distributed and pinned up, often in toilets. This is unacceptable and goes against the University's Dignity and Respect Policy.

Invitations to known transphobic or trans-hostile speakers

While it is important to uphold academic freedom and debate, organising events with speakers whose work forms a strong basis for the hatred, distrust and demonisation of minority groups and especially those with protected characteristics can contribute substantially to the feeling that the University is a hostile and unwelcoming environment. Given the presence of ubiquitous trans-hostile messages almost everywhere in the media it is particularly distressing for trans and/or non-binary people to see these being apparently sanctioned and approved by University staff.

Increased need for medical support

For trans people seeking medical support for transition, they may require ongoing or regular contact with medical professionals, time for surgery and recovery or medication reviews. This can be made harder if staff are unsympathetic or hostile.

What's all the fuss about Pronouns?

The English language has gender-based pronouns (not all languages do) which means that they identify a person's gender when used. Almost everyone has a gendered pronoun (though cisgendered people rarely, if ever notice that) and will experience a jarring effect when the wrong pronoun is used. Trans/non-binary people are no different and will have a pronoun they wish you to use, which might be different to what you expect. In addition to 'he/his' and 'she/her' you might be asked to use 'they/theirs', for example. Many people find the notion of using 'they' in the singular challenging. However, it is commonly used when referring to people where you don't have knowledge of their gender identity e.g. On the Great British Bake off in the technical round where the judges don't know who baked what you will hear them use phrases like, "Ah well, they've overbaked it" when referring to an individual baker. If someone you know transitions during the course of your acquaintance, then you will need to change the pronouns you are accustomed to using. While this can be very hard because pronouns are such an automatic form of speech, it is

really important to make the effort. Trans/non-binary people are used to people making mistakes, but deliberate misgendering or lack of effort to change are both unacceptable and a form of microaggression.

Effect of transphobia and microaggression on students

Because trans and/or non-binary students are experiencing active transphobia on top of daily microaggressions, they are particularly at risk of the following:

- Loss of self-esteem, decrease in mental and emotional resilience, tiredness, exhaustion and stress
- Damage to the ability to thrive in an environment
- Mistrust of peers, staff and the institution
- Decrease in participation and ability to study
- Increase in student attrition

I go to the swimming pool to train four times a week, and it's one of the places where I feel less comfortable because it's really gendered, everything there is just male and female. Sometimes I don't feel like going to the swimming pool and having to deal with the whole locker room situation, and there are times that I literally just gave up swimming. For a cis person, it doesn't affect you because obviously you've grown up that way - you don't realize how many things are gendered, and they are compulsory genders, and there is no other way around it.

Recognising Microaggressions against trans and/or non-binary people

These are some common ways that trans and/or non-binary people experience transphobia through deliberate or unintended microaggressions (small, but significant, daily occurrences).

Microassault

These are explicit transphobic derogations expressed verbally or non-verbally. They may be precursors to physical assault. For example:

- Abusive descriptions, e.g. "Tranny"
- Deliberate 'Deadnaming' (use of birth or former name without consent)
- Deliberate misgendering (saying 'he' instead of 'she' or 'they')
- Insistence on gender binary or gender immutability, e.g. "you're either a man or a woman", "you can't change sex"
- Excess focus on anatomical sex markers, most usually reproductive organs
- Avoidant behaviour
- Anti-trans posters, stickers, leaflets, particularly in toilets
- Inappropriate touching without consent ('checking')

- Intrusive questioning about intimate details without consent.

There's this weird idea of touching people's parts and 'checking' that I think is quite common for trans people. Very often when I tell people I'm a trans man they reach for my chest and say, "What have you got there?" Or reaching between people's legs and all that stuff.

People feel entitled to ask questions that are really intimate that they'd never ask a cis person. Because you've been honest about being trans, they then think that they've been invited into some sort of sexual or personal discussion,

If you wouldn't ask a cis person this, why are you asking a trans person this? If you met this guy you wouldn't ask, "Oh, what does your penis look like and do you have a penis and how big is your penis, what kind of underwear do you use?" so why would you ask a trans person?

Microinsults and Microinvalidations

These are often based on ignorance and misunderstanding. For example:

Misconception of what trans identity is and entails:

- "Can't you just be a butch lesbian?"
- "I also wanted to be a boy when I was a child."
- "All people think about being the opposite gender sometimes."
- "I don't get how you can feel like a man AND a woman"
- "Why are you making life so hard for yourself?"

The reason I'm taking testosterone is because it makes me feel better about myself and not because it makes other people feel better about me. It's not for them it's for my health and my wellbeing and my happiness.

Misunderstanding and minimising dysphoria and its impact

- "But all women hate their periods."
- "I don't understand why you don't just love yourself?"
- "Anorexic people also think their body is wrong and we don't let them starve themselves, why should you be allowed to mutilate your body?"
- "There are women with low voices so why do you dislike yours?"

