

Trans Student Support Policy

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Introduction

This policy sits within the university's wellbeing policies and is part of the university's Equality and Diversity commitments. GCU is committed to creating an inclusive and welcoming environment for students, staff and visitors. GCU celebrates all identities and has guidance and policies in place to raise awareness of gender diversity, and to provide clear pathways for gender diverse students and applicants to access support.

This policy sits within a legal context that protects trans people from discrimination, victimisation and harassment in education (Equality Act, 2010). For more information about the wider legal and policy context in relation to Higher Education, there is external advice from Advance HE, which includes a glossary of terminology:

<https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/trans-staff-and-students-he-and-colleges-improving-experiences>

For further information about supporting transgender students, please see our separate guidelines.

Definition of Trans

Trans and transgender are inclusive umbrella terms for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from the sex (male or female) they were assigned at birth. The term may include, but is not limited to, trans men and women, non-binary people and dual role people.

Please refer to the guidelines for more detailed information about terminology.

Policy Statement

The University recognises that there can be differences between physical/anatomical sex and gender identity/expression and, therefore, undertakes not to discriminate against gender diverse students. The University will treat all students and staff with dignity and respect and seek to provide a learning environment free from discrimination. The University will endeavour to undertake the following:

- Students will not be denied access to courses, progression to other courses or fair and equal treatment while on courses because of their gender identity, or because of their participation in any gender reassignment process

- The curriculum does not rely on stereotypical assumptions and contains no transphobic material
- Respect for the confidentiality of all trans students and that no information will be revealed without explicit consent from the individual
- Transphobic abuse, harassment or bullying (e.g. name calling, derogatory jokes, unacceptable or unwanted behaviour, intrusive questions) is treated as a serious disciplinary offence and will be dealt with under the appropriate procedure
- Provide a supportive environment for students who wish their trans status to be known; it is the right of the individual to choose whether they wish to be open about their gender identity in the University
- In providing accommodation for students, special issues which may be raised by trans students will be treated sympathetically by accommodation services
- Students undergoing medical and surgical procedures related to gender reassignment will receive positive support from the University to meet their particular needs during this period

Equality and Diversity Statement

GCU is committed to providing a culture and environment which is inclusive of all sections of society and responsive to the needs of individuals. We do this by promoting equality, valuing diversity and ensuring that our University community adheres to our [Dignity at Work and Study Policy](#).

We are committed to treating trans students fairly, and having an inclusive and supportive environment for students who identify as trans. We recognise our duty under the Equality Act 2010 to prevent discrimination and endeavour to ensure that this duty is carried out throughout the institution.

We also recognise that there is a legal framework which governs this area of equality which includes the Gender Reassignment Regulations 1999, Gender Recognition Act 2004 and as detailed above the Equality Act 2010.

1. Guidance to Students

If a student is considering or undergoing gender reassignment, they should contact the Student Wellbeing Service. A meeting will be arranged to discuss in confidence how the individual wishes to deal with their transition and to agree and follow a process with which they are comfortable. A very important element of this meeting will be to determine who should be told what and when and how this should occur.

It can be helpful to draw up a confidential plan for the period of transition and thereafter. The implementation of the plan should be reviewed regularly and reassessed at each significant part of the process. The plan should include the following issues:

- Whether a student wants to continue their course of study, defer for a set amount of time or come to some other arrangement e.g. part-time study
- The expected time scale of any medical and surgical procedures
- The expected point or phase of change of name, personal details or gender
- What time off will be required for treatment and/or possible side effects from any medication and how this will affect their study
- Whether the individual wishes to inform fellow students or staff themselves or would prefer to have this done for them.
- What amendments will be required to records and systems
- Whether training or briefing of fellow students or staff will be necessary, at what point and by whom
- If the student's course involves placement and/or registration with a professional body, discussion of how this will be managed

For further information, please see the Trans Student Guidance on our LGBT+ Students page:

<https://www.gcu.ac.uk/student/support/supportingourstudents/lgbt+/>

2. Guidance to Staff

The following informal guidelines on how to interact with people who are transitioning may be helpful for staff and fellow students.

- Use the name and pronoun that the person asks you to. If you aren't sure what the right pronoun is, ask or don't use pronouns. If you make a mistake with pronouns, correct yourself and move on. The important thing is not to make a big deal out of it.

- Respect people’s privacy. Do not ask what their ‘real’ or ‘birth’ name is. Trans people are often sensitive about revealing information about their past, especially if they think it might affect how they are perceived in the present.
- Similarly, **do not** tell others about a person’s trans status **unless permission has been granted** and/or it has been agreed as part of a support plan for the individual student. If documents have to be kept that have the person’s old name and gender on them, keep them confidential.
- Respect people’s boundaries. If you feel it is appropriate to ask a personal question, first ask if it is ok to do so. Personal questions include anything to do with one’s sex life, anatomy (not just genitalia) and relationship status – past, present or future. Questions such as, ‘Are you on hormones?’ can be considered personal.
- Listen to the person, and ask them how they want to be regarded and referred to
- **Further guidance to staff can be found in our Staff guidelines on our LGBT+ Students page: <https://www.gcu.ac.uk/student/support/supportingourstudents/lgbt/>**

3. Confidentiality

Please note, it is a criminal offence to disclose that a person is trans without their permission.