So many things that come naturally to cis people are matters of tight rope for trans people like, am I'm going to dress how I'm comfortable, am I'm going to dress how I'm not going to get looked at or assaulted or laughed at? Am I going to go into the bathroom where people will look at me funny or am I going to the bathroom where I feel really bad? Do I style my hair in a way that I like, or in a way that will stop my parents from nagging me about everything? So many arbitrary everyday decisions become like things of big importance and things that require work and thoughts and deliberation of personal safety, and what other people think, and how will other people treat me, and will I get names shouted at me on the street? Small things just become really big and heavy and hard to carry around all the time.

The impact of that constant decision-making is that we are tired a lot of the time. I'd like staff members to remember that we had to do tiring decision-making during every day and that does take its toll, it's an extra workload that we have

Unawareness of the importance, motivations and impact of transition

- “You’re just trying to be special.”
- “You’re just dressing for effect.”
- “How is it different to getting a boob job?”
- “Won’t your life be harder as a man without a penis?”
- “You don’t have to become a man to have a career in STEM.”
- “you think this will make you happy, but it won’t.”

A lot of cis people see transition, typically medically transition, as the problem, or the thing that is causing the hard times and it's like, “oh you know it's because you are taking testosterone you feel bad”. No, this is the solution, and this is the path that I'm walking to get away from the bad feelings.

Counteracting Transphobia and Microaggressions

Most people know that discrimination against disadvantaged groups is counter to The Equality Act 2010, which stipulates that people in the UK should not be discriminated against on the basis of one or more of their protected characteristics. Many people are unaware that Gender Reassignment is a protected characteristic like Race and Sexuality.

We also have a duty to ensure that students who have protected characteristics are supported and welcomed into our academic community, fostering good relations between those who have a protected characteristic and those who don't. This means that we should always be alert to incidents where the welcome and good relationships are at risk. Tackling transphobia and microaggressions is very important. The University's Dignity and Respect Policy, section 3.1 outlines the responsibility of staff and students to “Identify and challenge unacceptable behaviour when it occurs, even if it is not directed at ourselves.”

Here are two strategies, which are recognised to be effective.

Microinterventions

If you witness or are told about a microaggression experienced by a student, there are some strategies you can take to intervene.

- **Avoid singling out the victim** and drawing attention to them in front of others, but also take the opportunity to check-in with the victim, at the very least it can be reassuring to hear that someone else noticed what happened and that they wanted to help/offer support.
- **Make the “invisible” visible:** point out the underlying problematic attitude or make it safe for the student to do so.
- **Disarm the microaggression:** step in and stop or deflect. State your disagreement or reinforce the university's values and standards of conduct. Focus on the perpetrator rather than the victim.
- **Educate the offender:** help them to recognise their biases and explore their possible origin. Facilitate a conversation that emphasises shared aspirations and values between individuals without the need for stereotyping.

- **Seek external reinforcement or support:** Speak to a manager or other person in a leadership position. Contact the Respect at Edinburgh team for advice and help.

A lot of the issues that people are projecting onto trans people are in fact issues that *they* have with a more cis-normative society in general and the gender norms being put on *them*, and trans people just can't do the kind of work that they need to help them, but a lot of the time allies can do a lot of good things by just sitting down with someone and say, Oh look, why do you have these issues with what other people are doing?

Micro-affirmations

You can foster good relations with your students and help them to build a supportive academic community through intentional practice. If you start off and continue to practice these small acts, this will help build an inclusive culture.

- **Learn all students' names** – if you are not sure, ask them to help you pronounce them. Practice saying the name and/or make a note of the phonetic pronunciation.
- **Ask for and respect people's pronouns** – either do this for everyone, or if you want to approach an individual, do so discretely in private. Some trans people would prefer not to be asked at all so this is less intrusive or exposing.
- **Show interest in students**, ask them about their aspirations.
- **Affirm a student's potential** to succeed
- **Highlight the student's specific abilities** and progress to them and reinforce this through appreciative enquiry – help *them* to articulate their strengths and to build on them.
- **Validate their experiences** – believe them when they share their concerns or report incidents
- **Listen actively** – lean forwards and focus on the student.
- **Make clear statements** about expected behaviours and what will not be tolerated – state them and make them visible to everyone.
- **Ensure that you are familiar with** provisions for trans and/or non-binary students, especially the policy for dealing with transition of a student.

Educate Yourself

Living as a trans and/or non-binary person is still to be subject to the ignorance and sometimes hostility of others and a constant challenge to navigate cis-gendered environments. This is exhausting. Therefore, adding to the burden by asking trans and/or non-binary people to teach you or explain themselves is not acceptable outside of specific conversations carried out with consent. Here are some useful resources to educate yourself.

The Trevor Project: Guide to Being and Ally to Transgender Non-binary Youth

<https://www.thetrevorproject.org/resources/trevor-support-center/a-guide-to-being-an-ally-to-transgender-and-nonbinary-youth/>

All About Trans: Real People: Patchwork Stories

<https://www.allabouttrans.org.uk/about/patchwork-digital-storytelling/>

General guidance on law and good practice for transition of a student in HE

<https://www.gires.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Transition-of-a-Student-in-University.pdf>

Technical Guidance on the Equality Act 2010 for HE – see p.22 and Chapters 8, 9, 10

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/equalityact2010-technicalguidance-feandhe-2015.pdf>

National Centre for Transgender Equality FAQ about transgender people.

https://transequality.org/sites/default/files/docs/resources/Understanding-Trans-Full-July-2016_0.pdf

Ideas to improve teaching and the learning environment

Our aim should be to create an environment of ‘identity safety’ in which everyone can feel free to express their identity and feel it is of equal worth and value. It is the opposite of ‘stereotype threat’, which occurs when we feel that we are being judged against a stereotype that suggests our identity is problematic or devalued and we become vulnerable.

- Create strong staff-student partnerships to work together to improve inclusion. For example, [Chemunity](#) at the University of Edinburgh
- Wear a rainbow lanyard or other visible sign that you are safe for trans and/or non-binary people – **continue to do this when you teach online**. Put your pronouns in your signature for emails.
- Do your teaching materials portray trans and non-binary people in a poor light or fail to portray trans and/or non-binary identities at all. Provide a more balanced view. Use Pride Month as an opportunity to enhance your curriculum through surfacing the contributions of trans and non-binary people to your discipline, or how your discipline relates to their history. For example, does or did it contribute to ideas of who is ‘normal’ or ‘morally good’ that have negatively impacted trans and non-binary people? Set student projects that given participants the chance to learn and understand the trans and/or non-binary experience.
- Remember that laws and attitudes towards trans and non-binary people vary enormously from country to country and in some cases may pose extreme risk and mortal danger to them. Your students may come from countries where the latter is the case or worry about visiting them. Ensure any placement or year abroad plans are made with safety in mind.
- Join the Staff Pride Network for LGBT+ Colleagues and Allies. The SPN has strong ties with the student community and other LGBT+ organisations that support young people. They also run regular events that will educate you about different LGBT+ identities and can work with you to develop curriculum and other resources.

It would be great if staff had more awareness around things that could help trans people, like changing their name on the register, putting a preferred name on Euclid and making a note of their pronouns and words that shouldn’t be used for you.

- Familiarise yourself with University Resources (see below) so you can better support your trans and/or non-binary students.

I would like staff to understand that trans people may have particular medical or financial circumstances that cis people don't have. If I email a professor and tell them I'm having surgery, I want them to know that this isn't elective or cosmetic surgery, but needed for my mental and emotional health. Although there are uni policies for procedures around trans people but I think it's not very well signposted and staff aren't aware of it.

I think it's good to be aware of the home country that the person might be from might be hostile. So be aware of this in communication with parents. Ask the students, what words do you want me to use about you when we put information about you on your record? Is it possible to maybe hide or change some bits and not send your correspondence that might have things that are really dangerous for your parents or people in your country in general to your home address, for example.

I think a lot of the time people who were trans or might have been trans are sort of 'cis-washed'. Obviously, we can't say that this is definitely a trans man but we also can't say this is definitely a cis woman. So I think teachers should keep the space open for the possibility to be there and say, we don't really know how that person identified themselves - here's what they wrote about themselves, how they lived and what they thought about themselves, but we can't obviously ascribe a label to them now. A lot of the time it feels like it's a very prescriptive idea of historical people; if they were born a sex, that's their gender and any deviation from that that they did was to be a warrior or to get into a nunnery a monastery or something. Like there couldn't be another reason to want to be perceived as a man or woman.

University Resources

- Anonymous reporting of bullying, harassment or discrimination for students: <https://bit.ly/2ZrYpji>
- Respect at Edinburgh resource hub: <https://bit.ly/30c8JUL>
- UoE Trans Equality Policy: https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/trans_equality_policy.pdf
- EUSA Guide on Sharing Pronouns for Trans Allies <https://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/pageassets/yourvoice/representation/liberation/transnonbinary/Pronoun-Guide.pdf>
- UoE Gender Neutral Toilet Map <https://www.ed.ac.uk/estates/buildings-information/gender-neutral-toilets>
- The Students' Association's Trans and Non-Binary Campaign, led by their elected Trans and Non-Binary Officer, provide support and community for trans and non-binary students. Students and staff can find out more about the Campaign [here](#) or by emailing transnonbinary@eusa.ed.ac.uk, and trans and/or non-binary students can join the Campaign [here](#).

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