Explicit written consent should be obtained using standard pro-forma, available from the Student Wellbeing Adviser.

Confidentiality is crucial. Inappropriate, casual discussion of a trans student is unacceptable, as is disclosure that has not been agreed with the student. The action plan agreed with the student should make clear where disclosure will happen, and make clear the arrangements can be changed at any time if the student so wishes.

4. Practical Considerations

a) Time off from Studies

Trans students may require time off from their studies study for a wide variety of medical appointments. Appointments to see a specialist may involve travelling long distances. The amount of

time off required following surgery will vary greatly from 1 to 12 weeks depending on the nature of the surgery and the physical demands of the person's work or study. In all cases the member of staff or student should not be treated any less favourably than if they were absent due to sickness or injury. There may be a need for close relatives of trans staff or students to have time off to care for them in the same way that this would be necessary for parents or carers in other circumstances. There should not be any less favourable treatment in such cases.

b) Accommodation

The Caledonian Court staff will, after liaising with the Student Wellbeing Service, consider making necessary arrangements following specific requests from a trans student. If the student's gender identity changes whilst living in Caledonian Court, the Accommodation Officer will liaise with the student and any support services involved (with the student's permission) to assist the student in finding the most appropriate type of accommodation.

c) Toilets and Changing Facilities

A trans person should have access to 'men-only' and 'women-only' areas according to the gender in which they present. It is not acceptable to restrict a trans person to using accessible toilets or other unisex facilities.

d) Criminal record checks

Where these are required, Disclosure Scotland has implemented a process specifically for trans people who do not wish to disclose their trans status to their employer or placement provider. Please refer to our guidelines for more information about this.

5. Discrimination and Harassment

Bullying, harassment and discrimination are unlawful and will not be tolerated. Our policies protect the rights of trans people to dignity whilst living and studying at the university. Some examples of unlawful direct discrimination include:

- Refusing to support a student who is trans
- Verbally or physically threatening a trans person or spreading malicious gossip
- Refusing to associate with or ignoring someone because they are a trans person

- Refusing to address the person in their acquired gender or to use their new name
- Sexual harassment of a trans person
- Revealing the trans status of a person to others, either by disclosing information to individuals or groups
- Passing judgement on how convincing a trans person is in their acquired gender
- Refusing to acknowledge the rights of a trans person and failing to acknowledge that a transition has occurred.

6. Complaints

Where a student is dissatisfied with the arrangements offered in line with their circumstances, they can access information regarding the Complaints Handling Procedure from:

<http://www.gcu.ac.uk/gaq/appealscomplaintsandstudentdiscipline/complaints/>

GCU EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT FORM

1. DESCRIBE	
1.1. Name of policy/strategy/decision	Trans Student Policy
1.2. Owner	Student Wellbeing
1.3. Date	02/12/2016
1.4. Aims of policy/strategy/decision	This policy has been written to outline GCU's commitment to supporting trans students and to outline rights and responsibilities of staff and students. It is intended that GCU will support trans students appropriately.
1.5. Who does the policy/strategy/decision affect?	Students, Staff, Applicants, Visitors
1.6. Could there be any potential implications for equality, or people with protected characteristics?	The policy aims to support the principles of equality and diversity and ensure that students are not discriminated against. This policy applies to all trans students, regardless of background or personal circumstances.

2. ASSESS	
What are the implications, positive or negative (and evidence for this) of the policy/strategy/decision in relation to GCU's duty to have due regard to the need to:	
2.1. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation?	There is likely to be a positive impact on this duty as it is highlighting that GCU recognises the needs of trans students and is working to ensure that every student is treated equally.

2.2. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it?

There is likely to be a positive impact on this duty as the policy is based on supporting trans students and clarifying for these students that GCU is a welcoming university which supports every student's needs.

2.3. Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share it?

There is likely to be a positive impact on this duty as the policy is centred on breaking down barriers & raising awareness to remove prejudice.

3. ACTION

3.1. If a negative impact has been identified, how will this be addressed?

Until the Policy and guidance are implemented, it is not possible to gauge any negative impact. However, the implementation process will be monitored and data will be gathered in relation to the relevant protected characteristics that may be affected; any negative impact will inform the future review process of the Policy and guidance. Overall, there is no direct negative impact on the protected characteristics, as this applies to all students and the principles of the policy are to support all students. Although the policy itself is free from discrimination overall, ultimately it is the application and implementation of the policy that provides the scope for discrimination e.g. prejudices or attitudes of staff supporting their students. Therefore, there is potentially a development need for those involved in implementing the policy, and appropriate information will be provided to staff.

3.2. If changes have been made to the policy/strategy/decision as a result of this assessment, outline the changes

N/A

4. MONITOR AND REVIEW

4.1. How will the implementation of the policy/strategy/decision and its impact on equality be monitored and reviewed?

The policy will be reviewed annually alongside all other Student Wellbeing Policies.

5. PUBLISH

Please email this completed form, along with the policy/strategy and any other relevant information¹ to equality@gcu.ac.uk for publishing on the Equality and Diversity website and annual reporting in line with Equality Act 2010 requirements.

6. SIGN OFF

6.1. EIA Owner

Signature

Date

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6.2. Equality and Diversity Advisor

Signature

Date

	Adrian Lui	02/12/2016
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¹ Information or evidence may be removed if it is commercially sensitive or personal information
